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—Guralnick and Wolk (2002)
"BEAST OF NO NATION" (BY FELA)

Ahhhh
Let's get now into another underground spiritual game.
Just go dey help me dey answer you go dey say: aya kata

Oh yah
O fey shey loo
Aya kata
Mo fey shey 'gbon
Aya kata
O fey shey loo
Aya kata
Mo fey shey 'gbon
Aya kata
O fey shey wa'
Aya kata
Mo fey shey g'bein
Aya kata

Basket mouth wan' start to leak again-o
Basket mouth wan' open mouth again-o
Abis you don forget to say I sing-eo
Basket mouth wan' open mouth again-o
I sing you say
I go open my mouth like basket-eo
Malag be agbere
Basket mouth wan' open mouth again-o...

Fela weitin you go sing about-o
They go worry me...
They go worry me—Worry me worry...
They go worry me
They want to make I sing about prison
“BEAST OF NO NATION” (TRANSLATED)

Fela is getting ready to narrate...
Let’s get down to another spiritual level: try to understand what I am saying
Just help me by answering: things are not good
Let’s start...
They used a punch to beat me up
Things are not good — oh no...
They used a punch to finish me off
Things are not good — oh no...
They used a punch to beat me up
Things are not good — oh no...
They used a punch to finish me off
Things are not good — oh no...
They used a punch to shake me up
Things are not good — oh no...
They used a punch to finish me off
Things are not good — oh no...

My mouth wants to leak info again
Fela wants to speak again
Have you (gov’t) forgotten that I sing
Fela will start to talk again
You (gov’t) know that I sing
I will start to talk a lot in my songs again
And I don’t care what people will think
Fela will start to talk again

Fela, what are you going to sing about
The people keep asking me
Fela what are you going to sing about
The people are bothering me
The people want me to sing about prison
... They want to know about prison life
They go worry me...

The time where I dey for prison
I call 'em inside world

The time where I dey outside prison
I call 'em outside world

Now craze world, no be outside world
Craze world

No be outside world the police dey
Craze world

No be outside the soldier dey
Craze world

No be outside the court them dey
Craze world

No be outside the bad street dey
Craze world

No be outside the judge them dey
Craze world

Now craze world be that
Craze world

No be outside Buhari dey
Craze world

Now craze man be that
Craze world
... They want to learn about prison life

They are asking him for information...

When I am inside the prison
I call it the inside world

When I am in Nigerian society
I call it the outside world

Nigerian society is the crazy world

Crazy world

Police are in the outside world, right?

Crazy world

Soldiers are in the outside world, right?

Crazy world

Courts are in the outside world, right?

Crazy world

Dangerous streets on the outside, right?

Crazy world

Judges are in the outside world, right?

Crazy world

Now that is the crazy world

Crazy world

Nigerian president is in outside world?

Crazy world

Now that is a crazy man.

Crazy world
Animal in craze man skin-e
Craze world
Now craze world be that
Craze world
No be outside Idiagbon dey
Craze world
Now craze man be that
Craze world
Animal in craze man skin-e
Craze world

MUSIC AS A TOOL FOR RESISTING STATE-IMPOSED OPPRESSIONS

Music was used as a culturally appropriate tool of political resistance by Fela Kuti in Nigeria during an era of military regimes. Within the historical and spiritual contexts of Fela’s work, the power of this tool is understood both as empowering for the people and as threatening to the state. This is true in Nigeria, and in other nations where people continue to resist state authoritarianism, and the implementation of racist and colonial, structural and institutional, inequalities. In Nigeria cultural resistance to colonial structures thrives in music. Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* emphasized the power of cultural resistance and placed it as “central to political change, as it concerns the creation of alternative social meanings and values which challenge the dominant ideology of the ruling class” (Ghunn 1996-97, 7). In Nigeria, a land of extremes and immense diversity, music pulls people together, and creates avenues for connectivity and communication.

Artists who produce socially significant texts that critique authoritarian state regimes and structures in their lyrics play a key role in resisting state violence: “Cultural struggle is about raising the political awareness of the mass population, exposing the apologists for injustice and inequality, and creating an
An animal hiding in a crazy man's skin

*Crazy world*

Outside is the crazy world

*Crazy world*

Tunde Idiagbon (chief of staff) is in the outside world, right?

*Crazy world*

That is a crazy man

*Crazy world*

An animal disguised in crazy man's skin

*Crazy world*

alternative set of values and different perspectives of the world” (Ghunna 1996-97, 7). Fela's music represents such alternative values. His songs provide an avenue through which oppression can be both discussed and criticized, and thus destabilized.

**HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF NIGERIA**

Nigerian history is full of upheaval and turmoil. Two hundred years of commercial slave trading in West Africa yielded devastating results. Between 1500 and 1700 Africans went from being a minority in the world’s slave population to being a majority. It has been estimated that “eleven or twelve million of the... eighteen million or more slaves exported from Africa... came from West and Central Africa,” and this number is evident in the “continuing influence of West African culture in the Caribbean and North America” (Africa Policy 1996). In 1914 Nigeria became a country under British colonial rule, achieving independence in 1960 through political negotiations, not war (Nigerian Government 1999). The lack of a violent struggle brought about a peaceful transition, which legally is *post*colonial but economically is not. European and North American nations continue to have immense access to African resources. This access has resulted in much upheaval and unrest in Nigeria.
After legal independence approximately thirty years of military rule plagued the country, with dictatorships accompanied by flagrant human rights violations that instituted colonial economics and politics. Fela’s life started during colonial times, spanned the era of military regimes, and ended two years before democracy was achieved with President Obasanjo (a former military dictator who ordered the 1977 raids on Fela’s home and the murder of his mother) as Nigeria’s president. It is from within this context that Fela’s political stance was constructed and presented in his music.

MUSICAL CONTEXT: FELA’S AFRO-BEAT AS EMPOWERING AND ACCESSIBLE

Initially, Fela sang non-political songs in Yoruba and English, “but he soon started to sing anti-establishment songs, which very quickly brought him in collision with both imperialism and their local agents in power at home” (Ogunde 1998, 1). Fela coined the term “Afrobeat” and created a sound to define it. It was inspired by dissatisfaction with High Life, a form of music that dominated African recordings at the time. He was disturbed by the European emphasis on loping beats and singular guitars in High Life, as opposed to the rhythmic drums and brass-based beats of African sounds. He began using “jazz,... syncopated call and response vocals and brass,” and a “raw and natural honesty and energy” that came to define Afrobeat, both as a form of music and as a political avenue for commentary (Connelly 1999).

Rader (2003, 185) explains that for political artists “forging their own artistic language is not simply an aesthetic, it is also an ethic.” There is a sense of empowerment in the artistic creation of a voice, and through Afrobeat Fela empowered his voice and inspired African people who could relate to it to listen to his music. Through the re-emergence of African sounds in music Fela inspired people to relate more closely to African culture and African pride.
SPIRITUAL CONTEXT: EMPHASIZING AFRICAN CONCEPTIONS OF RECORDING HISTORY

The *abiku* in Yoruba traditions refers to ideas of reincarnation. More specifically, *abiku* refers to the concept of reincarnation as it emerges in Yoruba spirituality: “The Yoruba refer to the denizen, back from the chthonic region and born again, as *abiku*.... The metaphysical idea of Abiku... and the notion of rebirth serve as a master-narrative of the parent-child relationship in Pan-African socio-political contexts and literary texts” (Ogunyemi 2002, 663). Within the context of *abiku* social memory is passed down through generations in the spirits that reincarnate and inhabit the bodies of *abiku* children. Fela was identified as an *abiku* child by his family. It was believed that he possessed his grandfather’s spirit. Through that possession he had the experiences and the wisdom that the spirit carried. This is important in relation to the oral culture of many West African traditions. “Since *abiku*/*ogbanje* [ogbanje is the Igbo concept of reincarnation] evokes the past, with its separations and instability, the concept can serve as a springboard for examining issues of memory” (Ogunyemi 2002, 663). Within the context of Fela’s songs the assessment and denouncement of oppression exists in links between precolonial, colonial, and “post”colonial Africa. Being *abiku*, Fela had the ability to relay history as well as the impact of the past on present situations in Africa. He presented his songs on contemporary oppression as a connected continuation of the past.

LINGUISTIC CONTEXT: FELA’S LAGOSIAN ENGLISH

In Fela’s songs language is crucial. “Apart from his musical progressiveness he mixed up elements of at least three languages... Standard Nigerian English,... Nigerian Pidgin English and... Yoruba” (Coester 1998, 1). Code-mixing or code-changing, as defined linguistically, includes the incorporation and intertwining of languages, something Fela did often in his lyrics. When addressing the elite he used Standard Nigerian English; when addressing civil society he used Nigerian Pidgin English;
when addressing Yoruba political issues he used Yoruba. Often, as he changed back and forth between dialects and languages, Fela mixed them and created new words that drew his three audiences together. These new words came to represent modes of expression distinct to Lagos State, and became associated primarily with Nigerian urban life and culture: *Ayaka kuta, Ayaka kotu, Ayaka keete* are words that Fela created, and they have come to be expressions of suffering, oppression, and struggle in Lagos.

Fela’s songs continue to influence the way Lagosians speak and have come to illustrate Lagosian life. Maier (2000, 24) explains that Lagos is “a place full of frustration borne by millions of people who moved to the city in search of riches, but only found poverty, power cuts, water shortages, and breathtaking mounds of garbage. The city’s heart literally beats to pulsating rhythms and angry lyrics against the thieves in power from the Afro-beat musician and political activist, Fela Kuti.” On the national scale there are current political attempts to make pidgin English the official mode of communication in Nigeria because traditional English is viewed as elitist (mastered by those who are Euro-educated) and representative of the “slavery method of communication” in a manner that reimprints colonial structures in the country (Bala Habu 2004, 4). Fela’s heavy reliance on pidgin to communicate through song expanded the boundaries of his audience while reinforcing the importance of identity through language. Instead of shunning pidgin and relying on British English to communicate, Fela used British English only to emphasize the elitist and oppressive elements of European relations with Africa. His politicization of language through songs has provided support for the movement to abolish British English as the official form of communication in Nigeria.

**MUSIC IN AFRICAN SOCIETIES**

Fela’s native language, Yoruba, has been described as a “musical” one, with a “richness and rhythmic quality” that encompass a naturally musical feel to its sounds and expressions (Morales 2003, 151). In addition, as Morales notes, it has been stated that,
within the African and Caribbean contexts, “the interdependence of music/dance/gesture to language is strong.... By listening carefully to the musician and writer from these cultures, one can discern this connectivity” (150). Also, “South African writer Mongane Wally Serote points out how pervasive music is in the African culture: ‘one grew up, was brought up by music really. It... articulated one’s dilemma, one’s hopes’” (148).

Because music is such a key aspect of many African cultures and lifestyles, the use of music for sociopolitical commentary became a particularly powerful tool for Fela; it is within this understanding that the Nigerian state’s reactions to Fela can be better contextualized. The state was threatened by him because his anti-state politics reached many people, and those who felt powerless could relate to his messages and analyses. Using music and song to communicate provided Fela with an avenue natural to the lifestyle, upbringing, and culture of many Africans. In addition, the history of song and music in many parts of Africa (South Africa being the most documented) illustrates that Africans have used music and lyrics to communicate during difficult times, to denounce oppressive leaders, and to encourage resistance to brutality.

ORAL HISTORY AS AN AFRICAN TRADITION

In the 1960s scholars began to use “local oral traditions as a source for reconstructing the pre-colonial African past.... Such sources placed emphasis on African perspectives, thus providing a much-needed balance to Euro-centric accounts then prevalent” (Lee 2004, 83-84). This emphasis on African voices reinforces the relevance of Fela’s firsthand presentation of Nigerian experiences. The emphasis on oral traditions is relevant to his use of the narrative in presenting his stories, both by legitimizing his mode of expression and by emphasizing its necessity. In oral historical research methodological constraints are observed through the researchers’ influence on the people they are interviewing (Lundberg 2003, 68). Issues relating to translation, expression, and researcher bias become pertinent. In Fela’s case the songs
are a form of oral history, recording the implications of military regimes from the perspective of the average citizen in Nigeria. Issues related to transcription and researcher bias become minimized in this form of oral history, since the information is already recorded in song. In her assessment of oral historical research methods Lundberg (2003) refers to a ceremonial song that recorded and passed down through generations a historic voyage that a First Nations people undertook in resistance to colonization. In this song it becomes evident that historical records, in Native American history (similar in Nigerian history), are not only based on events but also focused on recording the experiences associated with such events.

Fela’s songs take people through specific experiences. The spiritual game Fela refers to in his songs invites his audiences to remove themselves from immediacy and to place themselves within the journeys he is narrating to them. As an abiku he represents both narrator and ancestor in his songs. As a musician he is able to invite large numbers of people to experience that journey.

FORMS OF POLITICAL RESISTANCE IN FELA’S SONGS

While many of Fela’s songs illustrate his style and mode of resistance, I focus here on “Beast of No Nation” (see above for excerpts) to highlight his techniques and political messages. Most of his songs are presented in a narrative format, a style that engages his audience in a conversation about politics, colonialism, and oppression. “Beast of No Nation” illustrates his role as both political narrator and oppressed character. This is the first song Fela released after his imprisonment. In it he refers to himself, the oppressed character, as a basket mouth with the ability to leak words; this leaking makes him a target of the Nigerian military regime.

In this narrative Fela is conversing with his audience, using his voice to repeat the questions they ask him and then using his background singers to answer these questions. He says that
the people keep asking him why he continues to spill words if the result continues to be beatings, arrests, and imprisonments by the military government. In response Fela explains that it is not he who speaks but politicians who speak lies to the people. The use of narratives in this song reveals how he uses music as a political tool of resistance. Fela mocks the state for its attempts to silence him, he dubs himself “basket mouth,” and he reverses people’s questions about his thoughts and experiences to bring their attention back to the state.

In response to questions about his experiences in prison Fela uses this song to explain that the outside world has the police, the courts, the corruption, and the lying politicians. Prison, he explains, is an inside world where that madness exists only as an extension of the madness in society. He urges Nigerians to see the madness of their own society, and to work to challenge and change it. Fela uses this song to present his strength despite imprisonment and to point fingers at political, social, and economic structures that oppress the people. His strength lies not only in refusing to be silenced, but also in exposing those who have tried to silence him.

By presenting narratives that mirror or address experiences specific to Nigerian society, Fela piques the interest of his audiences and captures their attention. He brings their own understandings of and experiences with oppression to a level of awareness that addresses global oppression and colonialist histories. In a political context these elements combined become threatening. Not only can Nigerian people relate to him, but also they can relate on a level that is interpersonal. His songs have the potential for what the Nigerian nation-state would consider disastrous, as Fela explains in “Beast of No Nation” — disastrous because his audience is large and, through his songs, is becoming more educated about and aware of the conditions that oppress them.

Rader (2003, 180) defines engaged resistance as having two necessary elements. One involves a “unified act of resistance,” and the second involves acts of “expression and communication that are fundamentally linked to... histories, cultures and beliefs.”
Fela’s music often pulled people together in several formats. While Fela was alive people conversed with each other about his newest releases and his political messages. His concerts came to mirror organized rallies and always involved a large segment of spoken words in which he addressed the most recent political and economic scandals in Nigeria. After the military government killed his mother Fela wrote a song outlining their actions and organized a rally throughout the streets of Lagos, during which he presented this song for the first time to his fans. Included in this rally was a replica of his mother’s coffin. The rally was also a re-enactment of his mother’s funeral, which ended at the military barracks, where Fela left her coffin before the gates: you killed her, you bury her, was the message. This rally/funeral drew tens of thousands of protesters. After Fela died in 1997 his own funeral was attended by approximately one million people (Connelly 1999).

Fela’s music provided a resonance that addressed Nigerian historical, cultural, and spiritual systems. In addition to education and political conversation through song, Fela used humour as a tool of resistance. “Humor remains one of the most successful and most frequent modes of... resistance. Laughing at the enemy is a way to make him less dangerous, more human” (Rader 2003, 183). Fela debased the authority of the military regimes by exposing them as people vulnerable to criticism and ridicule. He thus challenged their perceived invincible status.

ART AS POLITICAL EDUCATION AND EXPOSITION

In assessing Mona Hatoum’s visual art as resistance to oppression of the Palestinian people Jabri (2001, 38) states that it “presents what Michel Foucault refers to as a ‘critical ontology of the self.’ It encompasses both a critique of the present and an awareness of the place of history in the constitution of the self.” This presentation of the self within the context of the history that led up to the creation of that oppressed self is key in understanding Fela’s themes and modes of resistance through song: Fela draws
a macrolevel picture that enables his oppressed audiences to better understand their conditions. Within these modes of expression the power of resistance lies not only in exposing Nigerian sociopolitical, economic, and historical realities, but also in making the links between them.

In addressing resistance through political art forms Jabri (2001, 39) states that there is "a vulnerability associated with this space so the viewer is no longer a mere passive onlooker, but is deeply involved. The viewer enters a zone of questions and interrogations. The subject comes to bear witness, has to bear witness, and it is in this moment that the ethical emerges. It is in this moment of reflection that the subject acquires a critical attitude, an ethos built on creativity and critique." This analysis describes the power of the narrative and interactive style in Fela’s songs and performances. Fela often engaged his audiences during live performances. In his recorded music he always relied on his backup singers to answer his questions and probe at his ideas. He engaged in conversations with them as he sang and recorded his music of resistance. This engagement drew those who listened to his music into a conversation, forcing them to communicate with him as he sang; listeners ceased to be passive and became deeply involved in the messages of the songs.

Jabri (2001, 40) also states that political art “represents a form of resistance that Foucault refers to as a permanent critique of the present... articulat[ing] a political subjectivity.... Each work contains a remembered past,... while in and through this history, the present in all its tensions, all its dangers, is opened out to the viewing public.” Fela’s sung narratives draw people into that space of political instability that forces them to address political problems. His stories about everyday life and struggle in Nigeria are personal and accurate. These details, in conjunction with the historical-political context, comprise a strong message that, when understood on the grander scale of oppression and within the context of continued exploitation of Africans, is angering, emotional, and personal, and constitutes the necessity of resistance.
CHINESE AND CUBAN STATE REACTIONS TO POLITICAL MUSIC

In assessing the Nigerian nation-state’s reaction to Fela Kuti it is important to provide perspective through an analysis of other nation-states’ reactions to dissident musicians. I present two main responses: one matches the reaction of the Nigerian nation-state (China), while the other counters it (Cuba).

On April 27, 1998, Wu Ruojjie, a Chinese rock musician, was sentenced to three years in a “labor re-education” camp for disclosing the arrest of four poets in southwest China.” He was sentenced for “divulging state secrets” in a song (Huang 2003, 183). Wu associated himself with the student democracy movement in China and sang about the Tiananmen Square massacres. He belongs to a community of political rock musicians who challenge the Chinese nation-state through their songs. Cui Jian, the father of this community, wrote songs in which he defined music as a weapon, stating in one song that his guitar is a knife. Out of this community and leadership emerged Wu’s political use of music as resistance through exposure, education, and political dialogue and commentary. In China it is recognized that the promotion of political resistance is unsafe. As Huang notes, “the cruel lessons of the Tiananmen massacre have taught rockers that implementation of genuine political challenges is hazardous to one’s health” (191).

In Nigeria the repercussions of musical rebellion were also apparent. Fela faced much opposition and attack from the Nigerian military regimes during his life. In resistance to such reactions, Fela established the Kala-kuta Republic: the land on which he lived and performed was transformed into a republic, which incorporated laws and social control mechanisms, and functioned as a political, musical community. In November 1975, the Kala-kuta Republic encountered an attack, which included a raid that destroyed much of the property, severe beatings, and the rape of women found inside the compound (Connelly 1999). Two years later a “ruthless invasion” of the rebuilt Kala-kuta
Republic was undertaken by "unknown soldiers," who maimed and raped its inhabitants, and looted and burned the place down" (Ogunde 1998, 2). One thousand soldiers were present that day (Connelly 1999). Regardless, Fela remained politically vocal and unrelenting until death. His attitude to music was framed as a responsibility: if one had the talent to produce song, then one had a responsibility to use that talent to promote social change and freedom. Fela did not allow the consequences of such resistance efforts, although dangerous and at times lethal, to deter him from using his musical talents to progress the fight for freedom.

As the hardships of political resistance come with responsibility, this responsibility is accompanied by status, making the entertainer also an intellectual. Huang addresses this status when he points out that in China "rockers enjoy the status of culture creators" (2003, 191). An important element of that status is not only access to an audience willing to listen to the music, and thus the messages presented through the music, but also the ability to stimulate awareness of key political issues. Thus, while resistance through song has been challenged and discouraged through nation-state attacks and violent attempts at silencing musical dissidents, this avenue also provides tremendous opportunities to reach great numbers of people and affords musicians much access to the intellectual realm through which culture can be formed.

Rebellion through music, with such immense opportunities, has been used to challenge many elements of contemporary social structures that contribute to oppressive living conditions. This is illustrated in the musical rebellion initiated in China against patriarchy. A female rock band named Cobra uses music to politically challenge oppressive gender roles: "China’s all-female band, Cobra,... transgresses conventional Chinese gender roles" both in appearance and in social orientation (Huang 2003, 198). While Fela Kuti and Wu Ruojjie used music to address state-imposed institutional and cultural oppressions, other bands may have a different focus, choosing to structure their music to
address diverse elements of oppressive sociopolitical structures. As each band addresses issues specific to its experiences with oppression, it is hoped that collectively their work will address a large segment of social struggles against oppressive living conditions. As such movements begin to come together, music as a political tool for resistance and change becomes one of the more effective tools to challenge the comfortable status quo established in varying types of nation-states. This is a status quo that institutionalizes racism and classism, in manners that assume these oppressions are natural and necessary in all societies. Through the music the assumed naturalness of these oppressions is challenged and revealed as inhumane, and thereby unnatural to human societies.

In Cuba political rap was inspired by African American activists who visited Cuba and spoke a language of “black militancy that was appealing to Cuban youth” (Fernandes 2003, 578). Rap music became a method of criticizing the Cuban state for ignoring and perpetuating racial inequalities in the country (580). Two forms of rap emerged: the underground and the commercial. Underground rappers use rap “as a vehicle to criticize the silencing of race issues in post-revolutionary society... [and to] challenge stereotypes of blacks as criminals... [while talking] about the repercussions of slavery in the contemporary period” (584). Commercial rappers promote “alternative strategies of survival such as consumerism and hustling, thereby challenging new regimes of labor discipline and standards of revolutionary morality” (584).

Initially, Cuban rap emerged at a local, grassroots level. In the 1990s the Cuban state provided institutional resources to promote it and allowed multinational recording companies access to Cuban talent (Fernandes 2003, 578). This was an “important avenue of transnational participation” for the Cuban state, providing access to the US economy (578). Knowing that the capitalist economy buys out challenges to the oppressive status quo, Castro opted to use capitalism to co-opt revolutionary music: “While hip-hop in the US started as an urban underground
movement, it is now a major political product distributed by five of the largest multinational music labels” (578). Initially, the Cuban government attempted to implement this co-optation strategy, promoted “as a way of diluting the radical component of the genre” (585). While this worked for some rap artists in Cuba, a specific segment rejected such attempts at silence. Underground rap groups that rejected these changes were approached by Cuban state authorities, and in July 2001 they were provided with state-sponsored resources for the production of their music. “While initially the Cuban state attempted to sideline underground rappers by supporting the commercial element, the state is increasingly relating to the former, praising them for their rejection of commercialism” (585). “The image of Cuba as a mixed-race nation with African roots” is promoted, thus “inscribing the imagery of Africa into the revolutionary project, helping to construct internal unity,” while criticizing the United States for its racial disparities and capitalist structures (585). In this instance capitalism was used to silence those whom it could buy out, and Cuban state resources were used to buy out those who could not be bought by American money. For underground artists their success in the Cuban music industry provided Cuba with an image of diversity, which promoted the revolutionary history of the country.

Co-optation and silencing strategies in relation to revolutionary music differ according to each nation-state’s resources and cultures of control. In China and Nigeria silence is promoted through the military and imprisonment. In Nigeria these strategies are congruent with the militarization of Nigerian society, which occurred during colonialism. In Cuba strategies included access to commercialism to silence those who could be bought, while promoting anti-capitalist music to divert attention away from racial inequalities within the nation. In the United States the consumer culture and the heavy reliance on capitalism allow the nation-state to encourage those who do not promote revolution through music, while limiting resources for those who do promote resistance through music. The realities of life
in a consumer economy prevail to silence those who do not have the resources to produce revolutionary music. Fela, coming from a rich and politically powerful family, chose to use his resources to promote resistance through song. His family was not powerful enough to immunize him from Nigerian military and criminal justice brutalities; nonetheless, he persevered and did not allow his messages or his songs to be co-opted.

THE POWER OF RESISTANCE

Music as a tool of political resistance has been used internationally and historically. Under apartheid in South Africa music was used as a means of communication about oppression during times when communication among black and "coloured" peoples was controlled and punishable. Under the official institution of slavery in the United States black people used music to pass on messages and to plan rebellions. During the implementation of the chain gang the continued extortion of labour from African Americans was resisted through song: men on the chain gang used song to regulate the rhythm of their work, and they were able to successfully slow down the pace of work in a manner that went unnoticed by prison guards. In more recent times music has emerged as a mode of communication among oppressed peoples, and has promoted resistance through education and political dialogue.

Music, when used politically, provides a method of peaceful resistance to violent oppression. The violent reactions to political music illustrate how threatening this form of resistance is to the status quo. The capitalist silencing of revolutionary music illustrates the effort afforded to silence or co-opt resistance. Despite such attempts to maintain the colonial status quo, music continues to be a relevant avenue to promote empowerment for the oppressed. On the national level one can see the relevance of such efforts. Fela's music was localized in a manner that drew in his Nigerian audiences and allowed them the opportunity to view their oppressive living conditions through an empowered lens. On the international level music as a form of resistance
unites nations of oppressed peoples and creates international communities of artists who establish solidarity through song. Within the context of a group, and within the community-building elements of international musical revolutionaries, political artists are able to pursue resistance together. In the creation of international communities that transcend colonial and genocidal efforts to build contemporary nation-states, political musicians both promote resistance locally and challenge oppression globally.

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