

# Protest Music as an Instrument for Communicating Social Discontent in Africa

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## Abstract

Several people in Africa are discontent with the nature of governance, leadership and socioeconomic issues that plague the continent. These grievances are expressed through protest music, which draws attention to human dissatisfaction due to colonial and post-colonial oppressive rule. As a critical communication genre, protest music depicts the elites as architects of socioeconomic degradation. The paper examines socio-political climate in selected African countries. It describes the nature and relationships among governance, social discontent and protest music. Through contextual analysis, the paper identifies music as a medium of resistance communication. While it adopted Agenda Setting theory, purposive and available sampling techniques were used to select the relevant countries and songs. Findings reveal that protest music was strategically used in Nigeria and South Africa to unravel issues of social discontent. The genre operates as an information processing channel and socio-political commentary that offers the state knowledge about distasteful governance and opportunities to redress, adjust, amend and solidify good governance in affected countries. The analysis shows that protest music is context-specific and is used as an instrument for communicating social discontent in selected African countries.

**Keywords:** Human dissatisfaction, Protest music, Social discontent, Resistance communication, Governance in African countries

## Introduction

Protest music functions as an instrument for communicating social discontent in Africa. It unravels public dissatisfaction about the socio-political state of nations. As a weapon of human struggle in Africa, music is a powerful communication tool for dislodging oppressive rule. Protest music is the activity of human functionaries that protest to regain freedom. This communication has been in existence since the 1960s to resist the operations of leaders on issues related to civil rights violations, bad

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governance, police brutality, and corruption (Nzomo, 1973; Scher, 2014; Obono, 2017). Protest music manifest in the songs rendered like “Free Mandela” (Scher, 2014). Songs played a significant role in the reformation of South African government. Sounds of resistance by anti-apartheid movements prompted the struggle and dismantling of the Apartheid government (Vershow, 2010). Social discontent and protest music in Africa are engineered by the nature of human brutality, economic hardship, oppressive rule, white supremacy and general discomfort of citizens.

Songs are organizers and embodiments of protest reality (Hirsch, 2002). In the 1970s, David Nzomo used songs to call for African autonomy from the West. Sequel to his 1970 album on African politics, songs in *More Songs From Kenya* explored colonization, justice, self-determination, and hope (Nzomo, 1973). Protest against colonialism featured in African songs and performances to dislodge colonial rule. The history of South Africa is specifically marked by brutal systems of racial segregation of Apartheid, which forced most Africans to live under impoverished townships that lacked the most basic human rights (Vershow, 2010).

Emerging from the South African apartheid, songs became the communal act of expressing the injustices under the white British rule. Protest music is a key weapon of sociopolitical struggles. For Nelson Mandela, the struggle was inevitable:

We felt that without violence there would be no way open to the African people to succeed in their struggle against the principle of white supremacy. All lawful modes of expressing opposition to this principle had been closed by legislation and we were placed in a position in which we had either to accept a permanent state of inferiority, or to defy the Government (Clark and Worger, 2007: 150)

Resilience of Africans in the struggles against oppressive rule was obvious. Protest music bound citizens together in the fight against bad governance. While music inspires the oppressed to form strong coalitions against leadership, it disseminates information through “activation of the emotive powers that are all too often detached from the actual instruments of rights legislation” (Fischlin, 2003:10). Protest music is a ray of hope through troubled times (Birrell, 2013). Fela Kuti and Miriam Makeba used protest music to respectively fight corrupt military dictatorship in Nigeria and

Apartheid in South Africa (Birrell, 2013; Obono, 2017).

The relevance of music in African sociopolitical struggle is immense. It creates opportunities for displaying social discontent. Protest music remains a vital apparatus for empowering and emancipating citizens from oppressive rule of intimidation and subjugation. While songs express dissatisfaction, musical voices express rejection of political norms, opinions, attitudes and practices of leaders. Oppression of citizens remains the basis for protest music, a viable means of fighting bad leadership in the African continent. Protesters define and give shape to the music they use to disseminate information, express public opinion and critique administrative cultures. The music has life and power to inform, influence, and instigate social action against colonial, civilian, and military leaders. Its goal is to induce change in leadership and human wellbeing. In this paper, protest music is used within the context of social struggles and human discontent. Actualised through socio-political activism, the music is created by an oppressed group and constitutes freedom songs. It ranges from protests against colonial rule and the 1970-80s confrontations against oppression in Nigeria to the 1980s apartheid resistance in South Africa and the 2010 Arab spring revolts in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya in North Africa, among other African countries. The study was guided by the following objectives.

1. To examine the nature of music as a resistance medium of sociopolitical communication.
2. To describe the relationship between social discontent and protest music in Nigeria and South Africa.

### **Socio-political Climate and Music in Africa**

Many Africans are dissatisfied with the social, economic and political situations in their countries. They have concern about the rate of insecurity, violence, health crises, economic depression, impoverishment and corruption arising from bad governance, insensitivity, insincerity and greed of leaders. Most leaders in Africa are more interested in personal gratifications than improvement of the social conditions of citizens. Accordingly, they loot the treasury and have no definite socioeconomic agenda or plan to vacate office. Hence, rather than bringing a change in colonial rule, African leaders uphold bad governance, which limits development. Accordingly, countries are confronted with the reign of terror, brutal rule, hardship and poverty. Protest music is used to express public grievances, dissatisfaction and frustration, and to react against bad leadership.

Used by citizens and musicians to critique unproductive governments, music is one of the leading communication instruments to protest government's insensitivity to the masses. The genre is critical about the ruling class, who are perceived as sources of economic ruin, ethnic polarization and civil unrest. Some political figures in Ivory Coast co-opt music for political support as Reggae artists perform different roles as opinion leaders and political actors (Schumann, 2015). Some of these artists serve the needs of the state. Artistic production and music lyrics of Mzee Waziri Omari Nyange (b.1936) converged and diverged from government's ideologies by presenting innovative views, which could lead to nation-building in Tanzania (Suriano, 2015). While music can support leadership, protest music can communicate divergent views. Protest music remains a source of hope in an era of mal-administration. It falls within the resistance communication genre that is used in challenging the status quo to ignite hope for African citizens who have been socially exploited.

Across Africa, music has been employed for political support. It appeals to African publics and arouses critical examination of socioeconomic and political state of countries. Most revolutions in Africa used songs to unite and strengthen the morale of its adherents (Hirsch, 2002). While Reggae music is often associated with protest, artists in Ivory Coast frame political discourse using protest idiom and acting like public opinion leaders and political actors (Schumann, 2015), hence:

Reggae artists have found themselves on opposite ends of the political spectrum, each framing their discourse in an idiom of protest, but each also seen as lending support to one of the warring factions that have driven the increasing brutalization of the Ivoirian political sphere. However, artists' agency was severely constrained through a lack of freedom of expression and through threats from both the party in power and the opposition.

Protest music has power. It intimidates, forges change, enables resistance, strengthens the oppressed and unites people into taking a unified stand on public affairs. While Fischlin and Heble (2003:10) explore music as dissident practice, as power, and as the contradiction of "being silenced", "rebel musics" functions within a political context. The paper examines Nigerian and South African use of music for protesting and rebelling against

unfair leadership.

### **Agenda Setting Theory**

Agenda Setting theory was used in describing the role of music in highlighting bad governance and setting resistance agenda to citizens and leaders. Protest agenda was set because citizens were deprived of basic social and economic manpower for sustenance. Proposed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, the theory was based on the idea that the mass media force attention on certain issues, suggesting what individuals should think about, know about, and have feelings about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The authors suggest that the theory plays an integral role in the shaping of realities, with the general idea that what the public thinks about is set by the media, in this case, music. Protest music genre is used to unravel and relay information about bad governance in Africa. It forces attention to unjust leadership and bad socioeconomic conditions of citizens because the amount of time spent on these issues and the positioning of the information would determine the importance placed on the issues raised.

Since communication plays an integral role in society, music sets agenda to inform leaders and their publics about the nature of oppressive rule. The medium addresses vital issues aimed at reaching diverse populations. It informs citizens about the exploitative tendencies of leaders and resistance options against inhuman behaviours. Music was crucial in this fight as it suggested information that people were expected to think about, know about, and have feelings about. Although the media use agenda setting to control human “access to news, information, and entertainment” (Wilson & Wilson, 2001:14), music unravels information. In line with the basic assumptions of agenda setting, music shapes reality and has the ability to influence the visibility of events in the public mind. The study was hinged on the visibility proposition of the media because protest music was used to shape social reality.

The concept of agenda setting in society is for the media to selectively choose what people see and hear. McCombs & Shaw (1977:5) observe that issues highlighted in the media may influence the cognitions of the public, hence, “... the ability to effect cognitive change among individuals, to structure their thinking... its ability to mentally order and organize our world for us.” In other words, the media is successful in telling people what to think about, hence, protest music would affect cognitions to bring about the intended social change.

The first part of the agenda setting process is the importance of issues discussed in the media. The study was limited to the assumption that the media sets agenda through the attention it gives to salience of issues. The study addressed the agenda set by African protest music. It placed emphasis on specific issues that could enhance awareness and attention. *The agenda-setting function is argued to be the main contribution of the media to the political process (McCombs, 1981). In essence, media are effective in focusing public's attention on specific events, persons, issues and discussions (Shaw, 1979). Although the theory was originally focused on traditional media, its research has moved beyond examination of mainstream media to emerging media platforms (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; McCombs, 2003; Guo, 2012), including music. The theory is important in governance and has many benefits in society.*

### Methods

The paper identifies the processes and structures of music as a resistance medium of communication in Africa. The study used the qualitative approach in gathering and analysing data. Contextual analysis was used to retrieve data that describe the nature of governance, social discontent and deployment of protest music as a communication channel to resist oppressive rule. The analysis focused on specific phenomenological fields. This methodological framework is effective in studying actions and attitudes of individuals in group contexts. It addressed the research objectives, which centred on resistance music and events necessitating discontent. Issues on governance, social dissatisfaction and reactions against colonial and post-colonial rule were analysed by highlighting socioeconomic parameters, human rights violations, and citizens' resistance to oppression.

As used in this study, contextual analysis is analysis of text within its sociocultural and historical context. It systematically studies the nuanced social, economic, political, and aesthetic conditions within time and place in Africa. Contextual analysis was adopted to describe and interpret the text and context of songs. Analysis of situational conditions helped in assessing the text within sociological communication, taking cognisance of the social, cultural, political, and economic factors that propel protest music. This contributes to a better understanding of the settings and reasons for rendition of songs in different environments.

Adoption of this method is based on its strength in describing the occasion and location of protest songs and social discontent in Africa. Through purposive and available sampling techniques, Nigeria and South Africa were selected based on high prominence of resistance music while selection of songs was based on their nuanced emotive, expressive, argumentative and structural style. Interpretive techniques aided the analysis of data. Methods of data gathering and analysis interrogated music as a resistance medium of communication in Africa.

## Results

Music is used in the fight for freedom in Africa. Its emancipation ability is exploited by citizens and musicians in different parts of the continent, including Nigeria, South Africa, Senegal, Mali, and Egypt. The genre is adopted to showcase discontent about governance and exploitation of the masses. Most African countries were plagued with corruption and oppressive rule, which led to economic hardship, poverty, imperialism, displacement of people, imprisonment, exile, and death. Based on these and other social challenges, protest music was exploited to unravel resistance moves of the citizens.

### **Nature of music as a resistance medium of socio-political communication**

Music is an instrument of mobilization and has great value for resistance communication. Social, economic and political conditions of people in Africa are unravelled through it. The songs articulate social discontent and desired changes in public governance. The nature of music as a resistance medium is revealed in the processes of communication. Following the social composition of national populations, diverse languages and music forms are used to reveal the thoughts of citizens. Some of lyrics are serious, emotive and confrontational, with groovy rhythms, energetic trumpet and saxophone for message emphasis. Protest music dance in South Africa consist of foot stomping and spontaneous chanting, a symbol of apartheid resistance that is often invoked during African National Congress' (ANC) "Amandla" chant to intimidate government troops (Scher, 2014). The rhythm is energetic, fast, and militaristic with accompanying marching actions (Vershbow, 2010).

These forms of music performances communicate public intentions. The composition and bass voice of Vuyisile Mini contributed to his emergence as one of the most powerful organizers of resistance (Vershbow,

2010). Referred to as “the Father of Protest songs”, Vuyisile Mini composed one of the most popular songs in South Africa, “Ndodemnyama we Verwoerd” (Watch Out, Verwoerd) to protest against Hendrik Verwoerd, the “Architect of Apartheid”, for his role in the implementation of Apartheid during his tenure as Minister of Native Affairs (Vershow, 2010). The song was interpreted in different positive forms. Apartheid music also used the call and response method as exemplified *intoyi-toyi*, - a weapon of war introduced by youth that returned from training in Zimbabwe – to instil fear and intimidation (Scher, 2014). The music uses a highly-aggressive tune but dramatic in sending protest message. Music was used in the struggle for freedom from white supremacy.

Rendered in diverse indigenous languages like English, Pidgin English, Yoruba, Swahili and Afrikaans, the songs communicate to particular audiences. Different forms of music express the grievances of the masses and fight against white supremacy and inhuman rule. Hip hop, Reggae, Afrobeat, pop, and rap communicate discontent and resistance to exploitation. While racial discrimination was apparent in South Africa, colonialism, neo-colonial and corrupt rule were obvious in Nigeria, leading to economic depression. Unravelling insensitivity of leadership through music was to draw attention and whip up sentiments, hence, rather than being passive, citizens actively employed radical music approach to resist bad governance. Music, therefore, aided mobilization against the ruling class.

The struggle in some parts of Africa was more intense and lengthier. Socioeconomic indices were core in resistance communication. The relocation of South Africans from their traditional Sophia town to an unfamiliar and unwanted location was inhuman and insensitive. In 1955 armed police moved about 60,000 people from their indigenous settlement, which had lively arts, politics, religion, and entertainments and gave it to non-indigenes (Huddleston, 1956). This condescension of Africans, in addition to poverty, *necessitated music resistance*. Individual and corporate songs communicated resistance against oppression and racial discrimination. The attitude of prominent actors like Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and the Youth League was to develop “forceful popular protests against government segregation and discrimination” (Clark and Worger, 2007: 38). Emancipating youths from the structures of authoritarian and patriarchal culture was imminent. Musicians like Koos Kombuis (André Letoit), Johannes Kerkorrel (Ralph Rabie) and Bernoldus



Niemand (James Phillips) engaged in a countrywide campus tour to spread the message on reasons for the struggle against the authority in South Africa.

Imprisonment of ANC leadership in Robbin Island in the 1960s also triggered resistance from the people, including musicians. Because senior political prisoners were prohibited from having contact with other prisoners except during choir practice, incoming prisoners from the mainland conveyed news and instructions to them through songs (Scher, 2014). He added that exiled ANC members established the Amandla Cultural Ensemble, whose protest songs like 'Sobashiya Abazali' unraveled the military training received by youth outside South Africa. The song, "We will leave our parents behind and head for foreign lands in search of our freedom" also communicated the commitment to fight against oppressive rule.

Nairobi's Uhuru Park protesters changed the lyrics of *Yote Yawezekana* from its Christian message of hope to political protest and economic reform (Gazemba, 2014). During the reign of President Moi, political protest emerged because Kenyans could not accommodate his pervasive corruption. Ketebul Music also chronicled the contribution of Kenyan musicians in the movement for social and political reform. In the wave of discontent after independence in the 1960s, Kenyan musicians like Joseph Kamaru, D.O. Misiani and Gabriel Omolo poetically expressed people's disaffection through songs (Gazemba, 2014), adding that Hip hop musicians like Kalamashaka, PoxiPresha and GidiGidi Maji Maji used the song *Unbwogable* to protest. Spurred by the power of civil resistance, the Arab Spring toppled oppressive regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen through powerful soundtracks.

In Nigeria, oppression of the masses was massive and Fela Kuti and Hubert Ogunde used music to challenge colonial rule and African leadership. While Fela could not fathom the degradation and poverty of Nigerians, he attacked the ruling class by mentioning their names and the atrocities inflicted on people. Anti-government and military songs infuriated the government, leading to military attacks against Fela and *Kalakuta* republic.

Student activists, labour unionists and civil society also use songs to protest in Nigeria. The song "solidarity forever...we shall always fight for our rights" is principally used for protests against leaders. Many of Fela Kuti's songs are used by striking unionists and grieving protesters. In the 2012

protest against removal of fuel subsidy, the lyrics of Fela's "Army Arrangement" and "Shuffering and Shmiling" were used for procession in Lagos because the songs capture everyday life of the average Nigerian, who is battered by the conditions of living but keeps smiling. Most African are molested by power lords and lack basic amenities like water, roads, transportation, money and health facilities. While Fela began confrontational protests, he also sensitized citizens, inciting popular revolt against governments.

*mandla Awethu* is a popular protest and resistance song used by students' activists and labour unions in the world to whip up sentiments of power relations between them and their oppressors (Eesuola, 2015). Championed by youth movements, some of the songs rendered are to attract human well being. Young people openly express their sentiments and anger through direct song messages (Scher, 2014). Others led by rappers use protest music to prevent the clinging on to power by a Malian president in his 80s (Birrell, 2013). Music campaigns also communicated discontent of electorates. Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale *Abiola (M.K.O)* used "Hope 93" song to protest against bad governance, bidding farewell to poverty by projecting hope and progress in the midst of despair. His song critiqued the incumbent government and ignited resistance across party, ethnic and religious lines. Music is a crucial instrument for communicating discontent and igniting national well being. Songs criticise the excesses of leaders in relation to the suffering masses. Some musicians, protest movements and citizens make public their grievances through songs.

Music is central to protest movements, propagation of ideologies, resistance communication and survival of African people. It plays a pivotal role in the struggle against human oppression. Protest music reflects the times, especially resistance, political restructuring, unpleasant governance, socioeconomic challenges, and the fight for change and national development. Music in Africa is, therefore, not isolated from societal structures. It is an integral part of a poetic performance of an ensemble. It functions as a resistant instrument of communication.

### **Relationship between social discontent and protest music in Africa**

The analysis reveals a relationship between social discontent and protest music in South Africa and Nigeria. In other words, protest music is triggered by bad governance and deplorable living conditions of Africans, who are emotionally, psychologically, physically, socially and politically exploited

by rulers. Manipulation of the masses for self-aggrandisement challenges freedom of communication, resourcefulness, and survival, hence, protest music becomes a natural response against abusive ruling class. The goal of protest music is to regain human freedom, overthrow exploitative government and improve standard of living.

### Nigeria

Protest music is used in Nigeria to express discontent about socio-political issues. Musicians and civil rights' activists initiate it to activate change in governance. The music demonstrates social discontent of colonial and African rule. Hubert Ogunde (1916-1990) and Fela Anikulapo Kuti (1938-1997) are key artistes that used the genre for political communication in post-independent Nigeria (Obono, 2017). Their songs were framed as protest instruments against colonialism, sectionalism, political suppression, cultural dominance, socioeconomic deprivation and subjugation of citizens. The music was, therefore, employed to fight against powerful control of the masses by a few.

Engage in protest music is borne out of failure of the ruling class to serve the state. During the hike in fuel price by the Goodluck Jonathan regime in the wake of 2012 new year celebrations, musicians and civil rights activists staged a public protest in Lagos and Abuja. This was due to the insensitive decision of government to increase fuel price without basic considerations of timing, economic conditions and general living conditions of citizens. Among the many songs that were sung during the anti-subsidy protest, some reveal the bad economic situation in the country and the accompanying resistance from people. Hence,

(Yoruba rendition)

O ye ka binu, o ye ka binu

Gaari won, buredi won

Isu won ko see ra o

O ye ka binu

(Translation)

We are justified in this outrage, yes we are.

Garri is expensive, bread is costly

Yam is expensive and beyond the reach of the poor

We are justified in our outrage

The expression of discontent stems out of the high cost of living as reflected in the expensive food commodities. The hike on fuel price would affect the cost of transportation and other basic amenities, with increased poverty, hunger, social vices and death due to the inability of citizens to access the basic needs of life. Protest music became a civic rights apparatus to

communicate public grievances and uphold civic resistance. The behaviour of the public shows that group solidarity can transform the polity, uphold public opinion, and change social issues. It reveals that contemporary musicians can be used for political campaigns and war lords against oppressive rule. Accordingly, while music was used to support Jonathan's presidential candidacy, it was also used to challenge his unpopular policy on fuel price increase.

Fela Anikulapo Kuti used music as an instrument of communicating ill governance and corruption of African leaders. As a Pan-African protest singer whose lyrics condemned neo-colonialism, Fela's songs featured as social commentaries, confrontation against leadership, political engagement, resistance instrument, and voice for the oppressed. In the 1970s and 1980s, he was a known critic of the Nigerian military government and personalities. Kuti used songs in the 1970s to confront the military while mobilizing Nigerians to fight the system. He was a vocal opponent of Muhammadu Buhari's military government. He publicly staged and privately performed in his music 'empire', where every Friday and Saturday comprehensive language was used to critique institutions and individuals he considered to be perpetrators of evil (Olaniyan, 2004). Fela's confrontational songs reflect the social system and incite citizens against corrupt governance as portrayed in the excerpt from "Sorrow, Tears and Blood":

Eyah! Everyone run run run  
Eyah! everybody scatter scatter  
Eyah! police dey come army de come  
Eyah! confusion everywhere

Most of Fela's songs have strong political meanings. As spokesman for the downtrodden masses, or "sufferheads," of Africa (Collins & Eyre, 2015), Fela was never afraid of expressing his opinions in songs. As a radical music spokesperson of the African poor, his confrontational songs often resulted in battles with Nigerian authorities. Although he was jailed several times throughout the 1970s and 1980s for using songs to criticize the government and military, his successes lie in his inner-directed will, convictions, strength of character, and the linkage of social discontent with counter-hegemonic protest music and desire for human development.

Using songs of militancy, Fela operated in the realm of direct political confrontation. His fighting spirit is reflected in his anti-establishment songs

of Pan-Africanism. He was dedicated to the service of the masses and used music to war against forms of injustice, oppression and inequality. His protest extended beyond colonial administration to military and civilian rule. The song, “Alagbon Close”, was used to mock the police criminal investigation department headquarters in Lagos while “Zombie” was an insult on the Nigerian and African military mentality. Being fearless in protesting, he alluded to the military as being brainless: “Zombie - no go talk unless you tell him to talk” and “Zombie - no go think unless you tell them to think”. The assumption is that, military men just receive orders without inputs. As *zombies*, they have been hypnotized to carry out the will of the white man (Median, nd). Fela's music insinuates that the Nigerian military is working for the French or English. Attacking Nigerian soldiers through the *zombie* metaphor is socially intelligible, linguistically comprehensible, and culturally significant because a *Zombie* is not endowed with the mental capacity and ability to lead but is a 'follow-follow' in the Nigerian sociopolitical context.

The song, “Coffin for Head of State” was directed at General Olusegun Obasanjo, (then military ruler) while “International Thief Thief (ITT)” was a critic of the US multinational company, International Telephone & Telegraph (ITT) Corporation, which set up a telecommunications system in Nigeria under Chief Moshood Abiola, (Collins & Eyre, 2015). “Coffin for Head of State” emerged after Fela's mother was murdered by the military, who paraded her casket in front of the municipal buildings in Lagos. This revenge song was a call to place the Head of State in a coffin. It ignites public emotions to confront evil deeds.

In ITT, Fela equated those in government with thieves. He spoke about the negative actions of colonizers and their behaviours of taking and running away with African resources. The notion of International Thief Thief reflects different socio-political situations and how colonizers steal from the African continent. It is an attacks on corrupt leaders to incite the public against national and international oppression. The protest song was a direct insult on the men in power, heads of big corporations and companies that exploit the rich African soil, including MKO Abiola, who was the head of Nigerian branch ITT. The title of the song was inspired by this fraudulent communication company, hence, Fela's linkage of the evil deeds of ITT to slavery and exploitation of Africans. The exploitative tendencies of colonialism like corruption, oppression, economic inflation and theft reflect in the song lyrics, thus.

*...Many foreign companies dey Africa carry all our money go (2x)*  
*Them go write big English for newspaper, dabaru we Africans (2x)*  
*I read about one of them inside book like that*  
*Them call him name na I.T.T.*  
*I read about one of them inside book like that*  
*Them call him name na I.T.T.*  
*Them go dey cause confusion (Confusion!)*  
*Cause corruption (Corruption!)*  
*Cause oppression (Oppression!)*  
*Cause inflation (Inflation!)*  
*Oppression, oppression, inflation*  
*Corruption, oppression, inflation...*

This excerpt brings to the fore conditions of discontent that necessitated protest music, including economic, social and political breakdown initiated by foreign companies. Juxtaposition of bitter and sweet respectively portrayed in the lyrics and sound draws attention to the situation. The message is emphasised through the vocal movement and performance of the actors, forceful lyrics of the backing vocalists and the hard beats representing exploitation of African people. Emphasis was placed on the art of stealing by those in authority and this theme featured in many protest songs, including “*Authority Stealing*”, where Fela equated crimes of an armed robber with persons in authority. However, while armed robbers would be thrown into jail, the robber in authority would go unpunished as sung:

Authority people them go dey steal  
 Public contribute plenty money  
 Na authority people dey steal  
 Authority man no dey pickpocket  
 Na petty cash him go dey pick  
 Armed robber him need gun  
 Authority man him need pen  
 Authority man in charge of money  
 Him no need gun, him need pen  
 Pen got power gun no get  
 If gun steal eighty thousand naira  
 Pen go steal two billion naira  
 [Chorus]  
 Thief, thief thief!  
 Rogue, rogue, rogue!

### Robber, robber!

The juxtaposition of the two types of thieves (armed robber and authority man), their methods of stealing (gun and pen), the amount stolen (thousands and billions) and punishment (jailed and freed) shows the discriminatory tendencies in governance. Government officials are summarily described as thieves, rogues and robbers. The same conditions highlighted by Fela many years ago are still operational in current governance in Nigeria, where leaders loathe the treasury while poverty of the masses is at its highest level.

The songs depict social injustice, social discontent, human resentment and oppression of the African people and their resources by a few. It is a historical narrative of colonial and African maladministration. Governed by corrupt leaders, educated robbers and heartless personalities, protest songs violate the laws of impunity. The renditions show a relationship between social discontent and protest music, which is rampant in the African continent. The music operates as a force against ruling institutions. While some of the issues that led to protest music are on the increase in Nigeria leadership, protest music voices are currently limited in the fight for the proletariat and middle class. Where are the Fela's in modern-day Nigeria?

### *South Africa*

The struggle for freedom in South Africa took different forms, including protest music, which became prominent for liberation from white domination. The music was used to forge change through telling and retelling of historical events, biographies of individuals and songs (Scott 2003). The evolution of protest music mirrors the changing shape of struggle against Apartheid, which started from humble beginnings to a worldwide call for an end to the segregationist system, embodied in the message, 'Free Nelson Mandela' (Scher, 2014). Protest music emerged in the 1920s as one of the most widespread forms of mass resistance and a documentation of the struggle against Apartheid to communicate the grievances of the people. The music featured in the early choir music of the Ohlange Institute and pop hits of late 1980s (Scher, 2014).

Different South African music artists and citizens engaged in protest music performances to resist colonial rule. A group of Afrikaans musicians challenged the political system. People strongly resisted white rulership despite their disadvantaged positions, including the songs heard in prison.

For instant, Vuyisile Mini, a prominent political activist composed a protest song, 'Izakunyathel'iAfrica Verwoerd', (Africa is Going to Trample on You, Verwoerd) while in prison (Scher, 2014). The song was directed at Hendrick Verwoerd, the Minister of Native Affairs in 1958, who was identified as the architect of apartheid (Vershbow, 2010). The song's lyrics are explicit and targeted. It used strong language of resistance to portray that *Africa is going to trample on, and hurt Verwoerd* because of his intentions to harm African people.

The call on him to 'watch out' in "Ndodemnyama we Verwoerd" is deliberate. It communicates that Africans are not afraid of *Verwoerd*, hence, they will fight his evil acts and defeat him. Although *Verwoerd* is a Minister, he was challenged. The popularity of the song indicates the mindset of South Africans towards oppression, discrimination and domination. While the song was an expression of protest and a tribute to freedom fighters, it sounded like fun: "here comes the black man, your days are over" (Hirsch, 2002). Songs highlight the message. They capture the social structures that propel composition and rendition. The history of most protest songs in South Africa are related to the struggle against apartheid. "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika" was adopted as ANC's official anthem during the opening and closing of meetings by South Africa's educated elite to protest racial discrimination (Vershbow, 2010).

The song, "What have we Done?" exploited religious connotations to protest against racism. It used a calm tone to deliver the message. Using a rhetorical question as title of the song would appeal to the emotions of South Africans, their oppressors and the international community. Hence, the words, phrases, sentences and figure of speech communicate the unfair treatment of Africans. The appeal to the 'Lord' and 'Holy Spirit' to deliver them from the colour-based oppression is grounded on spiritual predilections of Africans as emphasized in the lyric, thus:

What Have We Done?

Lord, bless Africa

May her horn rise high up

Hear Thou our prayers

And bless us.



*Chorus*

Descend, O Spirit,  
Descend, O Holy Spirit.

What have we done?  
Our sin is that we are black  
Our sin is the truth  
They are killing us  
Let Africa return.

Protest music genre has powerful effects. The use of rhetorical questions and emotive expressions like 'they are killing us' because 'we are black' resonates the unjustifiable suffering and oppression of the black nation, appealing to human conscience and justice. This is actualised through expressive language and invocation of the Divine, which is the hallmark of the African belief system. Adopting figurative expressions such as metaphor, repetition, personification and symbolism presents Africa as a living object with emotional feelings. The song exploits existing contextual images and symbols that Africans are familiar with to aid communication. Elements of spirituality draw attention to supernatural authority to achieve the expected freedom, hence, the use of imageries like 'prayer', 'sin', 'Holy Spirit', 'truth', 'bless us', and 'Lord'. The intent of the song could be related to Negro spirituals, when African plantation workers in America invoked God for deliverance, accordingly, the call of the Holy Spirit to descend and help Africa during apartheid. The South African song of freedom connects with Negritude, exploiting Christian ideologies for protest and deliverance messages.

Radical protest music and actions were further employed for violent resistance. Lyrics of the song, "Sobashiy'abazali" (We Will Leave Our Parents), unveil the persistence and selflessness of freedom fighters to sacrifice the comfort of their families for the nation. The song evokes the sadness of leaving home for training camps. It employed linguistic and pragmatic approaches to convey objection and resistance as signalled in the lyrics, figures of speech and energetic and militant rhythms:

We will leave our parents at home/we go in and out of  
foreign countries/to places our fathers and mothers don't  
know/Following freedom we say goodbye, goodbye,  
goodbye home/We are going into foreign countries/To  
places our fathers and mothers don't know/Following

freedom (Olwage, 2008:169)

The song adopted some figures of speech to make the message appealing. Emotional appeal would attract sympathy from national and international observers. This sentimental song used repetition for emphasis while the sympathetic tone and mood shows the commitment of youths to human liberation. Sacrificing homes and parents for self-exile to unknown locations draws attention to the radical approach to resistance. Receiving training from foreign countries will equip them with the needed skills to fight and attain national freedom. Commitment of youth to liberation mirrors the attitude of young black Americans, including Martin Luther King Jr, who fought inequality and racial discrimination in America. Resistance is a skill. Youths move beyond their comfort zones to engage in renditions and activities that may cost them their lives.

Another protest music emerged following the forced removals of South African images and cities. Intending to clean up the country and erase 'black spots', Sophiatown was rebuilt as a white suburb (*Triomf*). This action was unwelcome, igniting resistance from South Africans. The removals propelled the song "Meadowlands", referencing Meadowlands township, which many Sophiatown residents were forced to relocate (Vershbow, 2010). The song expresses the devastation of the evacuation of inhabitants:

*We will move all night and day  
to go stay in meadowlands  
you'll hear the white people saying  
let's go to meadowlands.*

Originally composed by Strike Vilakezi, Miriam Makeba popularized the song. While international performances of the song exposed audiences to the injustices suffered by racial groups in South Africa, popular artists of all races mobilized people against apartheid. Scher (2014) indicates that Stimela released politically relevant protest hits like 'Whispers In The Deep' (1986) and 'Trouble In The Land Of Plenty' (1989). Some of the songs carried negative energy, compelling the destruction of oppressors. Hence, discontent, resistance and protest music in South African was presented in calm but aggressive formats as indicated in the overt political songs in 1990 by Brenda Fassie - 'Black President' and 'Shoot Them Before They Grow'. Such imageries showcase the level of resistance by South Africans to end racial oppression.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Social discontent is expressed through protest music. Songs play crucial roles and are formidable instruments of political communication. They provide the means of expressing popular resistance, sustaining resistance (Eesuola, 2015), and activating emotional sentiment. Songs express social discontent and political injustices. They go beyond dissemination of information to fighting oppressive rule. The importance of the genre lies in its use by popular musicians to “articulate the views of the powerless citizens and provide a critical discourse on national and international affairs” (Craig, 1998:1). Protest music takes different forms across Africa, with the goal of resisting oppressive rule that produces socioeconomic dysfunction and seeking change for the masses. In other words, the music brings to prominence issues that need public attention and discussion. Protest music in Nigeria and South Africa *focused public's attention to specific events, persons, issues and discussions on discontent to ignite resistance. This finding is consistent with the agenda setting proposition of Shaw (1979).*

Protest music has potentials for developing human consciousness and changing perceptions of the oppressed and oppressors. The music was central to South African struggles, serves different purposes in rallying a response from citizens and raises awareness for the international community (Olwage, 2008). It can change people's minds and feelings about their humanity (Ray, 1990). Based on his ideology that "music is the weapon", Fela Kuti used politically-charged lyrics and anti-establishment politics to critique established institutions and personalities (Olaniyan, 2004). The genre was used Fela Kuti and Hubert Ogunde to unravel the wrong deeds of colonial and postcolonial masters (Obono, 2017).

Bad economic situation, political dominance, authoritarian rule, and relative deprivation of masses propelled the resistance that featured in protest music. The incongruence between state resources and living conditions of the masses ignites a social response. Accordingly, music is an instrument of persuasion and political battle. Its components like drums, chants, and songs perform religious, social and military duties (Ilesanmi, 1998; Olarewaju, 2011), which help define people's experiences and encodes memories in different facets of lives (Chemerinsky, 2006). Music has been used throughout history to express people's inner emotions (Turino, 2008; Schacter, 2011; Obono, 2017 & 2018). Protest music intensifies emotions and reflects the nature of governance systems to ignite

social change. Expressed through sentimental appeals, music mobilized Nigerians and South African blacks against bad governance and apartheid regime, respectively. Protest music activates different responses, including anti-government movements, imprisonment, exile, self-rejection and social change. It inspires, motivates and energizes. It attracts attention, increases knowledge and influences human behaviour. The peculiarity of African music lies in its connection with sociocultural context. Its lyrics and performances are structured to suit listeners' environments, thereby facilitating identification, expression and interpretation of messages. Examining the divergent ways through which music fuels social and political movements, Turino (2008) discusses its use by the Nazi Party and the American civil rights movement. He highlights the power of music in expressing inner emotions, inspiring political movements, and exploring reasons music and dance are at the centre of most personal and social experiences. While the diversified pattern of music is suited for particular events, people and purposes, the mixed structural forms would create the intended aura that is consistent with the message. Music is sentimental and often framed to appeal to people's emotions to achieve the desired goal (Obono, 2018). Despite the seriousness in some of its messages, instrumentation stimulates dance performance and audiences' participation.

Musicians sometimes face verbal and nonverbal attacks from government as indicated in the burning of Fela's house and killing of his mother. Although the military harassed and brutalized him, they were unable to silence Fela Kuti's protests against the excesses of leadership in the 1970s and 80s (Gazemba, 2014). This action was not peculiar to Nigeria as Gazemba added that Joseph Kamaru and D.O. Misiani also faced similar challenges as the former endured political backlash from the Moi regime while Misiani occasionally fled the country anytime he released a song that was critical of the government. Self-exile became a regular response to protest musicians. The pressure against the apartheid government in the 1970s and 1980s was upheld by musicians like Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela (in exile) and Lucky Dube (at home).

Protest music challenges oppressors. It is confrontational but raises human consciousness. The South African apartheid movement and songs of Fela attacked colonialism and African governments. It provides knowledge about distasteful governance using context-specific messages. As musical warriors and protest leaders, musicians drew heavily from the connections between music, militancy, violence and resistance, hence the use of

confrontational music as an instrument for communicating social discontent in Africa.

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