

**COMBATING CORRUPTION THROUGH THE LANGUAGE OF MUSIC:  
AN ANALYSIS OF FELA ANIKULAPO KUTI AND EEDRIS  
ABDULKAREEM'S SONGS**

**BY**

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## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify this research project was carried out by Glory Anitie IBANGA in the Department of English and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, under my supervision.

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*05/3/2025*

## **DEDICATION**

To God, the owner and giver of life, who makes everything beautiful in His time.

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Title

Certification ii

Dedication iii

Acknowledgements iv

Table of Contents vi

**CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Purpose of the Study 1

1.2 Scope of Study 1

1.3 Methodology 1

1.4 Theoretical Background 2

1.5 Review of Related Literature 4

1.6 Justification of Study 6

1.7 Thesis Statement 7

**CHAPTER TWO: SOCIETAL CHANGE**

2.1 Data One: *Water No Get Enemy* by Fela Anikulapo Ku 8

2.2 Data Two: *Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti 11

2.3 Data Three: *Jaga Jaga* by Eedris Abdulakareem 16

2.4 Data Four: *One Leg Up* by Eedris Abdulakareem 20

### **CHAPTER THREE: INSPIRING ACTIVITISM**

3.1 Data one: *Mr. Follow Follow* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti 24

3.2 Data Two: *Coffin for Head of State* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti 28

3.3 Data Three: *Koleyewon* by Eedris Abdulakareem 34

3.4 Data Four: *Clean Up Naija* by Eedris Abdulakareem 38

### **CHAPTER FOUR: CONFRONTING POWER STRUCTURES**

4.1 Data One: *Noise for Vendor Mouth* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti 43

4.2 Data Two: *Overtake Don Overtake Overtake* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti 48

4.3 Data Three: *Letter to Mr. President* by Eedris Abdulakeem 52

4.2 Data Four: *Country Hard* by Eedris Abdulakeem 56

### **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

Conclusion 61

Works Cited 64

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **1.1 Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine Nigerian secular songs and lyrics to combat corruption in order to encourage social change and accountability in Nigerian society. These include societal change, inspiring activism and confronting power structures.

#### **1.2 Scope of Study**

This study uses songs by well-known singers like Fela and Eedris Abdulkareem as case studies to examine anti-corruption themes in modern Nigerian secular songs from the Afrobeat and Hip-Hop genres. The study looks at how the lyrics of these songs affect how Nigerian youth and foreigners perceive and understand corruption.

#### **1.3 Methodology**

A qualitative research design is used in this study, which focuses on a content analysis of a few songs by well-known Nigerian singers Eedris Abdulkareem and Fela Anikulapo Kuti, who are recognized for their vocal opposition to social injustice and corruption. Songs that specifically address themes of corruption, government, and societal issues in Nigeria are chosen for the analysis. Analysis is on recurrent themes, stylistic components, and rhetorical strategies in each song's lyrics that emphasize anti-corruption messages. The identification and analysis of figurative language, including personification, metaphor, irony and

symbolism, can help us comprehend how these musicians use music to express sociopolitical concepts.

Song lyrics are gathered and categorized by the study according to anti-corruption themes such as systemic injustice, economic inequality, and power abuse. The study looks at how these musicians use their lyrics to combat corruption and increase social consciousness in Nigerian culture through thematic analysis.

#### **1.4 Theoretical Background**

This study applies Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how Nigerian musicians use language as a tool for political and social resistance. CDA is a method of studying language that focuses on its relationship with power, ideology, and social structures. It helps to uncover hidden meanings in texts, showing how words shape people's understanding of the world. Norman Fairclough, a leading scholar in this field, develops CDA to reveal that language is not neutral; it either maintains the status quo or challenges existing power structures (Fairclough 23). According to Fairclough, CDA examines how people use language to resist oppression, expose inequalities, and demand justice. This makes it a suitable approach for analyzing the protest music of Fela Anikulapo Kuti and Eedris Abdulkareem.

CDA applies to this study because it helps to analyze how these musicians construct their messages through lyrics. Their songs do not simply entertain; they serve as vehicles for exposing corruption, injustice, and government failure. The language they use is deliberate, shaped by the socio-political environment in Nigeria. Fela, for example, calls soldiers *zombies* in his song *Zombie* to highlight how the military blindly follows orders without questioning authority. This use of language mocks the oppressive regime and ridicules the military's role in suppressing civilians. Similarly, in *Jaga Jaga*, Eedris Abdulkareem describes Nigeria as chaotic and dysfunctional, using Nigerian Pidgin to reach the masses in a language they understand. Rogers and Wetzel argue that artists strategically use familiar language, metaphors, and satire to strengthen their messages and engage their audience (Rogers and Wetzel 45).

Scholars have explored CDA as a tool for analyzing power relations in society. Teun van Dijk, another major contributor to CDA, explains that discourse is a means of exercising and challenging power (van Dijk 67). He argues that those in control use language to dominate, while the oppressed use it to resist. Fela and Eedris use their songs as a means of resistance, countering the official narratives of Nigerian leaders who often portray themselves as competent and caring. Their lyrics reveal the realities of police brutality, economic suffering, and political corruption that the government tries to conceal. This aligns with Noam Chomsky's concept of "manufacturing consent," which explains that those in power

manipulate information to maintain control (Chomsky 97). Fela and Eedris upend the prevailing discourse and inspire critical thinking by utilizing music to question these narratives.

In addition to exposing corruption, the musicians use CDA strategies to mobilize their listeners. Fairclough notes that CDA involves not just analyzing words but also understanding their effect on the audience (Fairclough 134). Fela's *Coffin for Head of State*, for example, criticizes religious and political hypocrisy, using imagery and strong language to provoke thought and inspire action. Eedris, in *Letter to Mr. President*, speaks directly to Nigeria's leaders, making his message personal and urgent. These songs reflect what Paulo Freire calls "conscientization," the process of developing a critical awareness of one's social reality (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 112). Through their music, Fela and Eedris raise consciousness, urging Nigerians to recognize their oppression and resist it.

The study of these lyrics through CDA helps to explain why their music remains influential. Despite being released decades ago, Fela's songs continue to relate with present-day social struggles in Nigeria, just as Eedris's lyrics remain relevant to contemporary political debates. Their ability to craft compelling narratives, use powerful metaphors, and challenge authority makes their music an important part of Nigeria's history of activism. This study demonstrates how these musicians use their songs as instruments of social and political struggle by utilizing CDA to reveal the deeper meanings in their lyrics.

## 1.5 Review of Related Literature

Nigerian musicians have a long history of using their songs to speak up against social problems, especially corruption. Two artists who stand out in this fight are Fela Anikulapo Kuti and Eedris Abdulkareem. In her book "The African Popular Culture Reader," Karin Barber explains how these musicians use their platform to expose corruption and challenge those in power (Barber 78). This role becomes even more important because sometimes these artists say things that newspapers and TV stations might be afraid to report.

Fela Kuti's music style, called Afrobeat, mixes African beats with strong political messages. In Tejumola Olaniyan discusses book "Arrest the Music: Fela and His Rebel Art and Politics," Fela didn't just create music, he started a movement that spoke for many frustrated Africans (Olaniyan 45). His famous song "Zombie" is a perfect example of how he used clever language to criticize the government. Instead of directly attacking the military, he called them zombies, meaning they just followed orders without thinking. Michael Veal's research in "Fela: The Life and Times of an African Musical Icon" shows how Fela used humor and local language to make his message clear to ordinary people while making fun of corrupt leaders (Veal 156).

More recently, Eedris Abdulkareem carries on this tradition of using music to fight corruption. His controversial song "Jaga Jaga" describes how messy Nigeria has become

because of bad leadership. Stephanie Shonekan explains in "The Life and Times of African Pop," Eedris speaks in a way that ordinary Nigerians understand, using everyday language and examples that people can relate to (Shonekan 92). Through songs like "Mr. Lecturer," he talks about different types of corruption, from political theft to bribery in universities.

These musicians do more than just entertain, they educate and motivate people to think about corruption differently. According to Paul Ugor's article "Youth Culture and Popular Music in Nigeria," artists like Fela and Eedris help people understand complex political issues by breaking them down into simple, relatable stories through their music (Ugor 234). They use their songs to encourage Nigerians to question their leaders and demand better governance.

The power of these musicians comes from how they use language in their songs. As Norman Fairclough explains in "Language and Power," the way people use words can either keep powerful people in control or help challenge their authority (Fairclough 112). Both Fela and Eedris choose their words carefully to connect with their listeners and make them think about corruption in new ways. Their use of local languages and everyday examples helps ordinary people understand and relate to their message.

## **1.6 Justification of Study**

First, while many researchers have written about Fela's music and activism, few have looked at how his work connects with newer artists like Eedris Abdulkareem who also speak against

corruption. As Tejumola Olaniyan shows in "Arrest the Music! Fela and His Rebel Art and Politics," musicians play a key role in challenging corrupt leaders and helping people understand complex political issues (Olaniyan 67). Studying both Fela and Eedris together, we see how Nigerian musicians across different time periods use music to fight corruption and encourage people to question those in power.

Second, this study looks at how these artists use clever language tricks like metaphors and humor to get their message across to ordinary Nigerians. In her book "Popular Music and Social Change in Nigeria," Stephanie Shonekan explains that musicians often succeed where others fail because they make difficult topics easier to understand through their lyrics (Shonekan 89). Since corruption remains a big problem in Nigeria, it's important to understand how music helps raise awareness and gets people to take action. This study shows how popular music does more than entertain. It helps people recognize corruption and gives them the courage to stand up against it.

### **1.7 Thesis Statement**

This study examines Fela Anikulapo Kuti and Eedris Abdulkareem songs and lyrics to expose corruption and encourage Nigerians to speak up against bad leadership through societal change, inspiring activism and confronting power structures.

## CHAPTER TWO

### SOCIETAL CHANGE

#### 2.1 Analysis

##### **Data One: *Water No Get Enemy* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

Fela Anikulapo Kuti's *Water No Get Enemy* is one of his most philosophically profound songs, full of profound social and political messages. The song, which was released in 1975 as part of the *Expensive Shit* album, uses the symbolism of water to discuss power, resistance, and survival. The lyrics reflect African philosophy and traditional Yoruba proverbs, where water is an unstoppable and essential force that sustains life. Fela uses symbolism, satire, and metaphor to critique corrupt leadership, highlight the tenacity of the people, and remind listeners of the inevitable triumph of justice. His message, a part of a smooth Afrobeat rhythm, serves as a powerful call for unity and societal change.

“If you wan to bath, na water you go use

If you wan cook soup, na water you go use

If your head dey hot, na water you go use

Water,e no get enemy”

### **Satire in *Water No Get Enemy* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

In this song, Fela quietly makes fun of those in positions of authority who do not see how important the people and this is the major example of satire. Water is necessary for bathing, cooking, and cooling off when heated, as the lyrics describe in their list of common purposes. These sentences convey a deeper, satirical message about administration, despite their seeming repetition and lightheartedness. No government can exist without its citizens; just as no one can survive without water. Yet, politicians continue to exploit and disregard the public, much like a man dumb enough to struggle against water.

The political atmosphere in Nigeria at the time helps to clarify Fela's satire. General Yakubu Gowon and other military leaders frequently repressed dissent and exercised strict control over the populace, disregarding their necessities in the process of gaining riches and authority. Fela highlights the ridiculousness of leadership that disregards its source of legitimacy by making fun of this mindset. Sola Olorunyomi argue that Fela's music often used satire as a means of disarming oppressive authority, making his critiques digestible even in a repressive regime (Olorunyomi 77). Fela makes his satire interesting and thought-provoking by singing in a soothing, even conversational tone.

### **Metaphor in *Water No Get Enemy* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

The entire song uses water as a metaphor. Fela portrays water as a natural force that is unstoppable and without an adversary. Leaders in Nigerian politics frequently view alternative voices, journalists, and activists as adversaries. Fela challenges this notion, though, by utilizing water to stand for justice, truth, and the people's collective will forces that no authority can ever completely stifle.

The line, "If your head dey hot, na water you go use" allegorically implies that change is unavoidable when society erupts because of poor leadership. Justice gradually soothes the oppressed's rage, much like water soothes a hot head. This metaphor aligns with Tejumola Olaniyan's argument that Fela used Afrobeat as a platform to expose power imbalances while reminding listeners of their strength (Tejumola 114). The water metaphor also implies endurance and flexibility, which are traits that oppressed people need to embrace in order to endure and ultimately regain their rights.

Fela's portrayal of water as a constitutional element that benefits both the rich and the poor is another potent metaphor. Everyone needs water to drink, regardless of their status as a king or a beggar. Therefore, everyone should benefit equally from leadership, not only the wealthy elite. This subliminal critique of class disparity supports Fela's egalitarian and just philosophies. In the song, water has profound symbolic meaning and is more than just a metaphor. Water is frequently associated with justice, rebirth, and purity in African beliefs. Fela uses this symbolism to support his claim that justice and truth will always triumph over all barriers, much like water.

### Symbolism in *Water No Get Enemy* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti

"Nothing wey them go do, water go find e level"

This line symbolizes the inevitable restoration of balance in society. Leaders may steal, oppress, and manipulate, but, like water, justice will eventually "find its level." This imagery aligns with Wole Soyinka's argument that African resistance movements are often rooted in symbolic and cultural expressions that reinforce collective memory (Soyinka 201). Fela reinforces the idea that justice is an unstoppable force no matter how horrible things become by using this imagery.

The song's reference to water as something that "no get enemy" is another significant symbol. This statement is at odds with Nigerian politics, where politicians frequently turn activists and critics into adversaries. Fela invites listeners to reconsider oppression and violence by asserting that water has no enemies. Just as water helps everyone equally, leaders who governed with wisdom, justice, and fairness would have no opponents.

Fela uses metaphor to portray water as a symbol of truth and resiliency, while his symbolism reinforces the idea that justice, like water, cannot be suppressed forever. *Water No Get Enemy* is more than just a song; it is a profoundly philosophical and politically charged reflection on power, justice, and survival. Fela uses satire to mock the folly of leaders who attempt to fight against forces that sustain them, and his symbolism reinforces the idea that justice, like water,

cannot be permanently suppressed. The song serves as a critique of corrupt governance as well as a call for unity and balance in society.

**Data Two: *Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

One of Fela Anikulapo Kuti's most thought-provoking songs, *Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense*, critiques the shortcomings of post-colonial African administration and the influence of Western ideology on the development of dysfunctional political systems. The song, which was released in the 1980s when Nigeria was under military government, challenges injustice, corruption, and the defective educational system that feeds these issues using satire, metaphor, and symbolism. The song is an appeal for social change, asking listeners to critically examine the information they are given, especially when it comes to politics, justice, and government.

“Teacher, teacher, make I ask you question

Teacher, teacher, if you no know, you go tell me

Who cause Africa trouble?

Na your government?

E no be my government?

E no be your papa government?

E no be your mama government?”

The mood of the entire song is established by this passage. As pupils challenge their "teacher," a symbolic character standing for the educational system, power, and the dissemination of ideological disinformation, Fela addresses the audience. He urges audiences to question their preconceived notions about governance and leadership, rejecting simplistic justifications for Africa's sociopolitical problems.

### **Satire in *Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

In *Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense*, satire is prevalent as Fela exposes the hypocrisy of authorities who intentionally oppress their constituents while professing to govern with integrity. Teachers are supposed to teach, but Fela implies that they are teaching "nonsense," which is humorous in and of itself. This illustrates how education turned into a means of deceiving Africans about their history, government, and rights, especially when colonial influence was present.

Fela sarcastically portrays democracy as a failed concept in Africa, not because the idea itself is flawed, but because it has been misinterpreted and corrupted by African leaders. He sings:

"Democracy, democracy/Crazy demo, demonstration of craze"

Here, he mocks the Western-imposed democratic model in Africa, referring to it as a "demonstration of craze" and "crazy demo." By changing the word "democracy" to "democracy," Fela draws attention to how ridiculous it is for African nations to embrace foreign political structures that are incompatible with their historical and cultural backgrounds.

This echoes the arguments of scholars like Claude Ake, who noted that democracy in Africa has often been reduced to a façade, with leaders using elections to legitimize authoritarian rule (Ake 45).

Fela's satire also targets religion, denouncing it as yet another instrument of oppressive justification. He challenges the function of religious organizations that advocate for submission over defiance of injustice. The song is both enjoyable and thought-provoking due to his ability to incorporate humor into serious political conversation, which guarantees that a wide audience will hear his message.

### **Metaphor in *Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

Another effective device in *Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense* is metaphor, especially when it comes to Fela's association of political power with education. The "teacher" stands in for those in positions of authority who set the standard for what people should think about justice and government, including politicians, colonial rulers, and even religious leaders. Fela confronts authority and inspires others to do the same by posing the inquiry, "Teacher, teacher, make I ask you question."

His use of the term "government" as a metaphor extends beyond the ruling elite to include parents, communities, and even the international system. He asks:

“E no be my government? E no be your government?”

This statement implies that everyone, whether actively or passively, contributes to the upkeep of corrupt systems. The metaphor serves to emphasize that oppression is not only imposed from above but is also made possible by societal cooperation. This aligns with the views of Frantz Fanon, who argued in *The Wretched of the Earth* that colonial mentalities persist because both leaders and citizens internalize oppressive ideologies (Fanon 132).

### ***Symbolism in Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense by Fela Anikulapo Kuti***

The song's symbolism emphasizes the conflict between native African values and imposed ideas. Fela questions whether what individuals have been taught actually benefits them by symbolically contrasting traditional African knowledge with the Western-influenced educational system. The word "teacher" is used frequently to represent all governing bodies that influence public opinion, including the media, churches, governments, and educational institutions.

The term "democracy" itself is symbolic, signifying how democracy is distorted in Africa. In many African countries, democracy has evolved into a tool for tyranny and manipulation rather than a system of administration by and for the people. Additionally, the song's use of the term "government" functions as a more general symbol, signifying both overt governmental leadership and the covert forces-foreign powers, multinational businesses, and corrupt elites-that shape national policies.

Beyond merely being a song, *Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense* is an instructional tool that challenges authority and calls for accountability. By highlighting the shortcomings of African governance and the effects of colonial ideas, Fela raises awareness that inspires social change and resistance. The song's empowerment to refuse mindless obedience is among its most important features. Fela invites regular people to consider how they contribute to injustice, in addition to criticizing politicians. This approach aligns with Paulo Freire's concept of "conscientization," where education becomes a process of awakening individuals to their socio-political realities and equipping them to fight injustice (Freire 92).

African leaders are also urged by the song to adopt indigenous solutions rather than imitating Western models that do not suit their own circumstances. Fela advocates for political systems that put the welfare of African citizens ahead of the interests of foreign powers or ruling elites by highlighting the inconsistencies in governance.

One of Fela Kuti's most influential songs is *Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense*, which uses humor, metaphor, and symbolism to criticize ideology control, education, and government. Fela challenges the legitimacy of forced political systems, highlights the absurdities of African democracy, and challenges listeners' preconceived notions about leadership and administration through wit and incisive political analysis. His appeal for social transformation is as potent today, acting as a timeless reminder of the necessity of active political participation as well as a historical critique.

### **Data Three: *Jaga Jaga* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

One of the most contentious and socially significant songs in Nigerian music history is *Jaga Jaga* by Eedris Abdulkareem. The song, which was released in 2004, publicly denounces Nigeria's poverty, corruption, and poor leadership. In Nigerian Pidgin English, *Jaga Jaga* means anarchy, disarray, or something that is totally damaged. Eedris vividly depicts a nation afflicted by incompetence and avarice through satire, metaphor, and symbolism. *Jaga Jaga* is a cry for social change as well as a song because of his audacious lyrics, which speak to the problems that Nigerians face on a daily basis.

"Nigeria jaga jaga, everything scatter scatter

Poor man dey suffer suffer, gbosa gbosa, gunshot inna di air

Palaver, wahala, problem everywhere"

The mood of the entire song is established by these lines. According to Eedris, Nigeria is in total chaos, with the impoverished suffering and daily life dominated by violence and instability. All Nigerians, from the wealthy to the average citizen, can understand the message because of his use of straightforward, understandable language.

### **Satire in *Jaga Jaga* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

Satire is one of the strongest characteristics of *Jaga Jaga*. Eedris exposes the harsh reality of everyday life and the shortcomings of Nigerian leadership through sarcasm and exaggeration.

He makes fun of the wealthy while the rest of the nation falls apart, which is one of the song's most scathing satirical moments:

“Plenty plenty corruption, inflation, election confusion”

Eedris emphasizes how these profound problems have grown so commonplace that they look like an endless joke by enumerating Nigeria's persistent troubles in a rhythmic, almost humorous way.

His description of "gunshot inna di air" is another instance of sarcasm. Violence persists despite leaders' claims to be defending the populace. This paradox highlights the irony of a nation where the ruling class claims to provide security, but insecurity is one of the main dangers facing the typical Nigerian. According to Olorunyomi, Nigerian protest music often employs satire to ridicule leadership and awaken political consciousness (Olorunyomi 83). Eedris follows this tradition, using *Jaga Jaga* as both a mirror and a weapon against failed governance.

### **Metaphor in *Jaga Jaga* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

Eedris makes extensive use of metaphor to emphasize his points. The term *Jaga Jaga* itself is the most overt metaphor, signifying the instability and chaos that characterize Nigeria's sociopolitical environment. Every Nigerian listening already knows that *Jaga Jaga* alludes to a nation in disarray; therefore, he doesn't need to explain it.

The song also highlights how nothing in Nigeria seems to work correctly by using the metaphor of "scatter scatter." Public services are almost nonexistent, the power supply is unstable, and the roads are poor. Instead of simply saying "Nigeria is in a bad state," Eedris gives listeners a mental picture of things falling apart, similar to Achebe's famous depiction of post-colonial disorder in *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe 110).

### **Symbolism in *Jaga Jaga* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

Another important approach in the song that reinforces its message is symbolism. The picture of "gunshot inna di air" is among the most potent emblems. This symbolizes both the ongoing anxiety among Nigerians and the violence that afflicts the country. It stands for political killings, police brutality, and the everyday insecurity that common people experience. This line serves as a reminder to listeners that violence is frequently employed to quell dissent in a nation where numerous protests and cries for reform are met with gunfire. Additionally, Eedris employs the phrase "Palaver, wahala, problem everywhere" to represent Nigeria's never-ending cycle of crises. The terms "palaver" (problem), "wahala"(problem), and "problem" itself each represent distinct facets of Nigeria's dysfunction.

Political corruption, economic hardship, and ethnic divisions all contribute to a society where there is no relief from suffering.

In addition, the song itself turns becomes a symbol of defiance. At a time when many singers shunned political subjects, Eedris made *Jaga Jaga* an anthem for irate Nigerians by publicly

denouncing the government. Because of his audacity, President Olusegun Obasanjo banned the song from state-owned radio stations, which only served to boost its appeal. Scholars like Tejumola Olaniyan argue that music in Africa is often used as a symbolic weapon against oppression, making *Jaga Jaga* a direct continuation of the tradition pioneered by artists like Fela Kuti (Olaniyan 102).

Beyond its aesthetic appeal, *Jaga Jaga* is a potent instrument for social change and consciousness. Eedris challenges listeners to face their nation's realities by exposing poverty, brutality, and corruption. He challenges people to consider leadership and governance seriously by exposing the extent of Nigeria's issues rather than providing simplistic answers or naïve hope. Additionally, the song gives common Nigerians a voice, empowering them. When a well-known artist bravely speaks out against corruption, it validates the frustrations of many people and strengthens their belief that they deserve better. This aligns with Paulo Freire's concept of "conscientization," where oppressed people must first become aware of their condition before they can fight for change (Freire 114).

More than merely a song, *Jaga Jaga* serves as a rallying cry for the oppressed and a daring critique of Nigeria's administration. Eedris uses humor to mock the inconsistencies of a nation that professes to be developing while its people are suffering. His symbolism emphasizes the gravity of these battles, and his use of metaphor creates a striking image of a country in distress. Above all, *Jaga Jaga* is a song that calls for responsibility and challenges the structures that control people.

**Data Four: *One Leg Up* by Eedris Abdulkareem**

The song *One Leg Up* by Eedris Abdulkareem is a potent critique of societal inequality, corruption, and systemic exploitation in Nigeria. One of the country's most vocal musicians, Eedris has always used his music to expose the struggles of common people while holding the elite accountable for their greed and mismanagement. *One Leg Up* addresses the unequal distribution of power and wealth, highlighting how those in privileged positions continue to benefit while the masses remain disadvantaged. Through satire, metaphor, and symbolism, the song vividly depicts a country where success is frequently linked to corruption, manipulation, and favoritism rather than hard work and merit.

“Some people dey use one leg up

Dem dey carry our money waka

Poor man no fit shout

Big man dey chop belle full”

The song's main theme, the glaring disparity between the wealthy elite and the impoverished, is encapsulated in this passage. According to Eedris, there is an unequal distribution of power, with certain people ("some people") having an unfair advantage ("one leg up") and continuing to take advantage of the nation's riches while the poor are left powerless.

### Satire in *One Leg Up* by Eedris Abdulakareem

*One Leg Up*'s satire is one of its best features. Eedris exposes the hypocrisy of Nigeria's governing class, who claim to serve the people while enriching themselves, by using sarcasm and exaggeration. The satirical remark "some people dey use one leg up" is directed at elites and politicians who take advantage of the system for their own benefit. In Nigeria, "one leg up" refers to an unfair advantage, privilege, corruption, and nepotism, whereas in other contexts it would imply a struggle or imbalance. The line, "Dem dey carry our money waka," which satirically ridicules how governmental officials pilfer money without facing repercussions, furthers the satirical critique. The phrase "waka" (which means "walking aimlessly" in Pidgin English) suggests that these dishonest people snatch up national wealth as if it were their own. This is a reflection of the political climate in Nigeria, where corrupt officials frequently evade punishment while common people are subjected to severe punishments for very minor offenses. This form of satire aligns with the arguments made by scholars like Sola Olorunoyi, who discusses how Nigerian protest music often uses humor and irony to highlight serious political and economic issues (Olorunoyi 88). Eedris makes sure that his message reaches a wide range of people by making his critique both amusing and understandable, including market traders, college students, and policymakers.

### **Metaphor in *One Leg Up* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

Another important literary device in *One Leg Up* is metaphor, the most important of which being the song's title. *One leg up* refers to an inequitable system in which certain individuals consistently enjoy an edge over others due to their connections, riches, or power rather than their own merit. This reflects Nigeria's pervasive culture of corruption and favoritism, where those with money or political connections continue to advance while others are left behind.

The metaphor also applies to the imagery of food in the line "Big man dey chop belle full." In this line, "chop" (eat) stands for wealth and privilege, while "belle full" (full stomach) denotes excess and greed. The term contrasts with the hardships of the poor, who are unable to "shout" (speak out) because of their disadvantage. This metaphor reflects Karl Marx's theory of class struggle, where the ruling class (bourgeoisie) hoards resources while the working class (proletariat) remains oppressed (Marx 73).

Another strong metaphor is in "Poor man no fit shout," meaning that the lower class in Nigeria has been so economically and socially marginalized that they have lost their voice. Because common people are frequently disregarded in administration and policymaking, this issue is not only one of financial suffering but also political exclusion. According to Tejumola Olaniyan, music like Eedris's serves as a "counter-hegemonic discourse" that gives voice to the voiceless and challenges oppressive power structures (Ólaniyan 107).

### Symbolism in *One Leg Up* by Eedris Abdulkareem

*One Leg Up* is filled with symbolism, which serves to reinforce its themes of injustice and societal imbalance. The image of *one leg up* represents both economic inequality and the manipulation of opportunities; in a just society, success should be based on talent and hard work, but Eedris contends that corruption, nepotism, and dishonesty frequently determine progress in Nigeria. The disparity between the "big man" (elite) and the "poor man" (ordinary citizen) is another symbolic representation of inequality; while the elite enjoy luxury and indulgence, the common people struggle to survive, unable to protest or challenge the status quo. "Dem dey carry our money waka" refers to the reckless looting of public funds, where national wealth is mismanaged and diverted for personal use. This is similar to Fela Kuti's critique in *Suffering and Smiling*, where he highlights how Nigerians endure hardship while their leaders live extravagantly (Olorunyomi 92).

Eedris Abdulkareem's *One Leg Up* is a powerful indictment of Nigerian corruption, inequity, and partiality. Eedris exposes the hypocrisy of leaders who profess to serve the people while simultaneously enriching themselves through satire. His symbolism draws attention to the careless misuse of national resources, while his use of metaphor demonstrates the ingrained power disparities that continue to afflict the poor.

## CHAPTER THREE

### INSPIRING ACTIVITISM

#### 3.1 Analysis

##### **Data one: Mr. *Follow Follow* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

*Mr: Follow Follow*, a politically and socially charged song by Fela Anikulapo Kuti, attacks ignorance, mindless obedience, and the perils of blindly deferring to authority. The song, which was released in 1977 as a part of his album *Shuffering and Shmiling*, urges people to think for themselves instead of obediently following the directives and ideas of social, religious, and political organizations. Fela emphasizes the use of critical thinking in opposing oppression and fostering social change through the use of satire, metaphor, and symbolism.

Mr. Follow Follow, make you open eye, open ear, open mouth, open sense  
Make you dey look, make you dey think before you talk

If you no get sense, na you go die

The message of the song is established by these lyrics. Fela urges people to use their senses, exercise critical thought, and challenge authority in order to avoid the perils of mindlessly following others. The final sentence is a sobering reminder that ignorance and mindless obedience can result in disaster, and the word "open" is used often to highlight the importance of awareness.

### **Satire in *Mr. Follow Follow* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

A major theme of *Mr. Follow Follow* is satire, as Fela makes fun of people who mindlessly obey authority by using humor and sarcasm. The term "Mr. Follow Follow" itself is a sarcastic description of someone who lacks the capacity for autonomous thought and lets others control their opinions and behavior.

In a sarcastic tone, Fela sings:

If dem say make you go die, you go die

This exaggeration demonstrates the foolishness of unquestioning loyalty. It illustrates how people, out of fear or ignorance, obey dictatorial leaders even when it goes against their own interests. In addition to criticizing the followers, Fela's satire also attacks the establishments that control people into submission, including governments and religious institutions. Olorunyomi argues that Fela's satire is a tool of resistance, making his critiques accessible to the common people while subtly disarming oppressive authorities (Olorunyomi 81). Even people without a formal education can understand his message and see the risks of blind obedience thanks to this technique. In the past, when Nigeria was ruled by the military and opposition was repressed and people were expected to submit without question, Fela's criticism was particularly pertinent. His song exposed the absurdity of blindly trusting those in authority, which inspired opposition.

### **Metaphor in *Mr. Follow Follow* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

Fela masterfully uses metaphor to convey his message about critical thinking and self-awareness. The term "Follow Follow" is not just a name; it is a metaphor for a society that blindly follows authority without questioning its motives. He urges:

Make you open eye, open ear, open mouth, open sense

In this context, "opening" denotes understanding, enlightenment, and resistance to coercion. He is advocating for political and intellectual consciousness rather than just urging people to physically open their eyes. This aligns with Paulo Freire's theory of "conscientization," where true liberation occurs when individuals recognize their oppression and act to change their circumstances (Freire 112). Another metaphor appears in:

If you no get sense, na you go die

Here, Fela equates ignorance with death. He suggests that a lack of awareness can lead to destruction, whether through economic hardship, political oppression, or social injustice. This metaphor aligns with Fanon's argument that the oppressed, if they fail to recognize their condition, become complicit in their own suffering (Fanon 135).

### **Symbolism in *Mr. Follow Follow* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

Fela's message is strongly reinforced by symbolism. The expression *Follow Follow* represents Nigeria's culture of mindless obedience, when people submit to oppression rather than challenging their rulers. The phrase "open eye" is another important emblem. Many African civilizations view sight as a sign of knowledge and wisdom. Fela symbolically asks for political and social awakening by asking people to "open their eyes." This is similar to the concept of "seeing the light" in many resistance movements, where vision represents truth and enlightenment (Soyinka 187).

The Afrobeat beat of the song has metaphorical meaning as well. The cycle of blind obedience, in which people consistently submit to authority without question, is symbolized by the repeated beat. The upbeat instrumentation of the song, however, represents resistance and exhorts listeners to break out from this habit. In addition to criticizing mindless obedience, Mr. *Follow Follow* is a potent call to action, imploring people to take responsibility for their own freedom. Fela pushes the populace to actively oppose injustice and reject passive acceptance, going beyond simply highlighting the shortcomings of leadership. The song emphasizes the value of individual thought and exhorts listeners to challenge authority rather than mindlessly obey.

The song's promotion of critical consciousness is one of the main ways it motivates activism. Deference to authority has become inherent in many African civilizations, making it challenging for individuals in positions of power. By highlighting the perils of blind obedience and encouraging listeners to consider their decisions and the information they take in, Fela challenges this convention. This aligns with Wole Soyinka's assertion that real revolution

begins when individuals recognize their own complicity in their oppression and take action to change it (Soyinka 98).

According to Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, those in power maintain dominance not just through coercion but by shaping societal beliefs (Gramsci 212). Through his music, Fela challenges this authority and uses it as a tool of resistance to raise people's awareness. His songs work as activism anthems, motivating listeners to actively pursue change and challenge the narratives that are imposed by people in authority. Mr. *Follow Follow* ultimately encourages unity among individuals opposing oppression. Fela helps oppressed groups feel united by calling blind obedience a shared enemy and encouraging them to unite in the fight for freedom and justice. Music may serve as a catalyst for social change and action, as evidenced by the way his message continues to inspire protests and political movements around the world.

A classic indictment of mindless obedience and the systems that uphold tyranny, Mr. *Follow Follow* is ageless. Fela uses satire to make fun of people who blindly obey authority. His metaphor highlights the importance of awareness and critical thought by equating ignorance with death. His symbolism positions knowledge as a vital instrument for emancipation and emphasizes the need of intellectual freedom. Mr. *Follow Follow* is more than just a song; it's a plea for social change. It pushes people to question their leaders, escape mental enslavement, and take an active role in determining their own destiny.

**Data Two: *Coffin for Head of State* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

*Coffin for Head of State* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti is a bold indictment of Nigeria's religious and political hypocrisy. Fela's personal experiences with state persecution, including as the violent military attack on his Kalakuta Republic in 1977, in which his mother was thrown from a window and ultimately killed, are reflected in the song, which was released in 1980. The title of the song alludes to a real protest in which Fela and his supporters, denouncing the brutality of the regime, carried a symbolic coffin to the home of General Olusegun Obasanjo, the military leader of Nigeria at the time. *Coffin for Head of State* serves as both a historical record and a plea for social change by using humor, metaphor, and symbolism to expose the oppression and corruption ingrained in the nation's leadership.

I waka many places, I see my people dem dey suffer

I waka many places, police station them be hospital

I waka many places, I see my people demn dey cry

I carry the coffin, I waka go government house

The song's tone is established by these lyrics, which depict the misery of common Nigerians living under a repressive government. "Carrying the coffin" is a potent metaphor for making people in positions of authority answerable for their deeds.

### **Satire in *Coffin for Head of State* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

Fela exposes the inconsistencies and hypocrisy of Nigeria's ruling class through scathing satire. The song emphasizes the government's claims of effective governance while also highlighting the people's misery. One of the most striking satirical lines is:

Him go dey cause trouble, him go dey cause confusion

Him go dey steal money, him go dey carry our money go

Here, Fela mockingly portrays the usual conduct of Nigerian politicians, who prosper on corruption, dishonesty, and deceit rather than serving the people. The overused phrase "him go dey" replicates the typical behavior of dishonest leaders, demonstrating how pervasive corruption is in the system. This technique aligns with Olorunyomi's argument that Fela's music employs humor and irony to highlight political dysfunction while remaining engaging for his audience (Olorunyomi 92).

Fela also satirizes the role of religious leaders who align themselves with corrupt politicians, using faith as a tool for oppression rather than liberation. He sings:

Religion na politics, religion na business

This line demonstrates how religion has evolved into a tool for profit rather than a moral compass. The song criticizes religious authorities that support corrupt regimes but do not fight for justice. This aligns with Frantz Fanon's assertion that colonial and post-colonial rulers often use religion to pacify the masses, preventing them from resisting oppression (Fanon 145).

### **Metaphor in *Coffin for Head of State* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

The song uses the act of transporting a coffin to the government house as one of its most stunning metaphors. In Nigeria, this act represents the demise of morals, justice, and leadership. The casket implies that the nation has been metaphorically slaughtered by the ruling class, which is a clear charge. In order to further illustrate this metaphor, Fela connects it to his own loss-his mother, a well-known political activist named Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, passed away following an attack by soldiers during the 1977 raid. Therefore, the coffin becomes a deeply personal protest against the cruelty of the regime as well as a sign of state failure. As Olaniyan argues, Fela often infused his music with personal and collective struggles, making his art both intimate and universally relevant (Olaniyan 107).

Another metaphor in the song is found in:

Police station them be hospital

This metaphor draws attention to the institutional failure in Nigeria. Police stations have evolved into places of cruelty where victims of state violence are taken rather than offenders, rather than being hubs of justice and order. This imagery is reminiscent of Wole Soyinka's description of African states where institutions designed to protect the people end up becoming instruments of oppression (Soyinka 98).

### **Symbolism in *Coffin for Head of State* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

*Coffin for Head of State* is filled with symbolism that strengthens its potent indictment of religious hypocrisy and administration. The coffin itself, which symbolizes the devastation

and deterioration of the Nigerian state under corrupt rule, is the most visible symbol. In order to show their disapproval of an unfair system, Fela and his supporters physically carried a coffin to the government house, where they gave those in authority a symbolic death sentence.

Another significant symbol is the act of walking, emphasized in:

I waka many places, I see my people dem dey suffer

Walking, or waka in Nigerian Pidgin, symbolizes witnessing and experiencing the realities of life under oppression. Fela emphasizes that the country's issues are structural rather than isolated by claiming to have traveled widely and witnessed misery everywhere. His purposeful use of repetition emphasizes how pervasive Nigeria's problems are by making the suffering seem unavoidable. The song's references to religion also have deep symbolic value. Fela criticizes how the state has appropriated religious organizations to appease the populace, transforming faith into a tool of oppression rather than empowerment. This critique aligns with Karl Marx's famous assertion that "religion is the opium of the people," a tool used to keep the masses docile in the face of oppression (Marx 73).

*Coffin for Head of State*, in addition to its artistic excellence, is a daring call to action, imploring Nigerians to actively confront injustice and reject complacency. Fela uses his music as an instrument of resistance by using bold criticism and strong imagery to motivate his listeners to demand systemic change and hold corrupt authorities accountable. By exposing religious and governmental corruption, the song serves as a catalyst for activism. By criticizing both organizations, Fela dispels the myth that spirituality and leadership are

infallible. Instead, he compels listeners to consider the intentions of those in authority and identify instances of manipulation. This message aligns with Paulo Freire's theory of "conscientization," which emphasizes that real social transformation begins with

awareness and critical thinking (Freire 112). Fela empowers people to fight injustice instead of accepting it as inevitable by urging them to see through deceit.

*Coffin for Head of official* also serves as a historical document of official brutality and persecution, documenting facts that the government could try to conceal. Fela's music acts as a counterbalance in a society where official narratives are frequently twisted to benefit those in authority, making sure that future generations are aware of the truth about their past. Chinua Achebe famously stated, "Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always have glorified the hunter" (Achebe 110). *Coffin for Head of State* continues to inspire activism by calling on people to reject passivity, challenge authority, and take action against injustice, demonstrating that music is more than just entertainment and can be a potent tool in the struggle for justice and social change. Fela's music is the voice of the oppressed, ensuring that their stories are heard and remembered.

One of Fela Anikulapo Kuti's most politically charged songs is *Coffin for Head of State*, which exposes injustice, hypocrisy, and corruption through satire, metaphor, and symbolism. He makes fun of the inconsistencies between faith and leadership with scathing cynicism. His symbols emphasize the gravity of state violence and the necessity of resistance, while his

metaphors graphically portray the breakdown of Nigerian institutions. *Coffin for Head of State* is more than just a song; it's a historical document, a political declaration, and a plea for social change. Fela continues to motivate younger generations to oppose injustice and hold their leaders accountable by questioning authority and promoting critical thinking.

### **Data Three: *Koleyewon* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

*Koleyewon* by Eedris Abdulkarcem is a fearless and combative song that criticizes police violence, corruption, and the suffering of common Nigerians under an unfair system. *Koleyewon*, the song's title, which roughly translates to "They won't understand" in Yoruba, captures the gap between the governing class and the hardships of the people. *Koleyewon* uses comedy, metaphor, and symbolism to question the status quo, raise awareness, and call for social change, much like many of Eedris's politically charged songs.

Dem go see us finish, dem go come dey laugh

Police go dey collect money for junction

Dem dey vex if you no drop something

Dem no know say we dey suffer for this country

These lines highlight Nigeria's pervasive problems with exploitation and corruption, especially in the country's law enforcement. Eedris depicts a nation in which the powerful abuse their powers while the people fight for their lives.

### **Satire in *Koleyewon* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

One of the most powerful aspects of *Koleyewon* is satire, as Eedris ridicules a system in which the police, who are meant to defend the people, end up acting as oppressors themselves by using irony and comedy to draw attention to the contradictions in Nigerian culture.

Police go dey collect money for junction

The well-known practice of police extortion in Nigeria is revealed in this line. Officers frequently use threats of violence to demand money from drivers and pedestrians rather than upholding the law. By portraying this as a commonplace occurrence, Eedris draws attention to the normalization of corruption. This aligns with the arguments of scholars like Olorunyomi, who states that Nigerian protest music frequently employs satire to ridicule leadership and awaken political consciousness (Olorunyomi 83).

Another satirical moment comes in:

Dem dey vex if you no drop something

Eedris mockingly presents bribery as a routine transaction, pointing out that corruption is so pervasive that it is considered abnormal to refrain from engaging in it. This humorous presentation compels viewers to consider the extent to which corruption has permeated Nigerian culture.

### **Metaphor in *Koleyewon* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

Eedris makes significant use of metaphor to highlight his message of inequity and oppression. The distance between the suffering of the masses and those in positions of authority is

symbolized by the title *Koleyewon* itself. Eedris implies that the ruling class is either consciously ignorant of or utterly unconcerned with the plight of common Nigerians by saying that the elite "won't understand."

Another powerful metaphor appears in:

Dem go see us finish, dem go come dey laugh

This Nigerian Pidgin expression, "see us finish," indicates that people no longer respect someone because of their ongoing misery or powerlessness. Eedris uses it to explain how the elite and government see common Nigerians as weak and unworthy of respect. This metaphor aligns with Frantz Fanon's argument that colonial and post-colonial oppression dehumanizes the people to the point where their suffering is no longer shocking (Fanon 135).

Additionally, the phrase "dem dey vex if you no drop something" serves as a metaphor for the coercive power structures in Nigerian society. It suggests that corruption is not just an individual act but an institutionalized expectation. This mirrors Karl Marx's theory that oppression is maintained through economic and political systems designed to benefit the elite at the expense of the working class (Marx 73).

### **Symbolism in *Koleyewon* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

*Koleyewon*'s themes of injustice, corruption, and resistance are reinforced by symbolism. The police are one of the song's most potent symbols; stand in for Nigeria's larger exploitation system. In Eedris's story, the police—who ought to represent law and order—become a metaphor for institutionalized corruption and officially sanctioned

injustice. The practice of "collecting money for junction" serves as a metaphor for the extent to which corruption has permeated even the lowest echelons of government. It's a bigger issue when organizations who are supposed to protect people instead take advantage of them. This aligns with Wole Soyinka's argument that African resistance movements are often rooted in symbolic and cultural expressions that reinforce collective memory (Soyinka 187).

The song's recurrent topic of pain serves as another symbolic component. Eedris perpetuates the notion that suffering has come to define the Nigerian people by reiterating passages about tyranny and economic hardship. The expression "Dem no know say we dey suffer for this country" represents the elite's disconnection from the realities of the general populace. This critique echoes Tejumola Olaniyan's analysis of African protest music as a vehicle for exposing the disconnect between leaders and citizens (Olaniyan 102).

A strong call to action, *Koleyewon* is more than just a song; it exhorts Nigerians to rebel against injustice, inequity, and corruption. Eedris Abdulkareem urges listeners to speak up against social and political injustice by bringing attention to the hardships faced by regular people. Raising awareness is among the song's most important forms of activism inspiration. Even though corruption is a daily occurrence for many Nigerians, Eedris expresses these annoyances in a way that encourages listeners to address rather than overlook them. This approach aligns with Paulo Freire's concept of "conscientization," which emphasizes that real social change begins when people become fully aware of their oppression and develop the

critical consciousness needed to fight against it (Freire 112). Eedris inspires people to take an active role in the fight for justice by using music to expose these unpleasant truths.

Eedris Abdulkareem's *Koleyewon* is a fearless and unvarnished indictment of Nigerian police violence, inequity, and corruption. Eedris uses comedy to highlight the inconsistencies of a nation whose security personnel oppress rather than defend its citizens. His symbolism supports the notion that injustice and corruption have evolved into systemic issues, while his use of metaphor draws attention to the stark contrast between the privileged and the suffering masses. *Koleyewon* is more than just a song; it's a historical document, a political declaration, and a plea for social change. Eedris makes sure that his music will continue to motivate future generations to oppose tyranny and demand accountability from their leaders by promoting awareness, solidarity, and resistance.

#### **Data Four: *Clean Up Naija* by Eedris Abdulkareem**

*Clean Up Naija*, a fervent protest song by Eedris Abdulkareem, demands reform in Nigeria. The song criticizes leadership's inability to solve the problems of common Nigerians, corruption, and poor governance. *Clean Up Naija*, the term itself, is a challenge and a demand, calling on Nigerians to free their nation of social inequities, corrupt politicians, and economic suffering. Eedris depicts Nigeria's hardships in a somber yet realistic manner through humor, metaphor, and symbolism, while expressing optimism that change is achievable if the populace banded together and took action.

Wetin be dis? Everything scatter scatter

Money no dey, job no dey, people dey suffer

Big man dey flex, poor man dey beg

Na who go clean up Naija?

Eedris emphasizes economic hardship, inequality, and the growing gap between the rich and the poor. The final line, "Na who go clean up Naija?" is a direct challenge to both leaders and citizens, calling for collective action against corruption. This line encapsulates the frustration of many Nigerians who feel abandoned by their leaders.

### **Satire in *Clean Up Naija* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

Satire is one of the most effective tools Eedris employs in *Clean Up Naija* to expose the contradictions in Nigerian society. He ridicules the government's incompetence by presenting a country in disarray while its leaders continue to live in luxury:

Big man dey flex, poor man dey beg

The ruling class in Nigeria, who live lavish lifestyles while the others fight for their lives, is parodied in this sentence. The irony is obvious: the people who are supposed to be serving them are instead taking advantage of them. This kind of critique aligns with the arguments of scholars like Sola Olorunyomi, who discusses how Nigerian protest music frequently uses humor and

exaggeration to expose the failures of leadership (Olorunyomi 92). Another satirical element is found in:

Government go talk say everything dey okay

In line with the themes in Fela Kuti's *Shuffering and Shmiling*, where he ridicules how Nigerians suffer while grinning as if nothing is wrong, Eedris uses satire to make *Clean Up Naija* both a critique and a wake-up call, calling on Nigerians to see through the lies and demand accountability. This sarcastic statement makes fun of the fact that Nigerian politicians frequently deny the country's problems, even when they are obvious to all.

### **Metaphor in *Clean Up Naija* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

The most notable metaphor used by Eedris to highlight the seriousness of Nigeria's issues and the necessity for reform is the idea of "cleaning up" the nation; the phrase "Clean Up Naija" does not literally mean cleaning but rather denotes the elimination of societal deterioration, corruption, and poor governance. This aligns with Paulo Freire's concept of "conscientization," which argues that change begins when people recognize the need for transformation (Freire 112).

Another metaphor appears in:

Everything scatter scatter

Like Eedris's previous song, *Jaga Jaga*, which also used disorder as a metaphor for Nigeria's problems, the choice of "scatter scatter," which means "completely disorganized" in Nigerian Pidgin,

evokes a sense of disorder and symbolizes the chaos and instability in Nigeria, a country where nothing works properly-poor infrastructure, unemployment, crime, and a failing economy.

Additionally, systemic inequality is metaphorically represented by the contrast between "big man dey flex" and "poor man dey beg." While the common people, portrayed by "poor men," are left to struggle for survival, the wealthy, represented by "big men," enjoy unending prosperity. This reflects Karl Marx's theory of class struggle, where the ruling class maintains its power by keeping the lower class in a state of economic dependence (Marx 73).

### **Symbolism in *Clean Up Naija* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

The song's themes of resistance and transformation are reinforced by symbolism; the act of "cleaning up" represents the struggle against injustice and corruption; it is a call to action, urging citizens to take charge of changing the system instead of waiting for corrupt leaders to do so; the imagery of "scatter scatter" represents the disintegration of national institutions; Eedris is not merely discussing roads or electricity; he is highlighting the failure of governance at all levels. This symbolism aligns with Chinua Achebe's depiction of post-colonial instability in *Things Fall Apart*, where he describes the collapse of traditional structures under external and internal pressures (Achebe 110).

In addition to criticizing injustice and corruption, *Clean Up Naija* is a potent call to action that gives listeners confidence by reminding them that they can make a difference."Na who go clean up

Naija?" is not merely a rhetorical question; it is a clear call to action for all Nigerians, asking people to assume accountability instead of depending on dishonest politicians to address the country's issues. Additionally, *Clean Up Naija* forces responsibility

in ways that traditional media frequently cannot by directly challenging political leaders to consider their mistakes. History has shown that music has the power to influence political discourse, spark social movements, and compel governments into reform, despite the fact that some people may disregard it as amusement. Eedris makes sure that his song is more than simply a criticism by transforming his annoyance into a rallying cry for activism, encouraging Nigerians to speak out, take a position, and demand a better future.

Eedris Abdulkareem's *Clean Up Naija* is a strong indictment of Nigeria's governmental failure, economic suffering, and corruption. Eedris exposes the hypocrisy of leaders who profess to serve the people while simultaneously enriching themselves through satire. His symbolism emphasizes the significance of national transformation, while his use of metaphor draws attention to the pressing need for reform. *Clean Up Naija* is more than simply a song; it's a historical document, a political declaration, and a rallying cry for action. Eedris reminds Nigerians that they have the ability to demand accountability and create a better future by bringing the truth to light and fostering resistance. His message is still relevant today since millions of people are still impacted by the problems he sings about.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## CONFRONTING POWER STRUCTURES

### 4.1 Analysis

#### **Data One: *Noise for Vendor Mouth* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

*Noise for Vendor Mouth* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti is a daring indictment of media misinformation, political manipulation, and social complacency. The song is a cautionary tale about the impact of dishonest leadership and the manipulation of information to further the agendas of those in positions of authority. *Noise for Vendor Mouth*, which was released during a time of political unrest in Nigeria, is a call to oppose oppression and false information in addition to being a critique of the media. Fela promotes activism and the challenge of power structures by destroying the systems that keep the general public ignorant through satire, metaphor, and symbolism.

Wetin you read for newspaper?

E be true? E be lie?

E be government wahala?

Or dem dey use us play?

The song's tone is established right away by these lines, which cast doubt on the media's objectivity and influence on public opinion. Rather of taking government propaganda at face value, Fela urges his audience to evaluate the material they are exposed to critically.

### **Satire in *Noise for Vendor Mouth* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

One of Noise for Vendor Mouth's most potent themes is satire, as Fela parodies the credulity of the general public and the dishonest strategies of the powerful. He exposes how people in positions of authority create narratives to hold onto power by mocking the way newspapers and the media are used to sway public opinion.

E be government wahala?

Or dem dey use us play?

Here, Fela sarcastically suggests that politics is nothing more than a game for the elite, where the masses are mere pawns. This kind of satire aligns with the arguments of Sola Olorunyomi, who highlights how Nigerian protest music often uses humor to mask deep-seated critiques of the state (Olorunyomi 92). Fela makes sure that even the most politically ignorant audience may understand his message by presenting weighty subjects in a lighthearted manner. Fela also satirizes the passive acceptance of media narratives by the people:

Wetin you read for newspaper?

E be true? E be lie?

Despite several instances of false information, society's propensity to believe the news without checking the facts is ridiculed by this rhetorical question. In a time when "fake news" and state-run media continue to influence public opinion, this criticism is still

pertinent today. Fela challenges his audience to reevaluate their dependence on official narratives by utilizing satire to highlight the inconsistencies in media and governance.

### **Metaphor in *Noise for Vendor Mouth* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

Fela's use of metaphor in the song strengthens his argument about misinformation and control. One of the most significant metaphors in the song is “Vendor Mouth,” which represents the media as a mouthpiece for the government rather than a source of objective truth.

#### Noise for Vendor Mouth

The word itself is figurative, suggesting that what vendors (the media) say is just noise, meaningless chitchat that diverts attention from the actual problems that people face. This aligns with Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, where ruling elites maintain control not just through force but by shaping ideological narratives that the masses consume (Gramsci 212).

Another metaphor appears in:

#### Newspaper fit make you believe anything

Here, Fela suggests that the media can fabricate realities and influence perception, much like a magician who deceives an audience with illusions. This mirrors Frantz Fanon's argument in *The Wretched of the Earth*, where he discusses how colonial powers used propaganda to control and pacify the colonized population (Fanon 135). Fela cautions against blindly accepting information by equating media influence with delusion.

## **Symbolism in *Noise for Vendor Mouth* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

*Noise for Vendor Mouth* relies heavily on symbolism to support its criticism of media manipulation. The newspaper itself is one of the song's most striking symbols; it stands for both disinformation and the censorship of public opinion.

Wetin you read for newspaper?

Newspapers and radio broadcasts have long been used as propaganda tools in Nigeria, as in many other countries, and by emphasizing this, Fela represents the media as a tool of oppression rather than enlightenment. This repeated line highlights the importance of the media in forming opinions.

Fela regularly alludes to "*Wa wahala*" (trouble), another potent image in the song. The word "wahala" in Nigerian Pidgin describes issues, conflicts, or crises. Fela means that those in positions of authority utilize crises, both real and contrived, as diversion from the actual problems afflicting society by frequently raising the question of whether media stories are "government wahala.". This aligns with Noam Chomsky's concept of "manufacturing consent," where governments use crises to justify authoritarian control (Chomsky 97). Lastly, the word "noise" itself has symbolic meaning. It stands for the deluge of false information that the public is exposed to. By referring to it as "noise," Fela implies that a large portion of the news is intended to mislead rather than to educate. Since media manipulation occurs all around the world, this criticism is not limited to Nigeria.

More than just a criticism of the media, *Noise for Vendor Mouth* is a call to action, imploring listeners to battle the power systems that govern information and dispel false information. Fela challenges people to question the narratives they are exposed to by using his music as a platform to reveal the strategies of those in positions of authority. Questioning authority is one of the main ways the song encourages resistance. Trust in leadership, whether it be media-based, religious, or political, is engrained in many African civilizations. Fela upends the idea that leaders should be blindly obeyed by questioning this naive confidence. This is in agreement with Paulo Freire's belief that true liberation begins when individuals develop critical consciousness (Freire 112).

Additionally, *Noise for Vendor Mouth* highlights how crucial awareness is in the struggle against tyranny. Fela's call for people to investigate the veracity of media reports is part of a larger message about resisting all types of manipulation, be it cultural, political, or economic. This aligns with the arguments of Wole Soyinka, who asserts that African resistance movements often begin with the rejection of false narratives imposed by those in power (Soyinka 187).

A bold indictment of official propaganda and media manipulation, *Noise for Vendor Mouth* uses symbolism, metaphor, and satire to undermine the systems that shape public opinion. Fela exposes the perils of false information, makes fun of the public's credulity, and advocates for a more critical approach to media consumption.

## **Data Two: *Overtake Don Overtake Overtake* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

Fela Anikulapo Kuti's *Overtake Don Overtake Overtake* is a deeply political song that critiques corruption, power struggles, and the oppressive nature of the Nigerian ruling class. Through his signature blend of Afrobeat and sharp social commentary, Fela exposes the contradictions of the Nigerian political system and its leaders. The song title itself, *Overtake Don Overtake Overtake*, suggests a cycle of deceit where one corrupt regime is replaced by another, ultimately leading to no real progress. In this powerful composition, Fela employs satire, metaphor, and symbolism to question the legitimacy of leadership and to encourage societal awakening and resistance against oppression

Overtake don overtake overtake

Na de same old politicians

Dem go promise, dem go fail

Poor man still dey suffer

These lines make clear how persistent corruption is in Nigeria. Fela criticizes the fact that while political leaders change, the lot of the people doesn't. *Overtake don overtake overtake* highlights the power cycle in which a corrupt leader is simply replaced by another through the use of repetition.

## **Satire in *Overtake Don Overtake Overtake* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

Satire is central to Fela's critique of Nigerian leadership. He mocks politicians who promise change but continue to enrich themselves while the masses remain in poverty. The phrase:

Dem go promise, dem go fail

This is a clear barb at Nigerian politicians who make lofty promises during campaigns but fall short of them after becoming office. African protest music frequently employs this type of satire because it makes the message approachable while highlighting the ridiculousness of corrupt authority. Fela also parodies the way the ruling class deceives the populace into thinking that things have changed when, in fact, the same cycle of corruption continues. His amusing use of the phrase *Overtake Don Overtake Overtake* suggests that even when there is a change in leadership, it is only the replacement of one corrupt clique by another. This corroborates the observations of Tejumola Olaniyan, who argues that Fela used satire as a tool to expose power dynamics and ridicule the contradictions of African leadership (Olaniyan 105).

### **Metaphor in *Overtake Don Overtake Overtake* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

Fela's criticism of the political system is reinforced by his use of metaphor. An extended metaphor for political shifts that seem to bring about progress but ultimately strengthen preexisting oppressive structures is *Overtake Don Overtake Overtake*. The word "overtake" implies motion and advancement, but by using it repeatedly, Fela dispels the myth that one dishonest leader merely replaces another, resulting in stagnation as opposed to change. Another powerful metaphor appears in:

Poor man still dey suffer

Here, "poor man" is not just an individual but a representation of the Nigerian masses who remain trapped in economic hardship despite changes in government. This mirrors Karl Marx's theory of class struggle, where the ruling class exploits the working class to maintain its dominance (Marx 78).

Additionally, the phrase same old politicians metaphorically represent a rigged system where leadership changes are superficial. This reflects Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, which suggests that those in power maintain their dominance not just through force but by shaping societal beliefs and expectations (Gramsci 212). Fela compels his audience to acknowledge the necessity of a fundamental change in governance by depicting leadership as a continuous cycle of corruption.

### **Symbolism in *Overtake Don Overtake Overtake* by Fela Anikulapo Kuti**

Another important literary device in the song is symbolism. The title itself is a symbol of deceit and false progress; the word "overtake" usually connotes forward movement, but Fela subverts this expectation by demonstrating that the change is merely an illusion; and the idea of "the same old politicians," which symbolizes the larger problem of political recycling in Nigeria, is another powerful symbol. Leaders who claim to bring about change frequently come from the same corrupt system, making real change impossible. This aligns with Chinua Achebe's argument that Africa's biggest problem is leadership failure (Achebe 51).

Furthermore, Fela's reference to the "poor man" as a perpetual victim of political deceit represents the misery of the lower classes in a society dominated by capitalism. Politicians continue to prosper

as the impoverished are exploited despite frequent promises of a brighter future. This connects to Frantz Fanon's critique of post-colonial African elites, who he argues replaced colonial rulers but adopted their oppressive tactics (Fanon 147).

*Overtake Don Overtake Overtake* is a call to challenge and overthrow oppressive power structures, not only a song. The public is challenged by Fela's songs to see past the appearance of progress and acknowledge the ways in which political elites deceive them. The song's promotion of political consciousness is one way it motivates activism. Many Nigerians give up on politics because they think reform is impossible and are fed up with corruption. Fela exposes the recurring cycle of exploitation in order to directly address this indifference. This aligns with Paulo Freire's concept of "conscientization," where social awareness is the first step toward liberation (Freire 112).

Additionally, the song encourages rebellion by questioning the legitimacy of corrupt regimes. By emphasizing that new leaders frequently don't differ from their predecessors, Fela exhorts the populace to demand real accountability instead of settling for hollow assurances. In the past, his music has been associated with activism, igniting campaigns against injustice and dictatorship in Nigeria and elsewhere.

*Overtake Don Overtake Overtake* by Fela Kuti is a stinging indictment of Nigeria's recurring cycle of corruption and political deceit. He exposes the hypocrisy of politicians who make empty promises of reform through comedy. His symbolism supports the notion that real transformation necessitates more than a change in leadership, while his use of metaphor draws attention to the appearance of progress.

### **Data Three: *Letter to Mr. President* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

*Letter to Mr. President* by Eedris Abdulakareem is a bold, direct, and unreserved critique of Nigerian leadership. The song is an open letter to the Nigerian president, holding him responsible for the suffering of the masses. Via a fusion of hip-hop and Afrobeat, Eedris draws attention to police brutality, economic mismanagement, corruption, and the struggles of the average person. Packed with metaphor, symbolism, and satire, the song is a potent piece of protest music that aims to challenge established power structures and inspire people to demand change.

Mr. President, wetin we do you?

Why your people still dey suffer?

We no get light, we no get water

Our youths dey die for street, dem dey waste for prison

The tone of the song is established right away with these lines, which make a direct and urgent plea to the Nigerian leader. Eedris presents his lyrics as a personal speech, making the people's suffering seem immediate and inevitable.

### **Satire in *Letter to Mr. President* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

One of the most effective strategies Eedris employs in this song to highlight the hypocrisy of Nigerian leaders is satire. Eedris uses irony to draw attention to the stark contrast between the

problems of common people and those in power by speaking directly to the president as though he were a friend or a concerned citizen.

Mr. President, wetin we do you?

Eedris continues the tradition of Fela Kuti in *Zombie*, who ridicules blind obedience to authority, by using humor and exaggerated questioning to highlight the absurdity of Nigeria's political landscape. Another instance of satire occurs when Eedris emphasizes how basic amenities, like light and water, are still inaccessible despite decades of independence. This question is laced with sarcasm because it implies that the people's suffering is so severe that it appears to be a purposeful act of punishment by the government:

We no get light, we no get water

Eedris emphasizes how deeply embedded these problems have become in Nigerian society by articulating these difficulties in a straightforward, even informal manner. This aligns with Sola Olorunyomi's argument that Nigerian protest music often employs satire to make harsh political critiques more digestible and relatable (Olorunyomi 88).

**Metaphor in *Letter to Mr. President* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

The title of the song itself is figurative, signifying the artist's endeavor to challenge authority on behalf of the silent masses. Similar to how people draft official petitions to hold their leaders accountable, the notion of writing a "letter" to the president implies that Eedris is bringing him down to earth.

Our youths dey die for street, dem dey waste for prison

The word "waste" symbolizes the wasted potential of Nigerian youth, many of whom are victims of crime, unemployment, and police violence; it suggests that young lives are being abandoned by a system that does not offer them options. This mirrors Karl Marx's theory of class struggle, where the working class is systematically oppressed and kept in poverty while the ruling elite enjoys unchecked privileges (Marx 78).

Another strong metaphor appears in:

We no see food chop, yet politicians dey flex

Here, "chop" (meaning "eat") stands for riches and economic prosperity, and the metaphor of politicians "eating" the country's wealth furthers the idea of economic inequality and exploitation, which is a common motif in Nigerian protest music, while regular Nigerians fight for their lives.

**Symbolism in *Letter to Mr. President* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

*Letter to Mr. President* relies heavily on symbolism to reaffirm its themes of resistance and injustice. Instead of referring to a specific person, the term "Mr. President" itself is a representation of Nigerian leadership in general. The president is used by Eedris as a metaphor for all dishonest leaders who have not succeeded in bettering the lot of their constituents.

**We no see light, we no see water**

Water and light stand for essentials that every responsible government must supply. Their exclusion from the song symbolizes how the government has failed to provide for the basic requirements of its people. This echoes Frantz Fanon's argument in *The Wretched of the Earth*, where he discusses how post-colonial African leaders often neglect the people in favor of maintaining their own power (Fanon 132).

The song also uses the image of Nigerian youths rotting in prison and dying on the streets as a potent symbol. This is a metaphor for the larger problem of systematic oppression, in which the carelessness of the government traps the younger generation in a cycle of crime, incarceration, and death. Additionally, Nigeria's legal system is criticized in the article for disproportionately punishing the poor while shielding corrupt elites from punishment.

*Letter to Mr. President* is more than just a song; it is a direct act of defiance against corrupt leadership. By candidly discussing government failures, Eedris inspires common people to confront those in authority and demand accountability. The song also fosters political consciousness, which is one way it encourages activism. Many Nigerians have become indifferent to corruption, considering it an unavoidable aspect of life. By bringing these issues to light in a straightforward

and relatable way, Eedris forces his audience to face the truth of their circumstances. This aligns with Paulo Freire's concept of "conscientization," where oppressed people must first recognize their condition before they can take steps toward liberation (Freire 112).

The song exposes politicians' hypocrisy and deceit, which further inspires resistance. While the majority struggle, many leaders live in luxury and pose as servants of the people. Through pointing out these inconsistencies, Eedris provides his audience with the vocabulary to more successfully question and critique the government. This aligns with Noam Chomsky's concept of "manufacturing consent," where those in power manipulate public perception to maintain control (Chomsky 97).

Eedris Abdulakareem's *Letter to Mr. President* is a bold critique of Nigerian government that reveals systematic oppression, inequality, and corruption using comedy, metaphor, and symbolism. The song acts as a call to action for political awareness and accountability because of its candid and unvarnished criticism.

#### **Data Four: *Country Hard* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

Eedris Abdulakareem's *Country Hard* is a potent protest song that depicts the struggles of the average Nigerian in the face of social inequality, economic hardship, and corruption. It is a pressing call to action that emphasizes how the government's shortcomings continue to exacerbate the lives of common people. Eedris uses metaphor, symbolism, and satire to paint a realistic but grim picture of Nigerian reality, imploring listeners to acknowledge these injustices and work toward societal change.

Country hard, we no fit chop

Government no send, dem no dey stop

Police dey shoot, poor man dey die

Rich man dey laugh, dem dey high

Eedris Abdulakareem's *Country Hard* is a potent protest song that depicts the struggles of the average Nigerian in the face of social inequality, economic hardship, and corruption. It is a pressing call to action that emphasizes how the government's shortcomings continue to exacerbate the lives of common people. Eedris uses metaphor, symbolism, and satire to paint a realistic but grim picture of Nigerian reality, imploring listeners to acknowledge these injustices and work toward societal change.

### **Satire in *Country Hard* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

Satire is one of Eedris's strongest tools in *Country Hard*, as he mocks the government's incompetence and its inability to address the suffering of the people. The line:

Government no send, dem no dey stop

Nigerian officials who are supposed to serve their people but show little concern for their plight are mockingly criticized in this line. This is consistent with the history of African protest music, which

frequently employs comedy to soften the blow of harsh political criticism. This strategy is also used in Fela Kuti's *Zombie*; in which he parodies military submission to repressive governments.

Eedris also uses irony to expose the broken justice system:

Police dey shoot, poor man dey die

Law enforcement, which is supposed to protect civilians, instead turns against them, disproportionately targeting the poor, as this ironic statement highlights. As evidenced by campaigns like #EndSARS, in which young Nigerians demonstrated against police brutality and extrajudicial murders, police brutality is still a significant problem in Nigeria. This irony reflects Noam Chomsky's theory that state power often acts in its own interest rather than serving the people (Chomsky 93). Another moment of satire appears when Eedris highlights the indifference of the wealthy elite:

Rich man dey laugh, dem dey high

This line suggests that while the poor are struggling to survive, the rich are too intoxicated with wealth and power to care. This kind of sharp contrast is a common theme in protest music, as seen in Bob Marley's *Them Belly Full (But We Hungry)*, where the rich continue to eat while the poor starve.

### **Metaphor in *Country Hard* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

Eedris deepens his criticism of Nigeria's socioeconomic circumstances by employing metaphor. The term *Country Hard* itself is a broad metaphor for the tremendous adversity that the populace

faces. Eedris personifies Nigeria, giving the impression that it is physically hurting, rather than just saying that the nation is having difficulties.

Another powerful metaphor appears in:

Poor man dey die, rich man dey high

In this context, the term "high" not only describes drunkenness but also the wealthy's disassociation from reality, since they live in a bubble, oblivious to the plight of common Nigerians. This reflects Karl Marx's argument that the ruling class creates a reality disconnected from the struggles of the working class (Marx 72).

Furthermore, the metaphor of "chop" (eat) in:

Country hard, we no fit chop

"Chop" stands for financial survival. Being unable to "chop" represents the people's inability to pay for food, which is a basic need. In Nigerian Pidgin English, "chop" is commonly used to mean sustenance, so by using this metaphor, Eedris makes his message accessible and relatable to everyday Nigerians.

### **Symbolism in *Country Hard* by Eedris Abdulakareem**

In *Country Hard*, symbolism is essential for reiterating the theme of injustice and oppression. The adage "police dey shoot, poor man dey die" refers to the abuse of authority, in which government agencies that are supposed to provide protection instead injure people. "Government no send" is

another powerful sign. In Nigerian Pidgin, the word "send" means "to care," but in this context, it represents the government's total disregard for its people. This reflects Frantz Fanon's argument that post-colonial African leaders often replicate the same oppressive structures as their colonial predecessors (Fanon 134). Furthermore, the expression "rich man dey high" represents the disengagement of the ruling class, who live in luxury while the others fight for their lives. This criticism is comparable to Fela Kuti'

Suffering and Smiling, in which he reveals how the wealthy Nigerian elite ignores the suffering of the general populace in order to live in luxury.

*Country Hard* is a call to action as much as a lament. By bringing to light the harsh realities of Nigerian life, Eedris urges the populace to face the oppressive power structures and cease to accept suffering as the norm. The song raises awareness of the situation, which is one way it encourages resistance. A large number of Nigerians suffer without challenging the system that maintains them in poverty. However, Eedris compels his audience to acknowledge the injustice that exists in their surroundings. This aligns with Paulo Freire's concept of "conscientization," where true liberation begins with awareness of oppression (Freire 118).

Through satire, he exposes the hypocrisy of the elite; through metaphor, he intensifies his criticism of systemic inequality; and through symbolism, he reaffirms the harsh realities of Nigerian life. Eedris Abdulakareem's *Country Hard* is a potent critique of Nigerian leadership and citizen struggles.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

This study examines how Nigerian secular music serves as a tool for social and political activism, focusing on the works of Fela Anikulapo Kuti and Eedris Abdulakareem. Their music speaks against corruption, oppression, and economic hardship while inspiring awareness and resistance among the people. The study analyzes selected songs to show how they use satire, metaphor, and symbolism to criticize leadership, challenge power structures, and demand justice. These musicians transform music into a vehicle for social transformation and truth-telling by fusing rhythm with stirring words.

The study explores the themes of governance failure, police brutality, media manipulation, and economic inequality as presented in their music. Fela's *Zombie*, *Coffin for Head of State*, and *Overtake Don Overtake Overtake* expose the *flaws* of military rule, the hypocrisy of religious institutions, and the illusion of political progress. Eedris's *Jaga Jaga*, *Letter to Mr: President*, and *Country Hard* highlight the struggles of ordinary Nigerians, the broken justice system, and the indifference of the ruling class. These songs do not only entertain but also inform and mobilize the people to challenge oppressive systems.

The study also explains how these artists use literary devices to enhance their messages. Satire makes their criticism sharp and memorable, as seen in Fela's mocking portrayal of soldiers as mindless zombies or Eedris's sarcastic questioning of Nigerian leadership. Metaphor gives depth to their lyrics, turning everyday experiences into powerful statements

against injustice. Symbolism strengthens their messages by using familiar images, such as coffins, police brutality, and hunger, to represent deeper political and social realities. These techniques make their music more than just entertainment, they become tools for activism.

The study explores the songs' practical effects in addition to their artistic value. Generations of activists and demonstrators have been inspired by Fela's music, and his impact can still be heard in contemporary initiatives like #EndSARS. Young Nigerians who endure everyday economic struggle and government indifference can relate to Eedris's music. Their songs ensure that the people's battles are remembered and taken care of by acting as historical documents of oppression and resistance.

The study finds that music remains a powerful force in confronting corruption and injustice in Nigeria. Fela and Eedris show that artists do not only reflect society but also shape it by influencing public opinion and encouraging resistance. Their music raises awareness, gives voice to the oppressed, and challenges those in power to act responsibly. Despite government attempts to silence them, their songs continue to inspire change and remind the people that they have the power to demand a better society.

Another key finding is that the issues Fela and Eedris sing about still exist today, proving that their messages remain relevant. Corruption, police brutality, and economic hardship persist, making their music timeless and necessary. Their work shows that true activism does not end with one generation but continues as long as injustice remains. This study demonstrates the

enduring influence of protest songs and reaffirms the use of music as a tool for social change by examining their music.

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