

AFROBEATS SONGS AS TOOLS FOR POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RESISTANCE

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project titled: AFROBEATS SONGS AS TOOLS FOR POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RESISTANCE was carried out by AGBEYI RAPHAEL (Master) with the matriculation number ART2100157 of the Department of English and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin city.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project first and foremost to Almighty God, whose strength and grace have sustained me throughout my days as an undergraduate and made the completion of this work possible. I also dedicate it to my beloved mother, whose constant encouragement, love, and support have been my greatest source of motivation.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Afrobeats as tools for political and social resistance in Nigeria, with a focus on how artistes employ music to influence and critique the political and social realities of the nation. The research reveals that Afrobeats has evolved beyond entertainment into a powerful instrument for social awareness, political activism, and resistance against oppression, corruption, and injustice. The study adopts New Historicism Theory as its theoretical framework, which states that understanding a literary or artistic work requires knowledge of the historical context that shapes it. This approach enables an exploration of how Afrobeats reflects and responds to Nigeria's political and social decadence. Ten songs were analyzed, including Eedris Abdulkareem's "Jaga Jaga" and "Tell Your Papa"; Burna Boy's "20.10.20", "Another Story", "Monsters You Made", "Common Person", and "Wetin Man Go Do"; Falz's "This Is Nigeria" and "Johnny"; and Teni's "Uyo Meyo." I'm Findings show that these artistes use Afrobeats as a medium for advocacy, self-expression, and societal critique. Their songs confront issues such as bad governance, state violence, social inequality, unemployment, and moral decay while inspiring resilience and hope among listeners. The study concludes that Afrobeats functions as a voice for the people. It educates, unites, and awakens social consciousness; thereby placing the genre as a vital tool for political and social transformation in contemporary Nigerian society.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

This essay examines selected Afrobeats songs as tools for social and political resistance in Nigeria. It demonstrates how Afrobeats in Nigeria have historically functioned as more than mere entertainment; it has often been used as a medium for protest, resistance, and social commentary. While Afrobeat, pioneered by Fela Kuti, is globally recognized for its political and activist character, the contemporary Afrobeats genre has equally demonstrated its capacity to voice dissatisfaction with corruption, poverty, social inequality, and state repression which are issues in contemporary Nigeria society.

1.2 Scope of study

This study is limited to the exploration of selected Afrobeats songs that engage with social and political resistance in Nigeria. The research does not attempt to cover the entire body of Afrobeats music, since the genre is vast and diverse. However, it focuses on a carefully chosen set of songs that encompasses clear themes of resistance against corruption, oppression, bad governance, social inequality, poverty, and state brutality.

The songs under analysis are drawn from three prominent artistes; Eedris Abdulkareem, Falz, Burna Boy, and Teni. These artistes are widely recognized for using music as a medium for protest and social consciousness. Their selected works are particularly relevant to contemporary audiences because they highlight political and social decadence in Nigeria society and show how Afrobeats addresses contemporary issues while maintaining the activist status of earlier musical traditions (Afrobeat).

The scope of this research is therefore confined to: Abdulkareem's *Jaga Jaga*,

Abdulkareem's *Tell Your Papa*, Burna Boy's *20.10.20*, Burna Boy's *Another Story*, Burna Boy's *Monsters You Made*, Falz's *This is Nigeria*, Burna Boy's *Common Person*, Teni Uyo *Meyo*, Burna Boy's "*Wetin Man Go Do*", and Falz's *Johnny*.

1.3 Methodology

This study employs a qualitative and analytical research method, with emphasis on textual and thematic analysis. Since the concern of this research is focused on selected Afrobeats songs as tools for political and social resistance, the methodology is designed to treat the selected songs as texts that can be examined in the same way as literary works. The primary data for this study consist of ten Afrobeats songs whose lyrical content directly addresses issues of governance, corruption, poverty, inequality, hopelessness, drive to make quick money and state oppression in Nigeria. These songs are divided into two categories which are; political resistance and social resistance.

The political resistance songs include: Abdulkareem's *Jaga Jaga*, Abdulkareem's *Tell Your Papa*, Burna Boy's *20.10.20*, Burna Boy's *Another Story* and Burna Boy's *Monsters You Made*. While the social resistance songs include: Falz's *This is Nigeria*, Burna Boy's *Common Person*, Teni's *Uyo Meyo*, Burna Boy's *Wetin Man Go Do*, and Falz's *Johnny*. These songs were carefully selected because of their clear engagement with the socio-political realities of the Nigerian experience. The analysis proceeds by subjecting the lyrics of the songs to close reading and textual interpretation, which uncover how they function as instruments of resistance. In addition to the analysis of the lyrics, the study also shows the connection between the songs and their socio-political context, considering the circumstances and realities that inspired them.

However, this research also draws on secondary sources such as journal articles and online

publications to support the analysis. These materials provide background information on Afrobeats, its counterparts (Afrobeat), the Nigerian society, and how Afrobeats is used as a tool for protest and resistance in Nigeria. Through this methodology, the study demonstrates how Afrobeats music operates beyond entertainment to serve as a tool of social critique, resistance, and collective consciousness in Nigeria.

1.4 Theoretical Background

The theory adopted for this study is New Historicism. This theory focuses on the relationship between literature and the historical and cultural environment in which it is produced. It assumes that a literary text cannot be fully understood without examining the cultural, political, and social context of its time. The theory was developed in the 1980s, especially through the work of Stephen Greenblatt, who is often seen as the founder of New Historicism. Greenblatt believed that literature and history are deeply connected, and that we should read literary texts alongside other cultural materials such as speeches, laws, news, history and everyday activities which aids understanding and how they reflect or challenge power and ideology (Greenblatt, p. 5).

However, New Historicism emphasizes that literary works are inseparable from the cultural and historical circumstances of their production. Greenblatt describes texts as “cultural artifacts” that circulate power, ideology, and social energy within society (Greenblatt p.6). Thus, literature is not just a reflection of history but it actively participates in shaping cultural values and political realities.

According to Harold Veaser, who edited *The New Historicism (1989)*, the theory is based on some key ideas which includes: Every act of expression is part of a larger cultural and material context. However, literary and non-literary texts should be studied together for in-

depth understanding. A text is both a reflection of history and a force that shapes it (Veeder, pp. 3–13).

Furthermore, Murfin and Ray note in *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, that a New Historicist views a text with “an eye to history,” but not as a fixed background. Instead, history and literature are in dialogue: the text is both influenced by history and capable of influencing it in return (Murfin & Ray p. 456). However, a key feature of New Historicism is its broad view of what counts as a text. It does not focus only on famous literary works alone but also studies cultural products like sermons, pamphlets, rumours, art, clothing, and even everyday goods. This approach helps recover voices that are often ignored and creates what Gallagher and Greenblatt call “counterhistories,” stories that question or complicate official history (Gallagher and Greenblatt pp. 51–55). This makes it a suitable framework for analyzing selected Afrobeats songs, which are themselves products of specific historical and societal conditions in Nigeria.

Now let’s look at what Afrobeats entails. Afrobeats is a contemporary genre of popular music that emerged in West Africa, particularly Nigeria and Ghana, in the early 2000s. It fuses traditional African rhythms, highlife, hip-hop, reggae, dancehall, and electronic sounds, and is characterized by heavy percussion, polyrhythms, and danceable beats (Wikipedia, 2025).

However, scholars and cultural critics have described Afrobeats as more than just entertainment. Ogburn observes that Afrobeats “draws from Africa’s urban youth culture to create a soundtrack that expresses both the pleasures and frustrations of modern African life” (Ogburn p.18). Similarly, Collins notes that the genre represents a cultural shift, where music

becomes a way for young Africans to engage with issues of identity, globalization, and everyday survival (Collins p.102). Before proceeding it is important to note the difference between Afrobeat and Afrobeats. Afrobeat (singular) was created by Fela Kuti in the 1960s. It mixes jazz, funk, and African rhythms and is well known for its strong political messages against colonialism, dictatorship, and corruption (Afrobeat). On the other hand, Afrobeats (plural) is a newer style that began in the 2000s. It is more commercial and blends African rhythms with hip-hop, R&B, dancehall, and house. Its main themes are love, wealth, and enjoyment (Afrobeats; Arroyo). Even though Afrobeats is often seen as less political, some artistes such as Burna Boy, Falz, and Eedris Abdulkareem still use it to speak about social and political issues, continuing Fela's activism. Afrobeats, unlike its predecessor, typically features shorter song lengths, more polished production, and some artistes focus more on themes of love, partying, and celebration rather than political commentary. However, while afrobeats draw inspiration from Fela's pioneering work, their sound and lyrical content are slightly different. Recent discourse on the globalisation of African music highlights Afrobeats as a dominant cultural force shaping both African and international music markets. Jocelyne Muhutu-Remy, Managing Director for Spotify in Sub-Saharan Africa, highlights this in an interview with Al Jazeera, noting that "*Afrobeats is probably one of Africa's biggest cultural exports right now, and it is definitely influencing the music being made both on the continent and elsewhere in the world*" (Al Jazeera, 2023). She attributes this influence to the genre's inherent hybridity, its amalgamation of sounds, which facilitates seamless fusion with other musical styles and fosters cross-cultural collaborations between African artists and global acts. Afrobeats is perceived by a global audience as a vibrant, energetic, and celebratory genre. Its rhythms and catchy melodies have made it incredibly popular on

streaming platforms and social media. It represents a modern and thriving Africa, challenging outdated Western stereotypes. The genre has fostered a sense of unity and shared identity among the African diaspora and has become a global cultural export, influencing artists from various backgrounds and genres. Although Afrobeats is often associated with entertainment and dance, several scholars highlight its capacity for social and political engagement. Collins and Adebayo (2019) argue that Afrobeats has “repoliticized Nigerian popular culture,” particularly through songs that confront corruption, inequality, and state violence.

Now let's examine Nigeria's society. Nigeria is rich in culture and potential, but deeply troubled by political failure and social decadence. Corruption and poor governance have weakened institutions and caused great distrust of the government among the masses. Political promises which are ignored by the leaders, who exploit the nation's wealth for personal gains, while ordinary citizens are left to bear the consequences of their actions.

On the social aspect, youth unemployment has become alarmingly high. Unemployment has remained one of Nigeria's most persistent socio-economic challenges. Recent statistics indicate that the unemployment rate in Nigeria reached 33.3% in 2020, positioning it among the highest in the world (National Bureau of Statistics). This alarming figure reflects a deep-rooted structural problem in the economy and highlights the growing frustration among the youth population. The statistics shows that vast numbers of young Nigerians, despite their potential, remain jobless; many turning to criminal activities such as cyber fraud (Yahoo yahoo), arm robbery, prostitution; as a means of survival. Studies link this lack of opportunity to rising instability and insecurity in society. Furthermore, economic hardship and deprivation have also led to protests and unrest. Movements like #EndSARS emerged as a

powerful response to police brutality, poor governance, and social inequality. They highlight how frustration with political and social failure spills into public action and how youth-driven resistance can demand change. Together, these political failures and social issues form the foundation against which Afrobeat and Afrobeats have evolved. Artistes turn societal critique into melody, expressing resilience and resistance. In this study, New Historicism will be used to analyze how Afrobeats songs function within their historical and cultural settings, how they reflect and resist the social and political issues of their time.

1.5 Review of Scholarship

The connection between music, politics, and social commentary has long been an area of interest for academic inquiry. Within this context, the musical genre of Afrobeat, pioneered by the legendary Fela Kuti, and its counterpart Afrobeats stand out as an enduring example of music as a weapon for political and social resistance.

This review of related scholarship examines key works that explore the evolution of Afrobeat and its counterpart (Afrobeats). It also examines their role in challenging oppressive governments, critiquing societal ills, and advocating for social justice.

Early scholarship on Fela Kuti's Afrobeat often focuses on Kuti himself as a singular, charismatic figure whose defiance of the Nigerian government was both a personal and political act. Works such as Carlos Moore's Fela, *Fela: This Bitch of a Life (2001)* provide a detailed biographical account, contextualizing Kuti's political consciousness within his personal experiences and his unique artistic vision. These studies also highlight how Kuti's lyrics, which were often direct and confrontational, served as a powerful counter-attack to Nigeria government propaganda. The study highlights the repeated repression he faced, including the raid on his self-declared commune, the "*Kalakuta Republic*".

Furthermore, Fela's role in protest music is shown in Saheed Aderinto's, *Sorrow, tears, and blood: Fela Anikulapo Kuti and protest in Nigeria*. This work, titled after one of Fela's protest songs, portrays Kuti's artistry with close reference to the historical context of social protest in Nigeria. Aderinto's analysis examines the specific ways Fela's music reflected and responded to the harsh realities of political repression, using the evocative imagery of "*sorrow, tears, and blood*" to capture the brutal consequences faced by those who dare to speak truth to power. More recent scholarships which includes; Balogun, N.O. *An examination of the strategic logic of nonviolent resistance in Fela's Afrobeat*. *International Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 2024 argues that Afrobeat is a musical philosophy shaped by a disregard for human rights and government irresponsibility, advocating for Fela's use of music for protest and persuasion. It frames Afrobeat not merely as music, but as "*a musical philosophy shaped by disregard for human rights and gross irresponsibility on the part of government that have manifested in Africa/Nigeria's underdevelopment since the Union Jack was lowered in 1960s.*"

The study employs "music as a social process and philosophical tool of critical and constructive analysis," combining documentary data from Fela's Afrobeat with Key Informant Interviews to demonstrate this nonviolent strategic protest. It argues that Fela "chose to be part of the politics of revolution by using his music to express protest and persuasion, non-cooperation and intervention against injustice that has created the many problems of man and social reality." The compelling conclusion is that "Fela won against the oppressed post-colonial African leaders as he was the public conscience of the oppressed Africans who have continued to win despite being repressed." This highlights the effect of his

nonviolent resistance through music. The legacy of Afrobeat's political and social commentary extends into the contemporary era through the work of artistes who continue to use their music as a tool for resistance. A study titled *Protest and Activism in Selected Nigerian songs* (IJHUMAS, 2025) examines the contributions of artistes such as Sound Sultan and Eedris Abdulkareem. This scholarship highlights how songs like Eedris Abdulkareem's *Jaga Jaga* became a protest anthem, giving voice to the frustration of a populace struggling with poverty, corruption, and instability. The work of these artistes demonstrates a continuity of themes and purpose, as they both use music to challenge the government and address socio-economic inequalities. Moreso, *'Monsters You Made': Burna Boy, #EndSARS, and the Use of Restlessness"* (ResearchGate, 2024) offers a critical analysis of Burna Boy's song *Monsters You Made*. This work explores the song's engagement with *socio-economic, political, and epistemic challenges facing Africa, particularly in the context of colonialism and neocolonialism*, demonstrating the continued relevance of music in addressing contemporary issues like the *EndSARS* movement.

However, while existing scholarship on Afrobeat and Afrobeats has extensively documented its role in political resistance, particularly through the works of Fela Kuti and other protest musicians, fewer studies have given equal scholarly attention to its role in social resistance. Much of the current scholarship frames Afrobeat and afrobeats primarily as a political tool use to confront governmental corruption, dictatorship, and human rights abuses while overlooking the genre's broader function in challenging societal injustices, class inequality, cultural oppression, and structural inequalities. This study bridges that gap by integrating both political and social dimensions of resistance within the analysis of Afrobeats songs. By

examining ten selected songs; five reflecting political resistance and five reflecting social resistance, this research demonstrates the genre's dual role as both a political weapon and a social reform tool. It highlights how Afrobeats addresses issues such as poverty, economic inequality, police brutality, moral decay, and cultural marginalization alongside explicit political critiques.

In doing so, this work expands the existing body of knowledge by presenting Afrobeats as more than mere entertainment, but rather functions as an anti-government protest movement, a socio-political commentary platform capable of mobilizing resistance in Nigerian society.

1.6 Thesis Statement

Through songs, artistes challenge bad governance, expose corruption, state violence, political repression, historical manipulation and critique social injustices such as poverty, class inequality, hopelessness, youth struggle to get rich quick and hardship. However, Afrobeats function as political and social tools of resistance in Nigeria.

CHAPTER TWO

AFROBEATS AS POLITICAL RESISTANCE TOOLS

2.1 Introduction

Political resistance refers to the various ways individuals or groups challenge unjust governance, corruption, and oppression in order to push for reform or liberation. In Nigeria, Afrobeats had functioned as a powerful vehicle for such resistance, carrying the frustrations and aspirations of the people. This chapter examines how selected Afrobeats songs which includes: Abdulkareem's *Jaga Jaga* (2004) and *Tell Your Papa* (2024), Burna Boy's *20.10.20* (2020), *Another Story* (2019), and *Monsters You Made* (2020), function as tools for political resistance. Collectively, these songs engage with the Nigerian sociopolitical reality by resisting bad governance and corruption, state violence, political repression and historical manipulation.

2.2 Resistance Against Bad Governance and Corruption

Bad governance remains one of the most enduring obstacles to Nigeria's political and economic development. Since independence, successive governments (military and civilian) have been characterized by corruption, abuse of power, and poor leadership. These failures have resulted in poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and widespread disillusionment among citizens. However, Afrobeats artistes have often used their art as a platform to challenge irresponsible leadership and expose governmental inefficiency.

Firstly, in Eedris Abdulkareem's "*Jaga Jaga*", Abdulkareem paints a vivid picture of chaos in Nigeria, he attributes this chaos to bad governance and widespread corruption perpetuated by failed governments. Through his lyrics, he highlights the state of confusion and disorder which has caused unrest in every part of the society. The issue of corruption, poverty,

insecurity and unemployment have increasingly become a concern for the country since independence. Successive governments have come in and out of power yet no great progress has been achieved. The political and economic realities of the country continue to deteriorate, however, insecurity in Nigeria has become a norm, the masses are not safe anymore because of the anarchy that has subdued the country. Thus, Abdulkareem further portrays the plight of the common man in a society ravaged by greed, mismanagement of public funds, and a lack of accountability. He portrays a nation where those in power live in affluence and luxury, while the ordinary citizens suffer as a result of unemployment and poor living conditions. The song opens with the following lines:

*Nigeria jaga jaga
Everything scatter
scatter Poor man dey
suffer suffer
Gbosa gbosa, gunshot inna the air*

Here, Abdulkareem clearly captures the disorder in Nigeria's society. He shows the endless cycle of hardship and poverty experienced by ordinary Nigerians. However, the expression "gbosa gbosa" highlights the prevalence of violence and insecurity within the country. Crimes such as kidnapping, arm robbing, Islamic insurgency, mass killings of innocent people, have become a normal occurrence, which has raised serious fears and concerns among the masses. Through this song, Abdulkareem criticizes the corruption and irresponsibility of Nigerian leaders but also gives voice to the frustrations of the marginalized and oppressed citizens. Thus, as the song progresses, he says:

*Armed robber came to your house, e no thief
money, e no rape your wife,*

*Went straight up to your bedside
(Gbosa) Six feet, now you are down
Which armed robber no want
money Which armed robber no
want jolly Na political armed
robber be that Na wetin dey kill
Nigeria*

Abdulkareem critiques Nigerian politicians by likening political corruption to the actions of an armed robber, emphasizing that it is the political leaders rather than common criminals who are the true perpetrators inflicting pain and hardship on the citizens. Through his lyrics, he describes these politicians as “*political armed robbers*” who take advantage of power for personal gain while neglecting the welfare of the people. This highlights the moral decay and predatory nature of Nigeria’s politicians, suggesting that they loot the nation’s resources with the same ruthlessness as bandits. However, Abdulkareem’s comparison exposes how corruption within the political leaders has become an institutionalized form of theft that robs the nation of progress, justice, and stability. The consequences of corruption in Nigeria has led to economic collapse, poverty, and social disillusionment. This is evident when he says, “*Six feet, now you are down,*” an expression that captures the death and decay of the nation’s economy under corrupt leadership. Here, “*six feet*” highlights the breakdown of Nigeria’s potential, its industries, infrastructure, and moral values which are subdued by the weight of corruption. As the songs progresses he says:

*We dey grow, we dey grow, we dey grow,
eh There is peace and wealth
We dey grow oh*

*There is peace and wealth
(Eedris, what about Ikoja
now) Wọn ti gbowo wa ja
NEPA, wọn ti*

*regular 419 for
Nigeria
Agege to Ikeja na 100 naira
West Class na popular
Come show film for Nigeria
(Eedris, where Charles Taylor dey now?)
He dey live big life
High estate for Calabar
That na Liberia mafia for Nigeria*

However, through the repeated lines, “*We dey grow... there is peace and wealth,*” Abdulkareem criticized the propaganda of Nigerian political leaders who boast of progress and stability in post-military Nigeria. These leaders engage in self-congratulatory evaluations, they speak well of themselves, celebrating supposed achievements even when the evidence of failure is clearly seen. They make promises during election campaigns and fail to deliver after getting into office. Which describes the deceptive and manipulative nature of Nigerian politics, where leaders refuse to acknowledge the ugly reality of their poor governance.

Furthermore, Abdulkareem exposes the corruption and decay that define Nigeria’s governance. He makes reference to NEPA (National Electric Power Authority) as being “regular”, which is sarcastic. It’s an indirect criticism of the government’s failure to provide stable electricity, which ought to be a basic necessity. However, he further mentions “419” (a popular term for fraud) as a metaphor for a society where dishonesty and corruption have been normalized, spreading from ordinary citizens to those in the highest positions of power. This is made evident in the lines;

*NEPA, wọn ti
regular 419 for
Nigeria
Agege to Ikeja na 100 naira
West Class na popular
Come show film for Nigeria
(Eedris, where Charles Taylor dey now?)
He dey live big life
High estate for Calabar
That na Liberia mafia for Nigeria*

However, Abdulkareem uses “*jaja jaja*” to capture the everyday experiences of decay and frustration in Nigeria. His reference to the former Liberian warlord Charles Taylor, who was granted refuge in Nigeria, further highlights the depth of Nigeria moral and political corruption. By offering refuge to a known criminal, Nigeria appears as a nation that tolerates injustice, which reflects its moral decay.

Now let’s move on to Eedris Abdulkareem’s *Tell Your Papa*. In Eedris Abdulkareem’s *Tell Your Papa*, Abdulkareem critiques Nigeria's corrupt system and the moral decay that has purged its governance. It addresses the worsening economic crisis, rising inflation, and growing insecurity under President Tinubu administration. Abdulkareem laid emphasis on the effects of corruption and bad governance on the nation, where economic recession is the order of the day. Price hike for basic services has made the country unbearable for the common Nigerian citizen. The song further expresses the disillusionment and suffering of Nigerians, placing a request for accountability from the government. However, it directly addresses Tinubu’s son, Seyi, and serves as an instrument against issues that sabotage the country. These issues include; poverty, insecurity, and infrastructural decay

Furthermore, it is more like a continuation of “Jaga Jaga”, but one that addresses specific Nigeria’s present struggles, giving voice to the frustration of citizens under President Tinubu governance. The chorus sets the tone of direct confrontation. Abdulkareem says:

*Tell your Papa, Seyi, tell your papa country
hard Tell your Papa, Seyi, tell your papa
people dey die Tell your papa, this one don
pass jaga jaga.”*

Here, Abdulkareem appeals directly to Tinubu’s son, Seyi, using him as a link to the president. By addressing the nation’s leader through his family (son), Abdulkareem highlights the theme of accountability, a demand that power should answer to the people. This direct approach exposes how political privilege is often inherited in Nigeria, where families of political leaders continue to benefit from a corrupt system that impoverishes the masses. The repetition of the lines “*Country hard*” and “*People dey die*” captures the reality of Nigeria’s current economic crisis. Through these phrases, Abdulkareem paints a vivid picture of the suffering and hopelessness of ordinary Nigerians whose lives have been crippled by inflation, unemployment, and poor governance. Basic necessities such as food, fuel, housing, and healthcare have become luxuries beyond the reach of many. This decline in living standards exposes the devastating effects of corruption and mismanagement, as national wealth continues to be hijacked into private hands while the citizens struggle to survive. Abdulkareem gives voice to Nigerians who endure hunger, insecurity, and despair under leaders who are indifferent about the situation.

Furthermore, Abdulkareem strengthens his critique by comparing Nigeria’s present situation with that of 2004 (during the regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo), a period he previously criticized in his hit song “*Jaga Jaga*.” The comparison suggests that instead of improving,

the nation's condition has deteriorated even further, as captured in the line "*This one don pass Jaga Jaga.*" By referencing his earlier work, Abdulkareem creates a historical link, showing that the problems he denounced two decades ago (corruption, inequality, and mismanagement of public funds) still persist, and perhaps have even worsened. As the song progresses, he says:

*To buy food na luxury
Kpomo, èjà, iresi, èwà, ishu,
garri Indomie, Spaghetti
People dey jump inside
lagoon Because of
economic hardship Very
wicked policy
Anti-people's policy*

Through the lyrics, Abdulkareem laments over the economic situation of the country, highlighting that food items which are supposed to be very affordable for everyone have become luxurious items because of the hike of market prices. However, because of this economic state, people have resulted in committing suicide (taking their lives) as the only way forward. This is made evident when he says: "*people day jump inside lagoon*". Abdulkareem goes on to lament about the inhumane actions and policies of the Nigeria government who don't consider the consequences of their decisions. They come into power just for their selfish interests and leave the masses to wallow in pain. As the song progresses, he further addresses the problem of Insecurity and the Crisis of Safety in Nigeria. He says;

*Kidnappers dey kill Nigerians
Seyi, try travel by road without your
security Make you feel the pains of fellow
Nigerians You dey fly private jet
Insecurity no be your problem
Nigerians wey dey travel by*

*road Some of them dey face
death sentence*

The line “*Kidnappers dey kill Nigerians ... Seyi, try travel by road without your security*” dramatizes the constant threat of abduction and violent crime, especially on highways. The issue of insecurity has long prevailed in Nigeria, people travel on highways with great fear of being kidnapped or abducted, no protection from the government. They provide security for themselves and children. Abdulkareem challenges the political leaders, who enjoy protection through convoys and private jets. Thus, he exposes the gap between leaders and citizens abandoned to danger.

This insecurity reflects deeper failures in governance, underfunded security agencies, corruption within the police and military, and the government’s inability to protect lives. By confronting this reality, the song functions as resistance to the government, holding the president responsible for national safety.

Another recurring issue portrayed in the song is; infrastructural collapse. Abdulkareem laments the lack of stable electricity, despite citizens being forced to pay higher tariffs: “*Electricity na luxury ... to on AC na luxury, heat wan kill us for the country.*” This line resonates with Nigeria’s “*power problem,*” where billions have been spent on electricity reforms with little to show.

Interestingly enough, “*Tell Your Papa*” Was banned by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) for its political content and perceived criticism of government authorities (Vanguard News). Which further shows how the Nigeria government opposes criticism and would do anything to shut the mouth of its citizens.

However, Abdulkareem's "*Seyi Tell Your Papa*" and "*Jaja jaja*" are direct criticism of Nigeria's failed leadership. They serve as a powerful reminder that the promises of democracy have failed to transit into genuine progress for the people.

2.3 RESISTANCE AGAINST STATE VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL REPRESSION

Throughout Nigeria's postcolonial history, state violence and political repression have been the primary instruments of governance. Past governments have deployed coercion, intimidation, and manipulation to suppress the citizens and maintain control.

In Burna Boy's "*20. 10. 20*", Burna Boy's confronts state violence and political repression. The song functions as a historical document, which is a response to one of Nigeria's most traumatic events that played out at the Lekki Toll Gate, tagged "*the Lekki Toll Gate Massacre of October 20, 2020*". On that day, Nigerian soldiers opened fire on peaceful #EndSARS protesters demanding an end to police brutality, particularly by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit notorious for extrajudicial killings, torture, and extortion. The song opens with:

*Shey you never hear
About the things wey happen there Abi your eye never clear
Mankind so wicked
Let's talk about my government
Open your mind and your ears*

The song begins with a rhetorical question; "*Shey you never hear about the things wey happen there?*" (Have you not heard about what happened there?). This serves as both testimony and challenge. It serves as a testimony because it recounts an event that the government attempted to deny; and challenges, because it creates a sense of awareness about the incident. Burna Boy places himself in the position of a witness, demanding that his

audience “*open your mind and your ears*” to the truth. He refers to the government's act of violence against its citizens as wickedness. How can a leader of a country cause great harm to its own citizens without considering its effect on the people! As the song progresses he says:

*Make my people suffer suffer All
their nyanshes don dey open
Everything don scatter scatter
Twentieth of October 2020
You carry army go kill many youth for Lekki
Na so water o, water runaway my eye*

Through his lyrics, he highlights the fate of Nigeria youth who are victims of police brutality and violence, their voices are not heard, even when they try to voice out their pain, they are suppressed by the government. However, Burna Boy’s exposes the wicked act perpetuated by the so-called leaders, he indirectly mentions the government and the military:

*“Twentieth of October 2020
You carry army go kill many youth for Lekki.”*

Here, Burna Boy directly accused the government of being responsible for the death of youth at Lekki Toll gate. By naming the state and its armed forces as perpetrators, Burna Boy’s *20.10.20* functions as a counter-narrative that resists political propaganda. It also embodies Fela Kuti’s strategy of calling out institutions of power without fear. It also conveys deep grief and mourning. This personal lament becomes a collective mourning cry for Nigerian youth who lost their lives at Lekki Toll Gate. He further says:

*Nothing you go talk wey go justify the case of their
murder The Chief of Staff, the commander
And the army wey carry
order Mr. President, Mr.
Governor Godfather, gbo
gbo ijoba*

*All your atrocities
All of your corner corner*

Make all the deadbody disturb you for your dreams

Here, Burna Boy highlights that nothing can justify government excuses for the killings. However, this is a radical act of political resistance because it refuses to accept government narratives that tried to deny the massacre. The song thus positions itself as a voice of accountability, demanding that the state should be held responsible for the lives lost.

However, a leaked report from the Lagos State Judicial Panel of Inquiry had concluded that the October 2020 shootings could be described as a “massacre,” implicating the Nigerian military. However, Nigeria’s federal government dismissed the report as “fake news.” Information Minister Lai Mohammed stated that the panel’s report was “nothing but the triumph of fake news,” thereby denying both the credibility of the panel and the victims’ pursuit of justice (CNN). However, Burna Boy explicitly mentioned the institution involved in the massacre, the chief of staff, the commander, Mr. President, Mr Governor... stating that they will reap the consequences of their actions and pains they caused to the youth and the society at large. He says : *Make all the deadbody disturb you for your dreams.*

It’s important to note that Burna Boy leverages his global platform to amplify the voices of marginalized Nigerian youth. Thus, Burna Boy’s “20.10.20” continues Afrobeats’ long tradition of confronting state violence. The Lekki massacre revealed the contradiction of Nigeria’s democracy. Instead of protecting its people, the state deployed military force against them. Burna Boy’s song highlights the betrayal, exposing the failure of the Nigeria government.. However, the #EndSARS protests were not only about police brutality; they also symbolized decades of political oppression, corruption, and neglect. By naming the song “20 10 20”, Burna Boy resists the Nigerian state’s attempts to erase or downplay the event.

However, the song becomes a form of history, ensuring that future generations remember both the atrocity and the resilience of those who protested. Moreso, he says;

*If to say na shoot at sight, you for tell
us Make we no gather,
make we no talk,
make we no protest.*

Burna Boy condemns the state's betrayal of trust showing how Nigeria's democracy still bears the scars of authoritarianism. Citizens were protesting peacefully, yet they were suppressed by the government. Which highlights the violation of democratic rights, if peaceful protest is criminalized, then there is no freedom. He further states;

*The government sef don
deny Committee wey dem
set up, wetin dem dey do?*

Burna Boy further criticizes the official denial and the creation of meaningless committees set up to investigate the incident. This line highlights the culture of political manipulation in Nigeria, setting up panels that yield no justice, a pattern that has been in existence for decades. Burna Boy suggests that the blood of innocent victims will haunt the nation, symbolizing how state violence destabilizes society. It also evokes traditional African notions of spilled blood demanding justice. This is made evident in the line;

*“The blood wey you spill for Lekki go flood the
street E go reach everybody house.”*

Critics have described the song as a “mournful track” that speaks directly to the violence of the Nigerian state against its youth (Pitchfork). In the same similitude, Pulse Nigeria also notes that the song carries a clear message of resistance, urging Nigerians never to forget the Lekki massacre (“EndSARS”). However, the song shows how Afrobeats function as a means

of resistance to ongoing repression and state violence.

Now let's move on to Burna Boy ft. Chris Martin's "*Monsters You Made*". It's a politically charged song portraying oppression as a reason for rebellion. Burna Boy's "*Monsters You Made*" captures the global mood of rebellion which emerged during the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria and worldwide movements against racial injustice, such as Black Lives Matter. The song was released in 2020 and features British artist Chris Martin. Thus, it serves as a critique of political hypocrisy, neocolonialism, and the violence bred by systematic oppression.

According to MoreBranches, the song begins with a spoken-word excerpt of Ebikabowei "Boyloaf" Victor-Ben, the former commander of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). Which was a militant movement formed to fight against foreign oil companies who exploited the Niger Delta crude oil while leaving the people in poverty and causing devastating environmental pollution:

"If the government refused to develop the region and continue the marginalization and injustice, the youth that's what coming after us... and it will be more brutal than what we have done."

This opening portrays the song within the context of Niger Delta militancy and youth uprisings. It stands against oppression and neglect. Thus, It foreshadows the central themes of the song which includes oppressed populations, denied justice and opportunity, which has transformed the youth (masses) into the very "*monsters*" the state and government accuse them of being. Oppression, police brutality and state violence experienced by the youth has triggered the innate savage nature in them. However, Burna Boy uses this as a response to the government who made them "monsters".

However, In "*Monsters You Made*", Burna Boy and Chris Martian defend the actions of the

youth who have resorted to violence as a form of resistance against the bad governance and underdevelopment. This is made evident as Martin says;

*“Calling me a monster, calling us
fake No way, no way, now way
Calling me a
monster just ‘cause
we said”*

As the song progresses Burna Boy says:

*We’re from the block where it rains
Where we create barricades.”*

Here, Burna Boy rejects the notion that the government has on the marginalized youth, arguing that their rebellion is a product of injustice. The “*block where it rains*” symbolizes areas scarred by poverty, violence, and failed governance which has triggered the rebelling spirit in them. He further expresses the cycle of violence that ravaged the nation, the chaos, insecurity that prevailed in the country. This is made evident as he says

*Don’t get kidnapped from your
place ‘Cause it could happen
today
Not knowing how to behave
That is a sign that you
made Just lose your life
what a waste Your body
found in a lake.*

These lines show how insecurity and lawlessness arise when the state abandons its citizens. Youth who grow up in neglect are pushed into savage behaviour, which the same state now condemns. However, Burna Boy portrays the point that the rise of crimes among the youth today is a response to the government’s failure to create jobs or build a system that gives

young people hope and purpose. He further says;

*You know we come from a place
Where people smile but it's fake
How could they smile?
If you look around they are surrounded by pain
I've seen the sky turn to grey
It took the light from the day It's like the heads of the state
Ain't comprehending the hate
That the oppressed generate
When they've been working like slaves
To get some minimum wage*

Burna Boy highlights the reality of the ordinary Nigerians, who are subdued by the government. They are shortchanged by bad governance. It exposes the hypocrisy and suffering hidden beneath the people's smiles. It denounces leaders who remain blind to the pain and resentment bred by oppression and economic inequality. The imagery of darkness and false smiles symbolizes a nation stripped of hope and authenticity. By comparing the struggles of the working class to slavery, Burna Boy highlights the persistence of exploitation under modern systems. He also critiques the colonial education system that alienates Africans from their history and reality. He says:

*“Because the teacher dem teaching what the white man dem teaching
Dem European teachings in my African school.”*

Burna Boy accuses the state and colonial legacies of creating the “monsters” The song empowers marginalized youth, portraying their struggles as responses to structural violence rather than moral failings. The amplifies the voice of resistance by sampling Ghanaian writer Ama Ata Aidoo’s words from an interview (Burna Boy Samples Ama Ata Aidoo in Monsters You Made). Her statement:

*“Since we met your people five hundred years ago
Look at us, we have given everything, you are still taking.”*

Here, Burna Boy connects contemporary exploitation to historical slavery and colonialism. Africa has been drained for centuries, and the exploitation continues under neo-colonial systems. The post-colonial era even seems to be worse.

However, Burna Boy’s “*Monsters You Made*” portrays Afrobeats as a tool of political resistance by exposing the structural roots of violence, inequality, and alienation. Rather than condemning marginalized youth, it calls attention to the failures of leadership and the legacy of exploitation that force them into rebellion. Moreso, the song expands Afrobeats’ role from national protest to global resistance.

2.4 RESISTANCE AGAINST HISTORICAL MANIPULATION

Burna Boy’s “*Another Story*” captures the historical lesson and protest against how colonial and postcolonial powers have manipulated Nigeria’s history to perpetuate control, inequality, and ignorance.

In Burna Boy ft M.anifest “*Another Story*” Burna Boy interrogates the roots of Nigeria’s socio-political crisis. Unlike his other songs that focus on contemporary issues, this one takes listeners back to the colonial origins of Nigeria, tracing the country’s current dysfunction to the historical continuity of exploitation, betrayal, and failed leadership. The song opens with an intro narration which is widely attributed to Jide Olanrewaju, taken from his 2017 documentary *A History of Nigeria (Olanrewaju)*:

To understand Nigeria, you need to appreciate where it came from. In 1900, Britain officially assumed responsibility for the administration of the whole of what we now know as Nigeria from the Niger Company. And then, gradually over the years, British protectorates were established throughout the territory. In 1914, the protectorates

were amalgamated into one Nigeria. Actually, there's one additional detail that bears mentioning. In order to take over the territories from the Niger Company, the British Government paid 865,000 pounds. A huge amount in 1900. So let's establish a simple truth, the British didn't travel halfway across the world just to spread democracy. Nigeria started off as a business deal for them, between a company and a government. Incidentally, the Niger Company is still around today. Only it is known by a different name, Unilever! But that's another story.

This historical assertion influenced the entire song. It explains Nigeria's colonial origins as a transaction between Britain and the Niger Company, depicting that the nation was never built for its people but for exploitation. Burna Boy connects Nigeria's present failures to the colonial foundation. Burna Boy highlights the reality that Nigeria began as a business deal. This sets the tone for the song's critique: Nigeria's very foundation was rooted in exploitation and commodification, not nation-building or collective identity.

The song begins with;

*They wanna tell you o, tell you o, tell
you o Another story o, story o, story o
Since 1960 them dey play us,
why o Shey we go dey cry
forever more o*

“Another story” describes the endless propaganda, false promises, and historical manipulation that Nigerians have been fed since independence in 1960. Burna Boy highlights that the present situation of Nigeria began even before colonization. Corruption has been rampant in Africa since then, he says that Nigeria started as a business deal but the narrative was manipulated. He also shows how every government comes with assurances of progress, yet the reality remains the same; hampered by corruption, inequality, and suffering.

The line, “Since 1960 them dey play us, why o?” reflects the frustration of Nigerians who have endured decades of unfulfilled hopes. The history of Nigeria colonialism has been all

lies. The government hid the truth from the people and capitalized on the people's ignorance. Many dreams and aspirations have been shattered because of the government who propagated lies to manipulate its citizens. These manipulations have manifested in the economic and political system of Nigeria.

The collaboration with M.anifest shows how this same experience cut across all Africa states. Burna Boy links the Nigerian struggle with similar patterns of political dysfunction in Ghana and across Africa. This broadens the song's relevance, making it a critique not only of Nigeria's leadership but of postcolonial African states caught in cycles of corruption and stagnation.

"*Another Story*" further highlights leadership failure in Nigeria and Africa at large. He criticizes the leaders who sold and exploited Nigeria for their own benefit. As the song progresses M.anifest say;

*"Every year we dey sing cock and bull,
propaganda you dey push no dey go
point to the recycling of the same lies by successive
leaders, while "Shebi we go dey cry forever more"*

The above lines question whether Nigerians will remain victims of this manipulation or rise to demand accountability. Politically, "*Another Story*" functions as resistance by exposing the deception and exploitation that sustain underdevelopment in Nigeria. By reminding listeners of Nigeria's origins as a colonial business transaction, Burna Boy challenges the myths of national unity and progress promoted by the political leaders. The song also calls on Nigerians to reclaim agency, refusing to accept lies as their destiny.

The impact of "*Another Story*" lies in its ability to combine historical consciousness with contemporary resistance. It highlights present struggles such as corruption, bad governance,

unfulfilled promises within a long chain of exploitation beginning with colonialism. This makes it a vehicle for political awakening.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined how Afrobeats artistes deploy their music as a tool for political resistance, using their lyrics to challenge corruption and bad governance, state violence, repression and historical manipulation in Nigeria. Through close readings of selected songs, it is evident that Afrobeats functions beyond entertainment, it's also a medium for expression of discontent and addressing issues across the political spheres of the country.

Eedris Abdulkareem's "*Jaga Jaga*" and "*Tell Your Papa*" openly criticize Nigeria's political leaders, exposing the corruption, poverty, and social decay that have persisted since independence. Further highlighting the effects of political exploitation on the economy of the country. However, Burna Boy's "*20.10.20*" memorialized the Lekki Toll Gate massacre, serving as both a documentation of state violence and a cry for justice in the face of governmental denial. While "*Monsters You Made*" expanded the narrative to a transnational level, highlighting how marginalization and oppression transform the oppressed into so-called "*monsters*," and linking Nigeria's struggles to Africa's broader history of resistance against exploitation.

In Burna Boy's "*Another Story*," Burna Boy emphasizes on Nigeria's colonial history, reminding listeners that contemporary political dysfunction is rooted in the exploitative foundation laid by British imperialism. Thus, these songs highlight the role of Afrobeats as a tool of political consciousness, which amplifies the voice, the frustrations of ordinary Nigerians while resisting political repression. They also demonstrate how music preserves history and documents political injustices while functioning as resistance against them.

CHAPTER THREE

AFROBEATS AS SOCIAL RESISTANCE

3.1 Introduction

Social resistance refers to the ways individuals and groups challenge, oppose, or respond to inequalities and everyday hardships within the society. In the Nigerian context, social resistance often emerges in response to poverty, unemployment, Inequality, hopelessness, exploitation, insecurity, and poor living conditions that affect the masses. This chapter examines Afrobeats as a vehicle of social resistance by analyzing five selected songs: Falz's *This Is Nigeria*, Burna Boy's *Common Person*, Teni Uyo *Meyo*, Burna Boy's *Wetin Man Go Do*, and Falz's *Johnny*. Each of these songs addresses critical social issues, which includes: corruption, moral decay, and class inequality, hopelessness and the urge to get rich quick among youth, social injustice and hardship.

3.2 Resistance Against Corruption and Moral Decay

In Falz's *This Is Nigeria*, Falz portrays the social realities of Nigeria society, exposing the nation's corruption, hypocrisy, and decay that have ravaged the society. The song highlights how poverty, unemployment, and insecurity have eaten deep into our everyday life. However, Falz's *This Is Nigeria* is a direct critique of the social, economic, and political challenges that Nigerians face daily. The song exposes the frustrations, and failures in Nigerian society, making it a tool for social resistance. According to Jusi I Love, the song opens with a speech by his father, Femi Falana (Jusi I Love) which immediately sets the tone of the song. He says:

“Extremely poor, and the medical facilities are poor

We operate a predatory, neocolonial capitalist system Which is founded on fraud and exploitation, and therefore You are bound to have corruption institutionalised”

This speech highlights Nigeria as a society built on exploitation, where institutions themselves are corrupt. It portrays Nigeria as an impoverished nation whose resources and wealth are exploited for the benefit of few individuals. However, these exploitative practices have been normalized as a result of the neocolonial capitalist system. This history shows the root of decadence in Nigeria society, making corruption a system that has become increasingly rampant. Falz begins with the song chorus, he says;

*This is Nigeria
Look how I'm living
now Look how I'm
living now Everybody
be criminal*

Here, Falz highlights how crime has been normalized in Nigeria. Internet fraud (Yahoo Yahoo), petty theft, and corruption have become a means of survival for the masses. By saying “*everybody be criminal,*” Falz resists the moral hypocrisy of leaders who condemn the youth while themselves are looting public funds for their own personal gain. Falz uses this chorus to say that, not only those who carry arms are criminals but the politicians are also capable of carrying out criminal activities and these have led to the decay of the society's moral values. As the song progresses Falz highlights a series of morally questionable acts in society. He starts by saying:

*Just because I'm on TV now
Person wey no get work is checking to
see if my watch is original*

This satirizes Nigeria's culture of being too concerned about material things. Instead of addressing poverty and unemployment, the society glorifies wealth, especially among ladies, they are moved by what they see. In Nigeria society, the youth always place emphasis on material things such as: expensive clothing, wristbands, flashy cars. People are judged based on appearance rather than morals. Celebrities and politicians are glorified for their expensive lifestyle. This ill act among the Youth has bred different social vices in the society, even the unemployed try to feel among. Thus, they engage in criminal activity to obtain these material possessions. Falz resists this culture by pointing out its roots in socio-economic frustration.

He further points out the corruptive nature and social decay among Nigeria political leaders, he says;

*Wey that Madam
Philomena? Money vanish
for your office 36 milli, you
talk say na animal Never-
ending recession, oh
When looter, and killers, and stealers are
still contesting election, oh
Politician when theif some billion and
billi No day go prison o*

Here, Falz draws our attention to a real-life scandal where Nigeria officials claimed missing funds were swallowed by animals. Falz uses satire to resist the corrupt manipulation of the government. Falz uses "*This is Nigeria*" to express how dumb and naive Nigerian politicians perceive Nigerians to be. They continually tell incredible (cock and bull) stories to account for their manipulations. How on earth will even a 12 years old child believe a snake

swallowed 36 million Naira? Yet they openly give these accounts to adult Nigerians. Falz further highlights Nigeria's reality, he emphasizes on how ordinary people face economic hardship, while the corrupt leaders who engage in criminal activity recycle themselves in power. Same people with different faces, they come with different promises, yet they do worse than their predecessors. They engage in criminal activity like stealing and killing; yet they are not arrested for their crimes. Thus, the song resists the moral decay in Nigeria society, where lies and deception have become the order of the day.

As the song progresses, Falz addresses the issue of insecurity in Nigeria, he

says; *"Police station dey close by six, security reason o"*

The line above directly critiques Nigeria's failed security system, where the police whose primary function is to protect lives and property are unreliable and are unable to provide security even for themselves. By mocking their inefficiency, Falz resists the government narrative; that ordinary people are to be blamed for insecurity in Nigeria. Furthermore, Falz highlights that the government owes the people security, yet day after day innocent people are killed by insurgents. By addressing this, Falz resists government silence and denial of ethnic violence. This is made evident as he says:

*"There is plenty wahala sha
Fulani Herdsmen still dey
slaughter Carry people dey
massacre"*

Furthermore, Falz addresses the issue of religion institutions in Nigeria, he says;

*“Praise and worship we singing now
Pastor put his hand on the breast of his
member He’s pulling the demon out”*

Falz uses the lines above to attack religious hypocrisy. By highlighting sexual exploitation in churches, he resists religiosity and exposes how religion is often weaponized against the poor, which emphasizes how leaders of religious groups deceive its members and create room for immorality. This depicts that moral decadence has become a problem in every aspect of the society even among religious groups. He highlights a society that has lost its morals, even religious leaders who ought to be morally responsible still indulge in immoral activities. He also critiques how religion has been commercialized into business. Falz resists exploitative practices where church leaders profit from their congregations while offering little in return.

This is made evident in the outro commentary by Falz father, Femi Falana:

*It is only in Nigeria where you can take money from the church
Money contributed by poor congregation members
You go and set up a university that the members cannot attend”*

Falz further highlights the issue of unemployment and failed government electrically facilitates. This is made evident in the line:

*No electricity daily, oh
Young people are still working multiple
jobs and they talk say we lazy, oh*

These lines above show the daily struggles of power outages, unemployment, and underemployment. The “*lazy youth*” here makes references to President Buhari’s statement about Nigerian youth being lazy. Falz turns this insult into resistance, showing how hardworking Nigerians suffer even under failed leadership.

As the song progresses, Falz emphasizes on the issue of internet fraud, which has become a problem in Nigeria society, especially among the young people. These fraudsters drive recklessly to show off their flashy cars, which has led to accidents, loss of life and property. Some even go the extra mile to involve themselves in ritual to help them get more money. Falz expresses his concern about how a criminal activity has been socially accepted as a means of livelihood, tagged as a “hustle”. However, this act (Yahoo Yahoo) has led to other immoral acts such as prostitution. Girls now throw themselves on these fraudsters because they are believed to spend more on them. This is made evident when he says;

*“Yahoo Yahoo don tear everywhere
now And we act like it’s so cool”*

He further says:

“SARS stop me for road, any explanation, you go talk am for station, oh.

This line highlights the arbitrary arrests, harassment, and killings by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). By exposing this injustice, Falz lends his voice to youth resistance against police brutality.

However, Falz’s *This Is Nigeria* is a criticism of Nigeria's decaying social system. Falz incorporates satire, direct references, and social commentary. Thus, the song resists normalization of corruption, moral decay, insecurity, and failed institutions in Nigeria, which shows how Afrobeats functions as a weapon against social unrest and corruption.

While many young Nigerians perceive the song as a voice of their anger, some conservative religious leaders criticized the lyrics, especially the lines that mock pastors, arguing that it disrespected sacred institutions. The song also provoked strong institutional responses. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), for instance, banned the track from radio for containing “*vulgar*” content, a claim Falz dismissed, arguing that authorities were merely

uncomfortable with his bluntness (CNN; Music in Africa). This controversy further projects the song's visibility, showing that Falz succeeded in arousing a debate rather than just entertainment.

However, through its vivid portrayal of social inequities, *This Is Nigeria* shows how Afrobeats can function as a tool that educates, provokes reflection, and challenges both authorities and citizens to acknowledge and address social injustices.

3.3 Resistance to Class Inequality

In Burna Boy's *Common Person*, Burna Boy highlights the issue of class inequality in Nigeria society. This inequality has become so prevalent that it has become a problem. However, in Nigeria the rich are given high regards while the poor are given little or no regard. When a person is poor in Nigeria whatever the person says is meaningless and pointless, while the rich are perceived as being wise. Even among women in Nigeria, they prioritize the rich over the poor, no woman wants to marry a common man. It's this context that births "*Common Person*". The song celebrates the resilience and dignity of ordinary Nigerians (farmers, traders, mechanics, and artisans) who sustain society despite facing overwhelming struggles. These ordinary citizens contribute to the development of the country yet they are ignored. *Common Person* centers on social resistance by dignifying the poor and working-class citizens who are often invisible in the nation's narratives. The song opens with:

*Na me wey dey clean una
house Na me wey dey wash
una car Na me wey dey
cook ununu
Na me wey dey wash una cloth
Na me wey dey work for your
shop Na me wey dey hawk
ununu*

Burna Boy begins by affirming the identity of the ordinary Nigerian. The ordinary Nigerians are used by the rich for different purposes, ranging from house cleaning to hawking, they do all these jobs just to earn a living and make out something for themselves. But despite being marginalized in society, Burna Boy uses "*common person*" to insist on their right to

happiness. As the song progresses, he says;

*I be common person
But my happiness, oh, still be my own
Everybody get role, no mean say your own role passin' my own*

Here, Burna boy states that happiness is within, that irrespective of one's class or financial status, happiness resides within an individual and nothing can take it away from one. However, he highlights that every individual has a purpose in life. Thus, one's class doesn't define one's purpose. Burna Boy uses "*Common Person*" to expose the narratives of survival in Nigeria: people continue to find joy and celebrate life even while carrying heavy burdens. Furthermore, Burna Boy laments on what being an ordinary Nigeria (common person) entails and highlights his state of contentment. This made evident as he says;

*Because na God, I dey put all my
faith Food for my plate, fit no do
me jo Mm, balanso
Even as things no dey go my way
Even in days where no get nothing at
all Mm, balanso*

However, Burna Boy states the hope of a common man, that irrespective of the economic, political and social situation of his country he still has his own happiness. Thus, Burna Boy portrays the common person as both victim and resistor, forced into hardship, yet refusing to lose his happiness.

However, a review in OkayAfrica argued that the song is "a subtle protest against the elitism of Nigerian politics and society, presenting joy itself as an act of defiance against oppression" (OkayAfrica, 2022). Furthermore, In a society where "making it" is often tied to wealth accumulation, Burna Boy insists that happiness and humanity exist outside the wealthy definitions of progress. By portraying the "*common person*" as worthy of pride,

Burna Boy resists the ideology that equates poverty with failure. On Twitter and YouTube, listeners frequently commented that the song “*spoke directly to the reality of ordinary Nigerians*” living with economic hardship. Many fans described it as “*a song for the streets,*” and it has been widely used in TikTok videos showing daily struggles; such as traders in markets, students in hostels, and artisans at work.

This reception of the song shows how the song functions as social resistance tools. It also demonstrates live experience and gives visibility to those often ignored. However, the song highlights the importance of valuing every individual, not just the elite or the rich, and also highlights the need for dignity in labour and everyday existence.

3.4 Resistance to Hopelessness, Youth Struggle and get Rich Quick.

In Teni’s *Uyo Meyo*, Teni emphasizes perseverance, self-belief, and divine grace. She drew from her personal experience of finally graduating after several years of delay. However, she uses the song as a symbol of youthful endurance in Nigeria society, where frustration, economic hardship, and the desire for quick success dwell among the youth. Through her lyrics, Teni resists hopelessness, acknowledges the struggles of young people, and promotes patience and hard work over shortcuts to success.

The song begins with hope and celebration, resisting hopelessness and the fear of failing. Many Nigerians have lost hope in their lives and have been forced to live in fear and despair. However, this song functions as an encouragement or motivation to the youth. In the chorus Teni uses Ondo Yoruba dialect to say:

*Ùyò meyo Ùyò
meyo Oh ùyò
Ùyò meyo lé'hun osan okan mi o eh
Ùyò meyo Ùyò meyo
eh ùyò Ùyò meyo lé'hun osan okan mi o e”*

“*Ùyò meyo*” and “*Ùyò meyo lé’hun osan okan mi o eh*” which translates to “*I’m rejoicing*” and “*I am rejoicing over good things that has come to me*” This opening line resists despair by expressing gratitude and joy even when one is experiencing difficulties or struggling with failure. It further explains that when one is happy and grateful one is sure to succeed. Teni reminds listeners that joy eventually comes when you rejoice and be grateful for everything. Her message of motivation and encouragement is portrayed when she sings:

*“Everybody’s born a winner, if only you just believe.
Close your eyes and come and see nah eyeh
Don’t you worry ’bout a thing nah”*

Here, she inspires confidence and faith in oneself, a clear resistance to the hopeless mindset that often runs in the mind of youth facing unemployment or failure. She highlights that every individual is created to win and succeed in life, though life itself can make it seem untrue but it comes to reality if it starts in one's mind. Thus, Teni portrays the need to always believe in the possibility of success.

However, she reassures her audience that believing and persevering alone is not enough to win and succeed in life, one needs to get something done to succeed. She uses this song to resist those who *build castles in the air*, or sorting for shortcuts to bypass processes in life.

In Nigeria fast money, fraud, prostitution and overnight fame are glorified, Teni emphasizes patience, diligence, and faith. She highlights that success is a process, not an instant event. However, she challenges the get-rich-quick ideology by valuing gradual growth and consistency. She further highlights the importance of working and striving, stating that no matter how big or small the goal is; it’s achievable. This is made evident in the lines:

*'Cos if you work hard
'Cos if you work
hard You can get it if
you want You can get
it if you want
If you strive hard you can be just what you
want If you strive hard you can be just what
you want If you work hard you can climb the
mountain top
If you work hard you can climb the mountain
top 'Cos nothing is too small
'Cos nothing is too
small And nothing is
too big And nothing
is too big"*

This makes “*Uyo Meyo*” a song of resistance to hopelessness, as it empowers listeners to keep going despite obstacles. Teni’s lyrics also portray the everyday struggles of Nigerian youth who battle personal challenges in their pursuit for success. She sings:

*What my eyes have seen eh,
ohun toju mi ti ri ah...*

which means “*What my eyes have seen, what my eyes have witnessed.*” The line acknowledges the pain, delay, disappointment, and experiences that many young Nigerians go through. Yet, irrespective of all of these challenges she still stands firm to push for her dreams and aspirations. She further says:

*“Don’t let them tell you, ‘you
can’t,’ and they won’t help
you,
just so you know.
Just keep on pushing.”*

Here, she portrays resilience and self-reliance. People will certainly discourage one when

they see one struggling, they may attribute it to “*village people*” or spiritual problems. She affirmed that discouragement from peers and friends are key aspects of the youth struggle.

When she further declares:

“Ibi ti daddy mi o de, ma de be ma tu koja oh”

Which means “*Where my father didn’t reach, I will reach and go beyond*”, Teni expresses the ambition of a new generation that’s determined to surpass past limitations of previous generations despite challenges.

As the song progresses, she sings;

“Mo she rere n’aiye mi ah, mo she rere”
(“I have done well in my life”),

She uses the line above to celebrate the fulfillment that comes from honest labour and divine grace, without shortcuts. She expresses gratitude and self-affirmation throughout the song to show that there is meaning and pride in hard-earned success.

Teni further highlights that success comes in God’s time, not through haste or deceit. This is made evident when she says:

“Wan ro pe ótan, sugbon Ọlórún so pe o ku”
(“They thought it was over, but God said it’s not”)

However, Teni’s “*Uyo Meyo*” functions as a declaration of resilience, hope, and integrity. It resists hopelessness by assuring listeners that everyone is born to win and succeed. In today’s world, people are pressured by material things and despair. Teni uses “*Uyo Meyo*” to urge the youth to believe in their journey, stay patient, and celebrate genuine growth.

3.5 Resistance to Social Injustice and Hardship

Burna Boy's "Wetin Man Go Do" is a realistic portrayal of the average Nigerian's daily struggle for survival. Through the lyrics Burna Boy gives voice to the frustrations of ordinary people lost in a system ravaged by corruption, unemployment, and inequality. The song embodies resistance, encourages Nigerians to keep striving despite the hardship and unfairness of the society. He emphasizes on Nigeria society where people value only the rich and the poor are given little or no attention. In Nigeria the poor are often treated with less respect, no one really cares about one with no influence or affluence. This is made evident as he says;

*"Them no dey call me tele
oo But them dey ca-call
me now Na empty belle oo
Na im make man dey feel somehow"*

When Burna Boy sings,

"Na empty belle oo, na im make man dey feel somehow,"

He highlights the reality of hunger, a common condition among poor Nigerians. The line points to economic inequality, where the majority struggle to survive while a few live in abundant. As the song progress, Burna boy presents the song's central question;

"Wetin man go do?" (What can a man do?)

Which exposes the helplessness of the oppressed in the face of injustice. It is a question of frustration that portrays the struggle of an average Nigeria, who has no choice but to survive and keep pushing, irrespective of the social injustice and hardship that ravaged the country. A man has to be a man to survive in Nigeria. However, he uses the rhetorical question to emphasize that a man doesn't have to give up but to strive all the days of his life, because if he doesn't, no one will do that for him.

Throughout the chorus, Burna Boy paints vivid images of the hardship endured by the common man. This is made evident in lines:

*Waka waka no rest oo
Wetin man go do
Money go dey for madam to cook
Ogbono Wetin man go do
Your pikin sefe gass go school
ooh Wetin man go do
When money come e go
hear Wetin man go do uh
uh*

He captures the hustle and restlessness of people trying to survive in Nigeria. “*Waka waka*” symbolizes the constant struggle to find money, jobs, or daily bread. However, a man has no choice but to hustle to make money and fit into society. He also emphasizes on family responsibilities depicting that his struggle is not for luxury but for basic survival which includes food, education for his children, and stability. This highlights the economic hardship that forces ordinary citizens to work tirelessly just to meet simple needs.

Even when he says,

“Body don dey tire, body no be firewood,”

Burna Boy highlights the suffering of the poor showing that hunger, and overwork are the daily realities of those left behind by social injustices and hardship in the society. Yet, he continues with the chorus “*Wetin man go do*”, which highlights his refusal to give up. His faith and determination show that even in hardship, there is inner strength and peace despite the weariness that subdues him. He further says;

*“God I dey serve yi
No go let my blessings to pass
me Enemy no go laugh me.*

Make the money chill and relax me”

However, Burna boy uses these prayer-like lines to show spiritual resistance against hardship, his refusal to lose hope despite oppression. It reflects the way many Nigerians resist hardship through faith and determination. Thus, he shows that he desires money not just for comfort but also for respect and social standing.

Moreso, Burna Boy indirectly critiques the society that forces people into desperate choices:

*“Man go fight for money
Man go fight for woman
Man go fight for
business Man go fight
for nonsense.”*

Here, he reveals the reality of a man, who has to fight for everything in life. He fights to make ends meet and thereafter fights for love, business and even fights for trivial things, but amidst all, a man still has to fight for them to be able to fulfill all the society required of him. However, In “*Wetin Man Go Do,*” Burna Boy highlights the everyday struggles of ordinary Nigerians. Through his lyrics he exposes the harshness of social injustice, hunger, inequality, and hypocrisy, while celebrating the resilience of those who refuse to give up.

In Falz’s *Johnny*, Falz confronts the harsh realities of police brutality and government neglect in Nigeria. The song tells the story of Johnny, an innocent young man who becomes a victim of an unjust system. Through this narrative, Falz condemns the abuse of power and corruption that have claimed countless innocent lives in the country.

Falz begins the song with a tragic story:

*“Johnny just drop, na popo shoot am
down This happen for Jos,
but e happen many times around.”*

These opening lines introduce Johnny which symbolizes an average Nigerian youth, who is unjustly killed by the police (“popo”). Falz’s use of narrative to draw the attention of his audience to extrajudicial killings in Nigeria.

Falz emphasizes on how frequent and normalized these killings have become, Falz refuses to let the victims of injustice be forgotten. His lyrics directly attack the injustice of law enforcement officers and the corruption within the justice system:

*“Johnny wey dem
kill, he no carry
gun
He no get knife,
he no even look them wrong.”*

These lines expose the unjust act of the police, killing innocent civilians without provocation. Falz challenges the authorities who claim to protect but instead terrorize citizens. The line also reflects the failure of the Nigerian state to protect human rights.

Falz extends his critique beyond the police to the judicial and political systems that promote injustice:

*“Dem no go post am for blog,
dem no go broadcast am for television.”*

This line accuses the media and authorities of covering up state violence, showing how the system protects the powerful while silencing victims. Falz also implies that justice in Nigeria is for sale, that those with influence escape punishment while the poor suffer. By criticizing this cycle, he resists the normalization of corruption. Falz uses Johnny’s death to represent the collective suffering of Nigerians under failed governance:

*“Johnny wey dem kill for
Jos Na him mama dey cry,
she say make we stop to shout.”*

He laments the repeated tragedies but also uses the song as a call to conscience, pushing listeners to resist injustice through awareness, unity, and demand for reform. Through storytelling, he exposes police brutality, corruption, and the collapse of justice, while mourning the lives lost to state violence. The song's recurring image of "Johnny" represents every victim of injustice.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined how Afrobeats functions as a weapon for social resistance, highlighting the struggles, resilience, and survival of ordinary Nigerians. The selected songs; Falz's *This Is Nigeria*, *Johnny*, Teni's *Uyo Meyo*, and Burna Boy's *Common Person*, and *Wetin Man go do* depict the realities of Nigerians where poverty, inequality, insecurity, and hopelessness play a major role in daily existence. In Falz's *This Is Nigeria*, Falz reveals the moral and social contradictions of the nation which includes; rampant corruption, ritualized fraud, youth unemployment, and religious exploitation. His satirical delivery highlights how social decay has become normalized, such that "everybody be criminal." Furthermore, In *Johnny*, Falz narrates the unjust killing of an innocent youth by state agents. While the narrative critiques police brutality, it also reveals broader social anxieties around insecurity, injustice, and the disposability of human life. However, Falz has articulated the role of his music explicitly, he says, "I am a very conscious artist ... I'll use my voice to amplify whatever message ... whatever fight ... needs to be fought." (Falz qtd. in Teen Vogue).

More so, Teni *Uyo Meyo* resists hopelessness by assuring listeners that everyone is born to win, acknowledges youth struggle through personal testimony of perseverance, and rejects the get-rich-quick mentality by promoting hard work and faith in gradual progress. However, *Common Person* humanizes the dignity of everyday Nigerians (traders, artisans,

laborers) whose strength sustains society despite marginalization. Thus, In *Wetin Man Go Do*, Burna Boy highlights the burden of poverty, presenting Nigerians as trapped in cycles of labour and scarcity, yet resilient in the face of adversity.

Together, these songs highlight Afrobeats' role in resisting social decadence in Nigeria society, by amplifying the voices and struggles of the common people. They resist cultural norms by telling the stories of poverty, hustle, corruption, and survival that define everyday Nigerian life.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

This study has examined Afrobeats as tools for political and social resistance, paying close attention to how artistes use songs to influence the political and social life of the country.

It's also revealed how Afrobeats has evolved beyond entertainment to become a vital instrument for social and political resistance. Through its rhythm, lyrics, and global appeal, artistes use the genre to challenge oppression, expose corruption, and demand accountability.

The first chapter highlights the purpose and scope of the study, which refers to the areas the study covers. It highlights that the primary texts used to discuss Afrobeats as tools for political and social resistance includes: Abdulkareem's *Jaga Jaga*, Abdulkareem's *Tell Your Papa*, Burna Boy's *20.10.20*, Burna Boy's *Another Story* and Burna Boy's *Monsters You Made*, Falz's *This is Nigeria*, Burna Boy's *Common Person*, Teni Uyo *Meyo*, Burna Boy's *Wetin Man Go Do*, and Falz's *Johnny*.

The chapter then goes on to reveal the theoretical background employed for the analysis of the study, which is New Historicism theory. Which states that for one to understand a literary work one must first know the history that shapes it. This theory is adopted in order to explore how afrobeats has been a voice for addressing political and social decadence in Nigeria contemporary society. The selected songs used for this study are reviewed, paying close attention to the ideas of other literary critics and scholars. Also, the study reveals a thesis statement that guides how the research work is presented.

The second chapter examines Afrobeats tools for political resistance, it focuses on how

Afrobeats artistes deploy their music as tools for political resistance, using their lyrics to challenge corruption and bad governance, state violence, repression and historical manipulation in Nigeria. Through close readings of the selected songs, Afrobeats functions as a medium for expression of discontent and addressing issues that affect the political system of Nigeria.

Eedris Abdulkareem uses “*Jaga Jaga*” and “*Tell Your Papa*” to critique Nigeria’s political system. The songs revealed the depth of corruption, chaos and poverty that have prevailed in Nigeria since independence. More so, Burna Boy’s “*20.10.20*” highlights the Lekki Toll Gate massacre, it also shows the destructive effects of state violence and portrays a cry for justice in the face of the government. However, Burna Boy’s “*Monsters You Made*” highlights how marginalization and oppression transform the oppressed into so-called “*monsters.*” In Burna Boy’s “*Another Story,*” Burna Boy emphasizes on Nigeria’s colonial history, reminding listeners that contemporary political dysfunction is rooted in the exploitative foundation laid by British imperialism.

The third chapter examined the Afrobeats as tools for social resistances. It’s focused on how Afrobeats songs are used as a means to correct social ills in the society. Artiste uses songs to critique and correct the social decadence that ravaged the country. This chapter also demonstrates how Afrobeats function more than entertainment and serves as a vehicle for social resistance response to poverty, unemployment, socials and class Inequality, hopelessness, exploitation, insecurity, and poor living conditions that affect the masses.

In Falz's *This Is Nigeria*, Falz reveals the moral and societal challenges of the nation which includes; rampant corruption, ritualized fraud, youth unemployment, and religious exploitation. While In Falz's *Johnny*, Falz narrates the unjust killing of an innocent youth by state agents which critiques police brutality and also reveals broader social anxieties around insecurity and injustice. More so, *Teni Uyo Meyo* resists hopelessness and encourages consistency in working to attain success. She portrays youth struggle through her personal testimony of perseverance. However, she resisted the get-rich-quick mentality among Nigeria youth by promoting hard work and faith in gradual progress.

However, *Common Person* portrays the dignity of everyday Nigerians (traders, artisans, laborers) whose strength sustains society despite marginalization. She further highlights that every one should have pride in whatever they find themselves doing as means of livelihood. More so, In *Wetin Man Go Do*, Burna Boy highlights the burden of poverty, presenting Nigerians as trapped in cycles of labour and scarcity, yet resilient in the face of adversity.

Analysis from the various chapters makes it clear that Afrobeats is more than just music or functions more than entertainment. It is a voice for the people; it educates and awakens the people's consciousness. Through its rhythms and lyrics, artists have continued to speak out against corruption, inequality, and injustice while giving hope to the oppressed and marginalized. Social and political conscious songs of Burna Boy, Falz, and Teni, shows that Afrobeats has remained a tool for awareness and change. These songs reflect the realities of everyday life in Nigeria and encourage listeners to think, question, and act. However, Afrobeats unites people through shared struggles and reminds them that music can be both a form of expression and a force for resistance.

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