

## THE DYNAMICS OF REVOLUTIONARY APPEAL IN FELA'S SONGS

**Onwudinjo, Peter**

Department of English and Literary Studies

University of Calabar, Nigeria

Email: [peter\\_onwudinjo@yahoo.com](mailto:peter_onwudinjo@yahoo.com)

**Mgbojirikwe, Chinaka C.**

Department of English and Literary Studies

University of Calabar, Nigeria

Email: [santinek2002@yahoo.com](mailto:santinek2002@yahoo.com)

### **Corresponding Author:**

Mgbojirikwe, Chinaka Constantine,  
Department of English and Literary Studies,  
University of Calabar,  
P.M.B 1115,  
Calabar, Nigeria.  
E-mail: [santinek2002@yahoo.com](mailto:santinek2002@yahoo.com)

### **Abstract**

*Fela's rise in the early 1970s premised and set the stage for a novel phenomenon in Nigerian popular music art and tradition. The reality of life at this period reflects the loss of faith in Africa's nascent democracy by majority of the masses. Many Africans, especially Nigerians were living in incarcerated societies, at the watchful eyes of leaders, military men and kinsmen who have thrown to the wind, the collective drive and dreams of a united, peaceful and democratic society. This paper is an attempt to examine and expose those imprints of betrayals and the concomitant brutality unleashed on the masses through various inhuman ways. Through in-depth Marxist analysis of content and Fela's use of Pidgin English and the satirical style of yabis, the paper exposes the negative effects of oppression and brutality on Nigerian masses, and the adverse impacts of looting the public treasury. The paper posits that Fela's afrobeat music did much to infuse immense freshness of thought into rotten politics.*

**Keywords:** Revolution, Music, Corruption, Suffering, Appeal.

## 1. Introduction

Music art in Africa ranks high as one of the means of satirising and prodding leaders across the continent to tow the line of democratic leadership. Its aesthetic and utilitarian values stand glaringly pivotal in checkmating leadership excesses and recklessness in African societies. Music can be defined as vocal or instrumental sounds (or both) combined in such a way as to produce beauty of form, harmony, and expression of emotion. According to *Webster's II: New Riverside University Dictionary*, music is "the art of arranging tones in an orderly sequence so as to produce a unified and continuous composition". In reality, music does not have any one concrete meaning. Music has different meanings for different people. Music is unique in each person's life. To musicians, music is life. They eat, breathe, and live music. Music is their passion. For others, music is a hobby, a pastime. Music is something that arouses interest and is pleasurable. The casual fan may learn about music, how to read music, how to sing, or how to play a musical instrument, but they may not have the all-encompassing passion a musician possesses. Music is a means of relaxation for some, while others simply enjoy listening to the sounds, melodies, and rhythms that music brings to their ears, minds, and hearts.

Music in Africa is one of the ancient art forms that have not only flourished but have remained relevant till present day. In Africa, everyday life activities and other cultural experiences are closely tied to music. In attesting to the difficulty of separating music from the cultural content of Africa, Stone (1998:7) explains that "honest observers are hard pressed to find single indigenous group in Africa that has a term congruent to the western notion of "music". There are terms for more specific acts like singing, playing instruments and more broadly performance (dance, games, music) ; but the isolation of musical sound from other arts proves a western abstraction of which we should be aware when we approach the study of performance in Africa. Corroborating Stone, Senrgan-Zake (1986) is of the opinion that music is one of the "activities that characterise ... and play an important part in the lives of the people". The above arguments lend credence to the value of music right from the earliest periods when Africans were not literate, to the present era of high conscious literacy among the people of Africa. In the traditional societies, music is used to chastise and teach the etiquettes and benefits of good citizenship. The traditional music of African peoples have always reflected social control measures as a way of regulating existing and potential disharmonies in the society. This fundamental function that music plays has continued to be relevant to the present modern African society even on a larger scale. Music serves as a phenomenon that proves and sustains its essence in the society. Idolor (2002:2) contends that "no phenomenon void of utility survives in a society; an indication that the presence of music in almost every African society has a formidable role to play". He goes further to explain that "the ... function of music is affected through logical organisation of lyrics and performance practice. Some lyrics are presented in direct or indirect satire through such speech figures as simile, metaphor, alliteration, allusions and even short anecdote to convey an observation or/and opinion to a witness-audience. In other situations, other activities ... teach both viewers and participants the coded lesson (s)" (6). One major function of African music in socio-political control is the revolutionary appeal of the content and tone of its rendition that is geared towards entrenchment of egalitarianism in the society. Revolution is a trend that permeates most music by African musicians. One of the musicians that stands out in his revolutionary aesthetics and appeal on the proletariat is the Nigerian FelaAnikulapo-kuti. His music demonstrates an intense revolutionary appeal in the wake of military dictatorship. In the progressive music scene of today, his music imprints an indelible revolutionary appeal that is unparalleled. It is an interesting and important voice from Africa that has not stepped aside from the anti-imperialist struggle and as a matter of fact deserves support in this political attack.

Revolution, according to Laura Neitzel (2012:1) is "a movement, often violent, to overthrow an old regime and effect complete change in the fundamental institutions of society". Also, *The Encyclopaedia*

*Americana* sees revolution as “a term used to designate a fundamental change in the government or the political constitution of a country mainly brought about by internal causes and effected by violence and force of arms on the part of a considerable number of individuals (455). From the above suppositions, it seems proper to state that “revolution goes beyond mere change” (Mgbojirikwe, 2015:7). Idaevbtor (2005:86) avers that it includes “the fact that such a change in the political structure of a state has to come about through some violent response by the people to the conditions that impede their freedom”. African musicians like FelaAnikulapo-kuti use various songs imbued with violent torrents as a panacea to different conditions that oppress and dehumanise the people. Mgbojirikwe (2015:8) explains further that “... the dissatisfaction of the people continues to create cracks and tensions within the various nations in Africa. The inability of the government (especially the military) to caulk the cracks and level the rift between themselves and the ruled has made a revolution-ridden slum of Africa.... The loss of faith in government by an alienated people continues to find a looming space in African (music)”. The images in the lyrics of Fela’s songs are vivid reflections of this loss of faith which inevitably acts as revolutionary appeal. These images are strong aversions to all forms of socio-political imbroglios that Fela’s music frowns at. His music thus confirms an affirmation of open partisanship and revolutionary *tête a tête* with the oppressed masses in the existing intra-class schism.

The critical content and revolutionary appeal of Fela’s music became prominent during the era of military dictatorship, and with the music metamorphosing into what is known today as Afrobeat, its militant tone became glaringly confrontational, tending towards a Marxist dismantling of all forms of socio-political vices in the Nigerian society. As a result, Fela became an arch enemy of the military junta of General OlusegunObasanjo and General ShehuYar’adua, and their collaborators like MKO Abiola and companies such as Shell, ITT and Mobil. Afrobeat style of music does not only exhume the revolutionary beauty and appeal of Fela’s music but serves as his legacy to most musicians in Nigeria and beyond. OkeOgunde (2002) avers that “throughout his life, Fela contended that Afrobeat was a modern form of danceable African classical music with an urgent message ... created out of a cross-breeding of juju, highlife and African percussive patterns. It was to him a political weapon”. Ogunde further explains that “Fela refused to bow to the music industry’s preference for 3-minute tracks; nor did he buckle under entreaties to moderate his overwhelmingly political lyrics .... The fact that Afrobeat is today globally winning hearts in its original form – lengthy, ably crafted, earthy compositions laced with explicitly political lyrics – suggests that Fela’s purgatory on earth may have served to awaken a sensibility in people to appreciate authenticity and substance”. From Ogunde’s suppositions, it becomes apparent that Afrobeat is about socio-political and cultural literacy and awareness. It is a biting confrontation of world complacency, greed and fear especially among the Nigerian populace. It therefore piques for a transformative insubordination, bringing to fore Fredrick Douglas’ insightful outcry which states that “if there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favour freedom and yet depreciate agitation are men who want crops without ploughing up the ground. They want rain without the awful roar of its many waters” (Udenta: IV). Obviously, Afrobeat, the Fela legacy asserts to the masses that oppressors would never let off a victim if he is complacent and waits for the day God would answer his cry.

Obviously, Fela’s style of music and its socio-political and cultural content have continued to affect and influence generations of musicians and music lovers till today. Fela preached the gospel of autonomy, fearlessness, self-determination, transparency in trans-national business and governance, and the might of the masses. Fela was a voice of active radicalism in the music industry. Three factors could account for this perceived radical posture. The first is the fact that radicalism is grossly rooted in the background of the Kuti family especially on the part of his mother. Moore (2009:41) avers that “it would appear that their (parents’) stern principles and uncompromising attitudes were ... decisive factors that later shaped Fela’s personality.

His love, closeness to and place as the favourite child of Mrs Kuti exposed him earlier to the revolutionary movements and political activities of his mother.... While following his mother around, he met revolutionary leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah”. Other factors include personal experience both in childhood and adulthood and interactions with both individuals and societies. In his secondary school days, Fela formed the Planless Society with his friends like ShijiSowetan, DapoTeju-Osho, BunmiSowetan, BeekerstellShogbamu and BekoRansome-Kuti (his brother). The society was based on the principle of disobedience to teachers’ instructions. The society also had a newspaper called *The Planless Times* (Moore: 48). Fela’s active radicalism is equally attributed to factors outside Nigeria. At the age of seventeen, Fela left for England to study Medicine but instead ended up at the Royal College of Music. Moore (qtd. in Shimi and Opeyemi, 2013:78) reports that his encounter with Sandra Isidore in the United States of America marked the beginning of a new vista in his life. She educated him on legacies and history of Africa (and) *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* but more significantly, Fela visited the United States at the height of radical discrimination and social prejudice against the black by the white.

Fela died on 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 1997 of AIDS related complications. Nevertheless, this musical genius marks him as an enduring, exhilarating international Afrobeat star. Despite his unconventional and sometimes bohemian behaviour, Fela towered over his contemporaries in one major respect. He was the most fearless vocal human rights activist – basketmouth that Nigerian music industry has ever produced (Shimi and Opeyemi, Ibid: 75).Fela has to his credit more than fifty (50) music albums. However, not all his songs will be considered in the study. His songs to be considered for critical evaluation in the study will be restricted to the revolutionary songs in line with the focus of the present study. As a result, “Authority Stealing” and “ITT” are selected and considered relevant to the study because of their high-tempered tone of revolutionary appeal especially on the oppressed.

## **2. Looting of Public Treasury in Fela’s Songs**

Fela’s music is a vivid reflection and representation of man’s diverse expression in the Nigerian society especially during the periods of the various military regimes in the country. These periods epitomise and punctuate a time when human rights abuses, mindless looting of public treasury, suffering, and brutalising of polity were at its very peak. In his music, Fela unapologetically questions the continuous suffering and brutalisation of the masses and the abysmal looting and expropriation of national wealth by those in power. He offers his music as an eye opener to unlock the consciousness of the masses to those conditions that work against their welfare in a supposedly affluent society. As a musician, Fela acquiesces to the fact that “in a sadistic society where oppression, deprivation and dehumanisation form the bulwark of society’s superstructure, it is balmy and distastefully defeatist for an artist to recoil in an indifferent shell of creative fantasy, celebrating Art-for Art’s sake; that the artist cannot write or sing about mushy love songs or scripts when his immediate surroundings are engulfed in a conflagration. The artist’s sublime task is to put out the pillaging flames first: then later as a form of catharsis, he can write queasy love ditties to his estranged heart throb (IfemesiaIferenta, 1989:18). Also like Ofeimun, (1980:1)Fela’s *sraison d’ être* is “to nudge and awaken those that sleep among the people into action”. Obviously, in the existing oppressive reality, Fela’s music speaks to the masses to be aware of their rightful place in the society. His creation of a heightened and revolutionary consciousness in the oppressed masses is evident in the forms of revolutionary appeal in the content lyrics of his songs.

Fela’s songs glaringly challenge the mindless looting of public treasury at the expense of the collective dream, harmonious existence and survival of the society. In the song, “Authority Stealing”, Fela asserts that the reckless looting of public treasury is the worst form of corruption that helps to catalyse and engender socio-economic inequality in the Nigerian nation. According to Osoba, (1996:371) corruption is

any “anti-social behaviour conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms, and which underscores the authorities’ capacity to secure the welfare of all citizens”. Waziri (2010) views corruption as “abuse of power for private gains or a perversion or change from general accepted rules or laws for selfish gains”. Also, Glasser and Goldin (2005) aver that corruption is “the process by which a well-functioning system of government decays into one that fails to deliver, and maltreats its citizens”. Fela’s “Authority Stealing” is deeply rooted in exhuming different shades of looting which rank high as forms of corruption. In the first three stanzas of the song, the phrase, “Authority Stealing” is incrementally repeated for emphatic details. Fela moves on to broadly categorise the perceived stealing in the society as “the left wing and the right wing”. While the left wing belongs to petty thievery and armed robbery, the right wing belongs to authority stealing. Shina and Opeyemi (2013:82) further explain that “while petty thief includes pick pocket, armed robbery involves the use of dangerous weapons to forcefully acquire another man’s property. Authority stealing or pen robbery involves the use of power or office to steal from the public or government coffers”. Fela makes it clear in the song that a thief is anybody who takes something that belongs to another person. This is seen in the following lines:

Argument about stealing/Argument about stealing  
 Somebody don take something/Somebody has taken something  
 Wey belong to another person/that belongs to another person  
 Then you go hear/ then you will hear  
 You be thief/ You are a thief  
 You be rogue/You are a rogue  
 You be robber/You are a robber

Fela goes on to identify the various operating hideouts of the left wing thieves:

On top of the road, on the side people deywaka/On the road, on the pedestrian lane  
 Office worker, labourer worker, worker’s worker/ Office worker, labourer worker, worker’s worker  
 Dem go deywaka inside bus dem go dey/they will be walking inside buses they are there  
 Motorcycle demdey ride plenty plenty crowd/they ride motorcycle among huge crowd  
 Inside this crowd, sometimes for one corner/inside this crowd maybe at one corner  
 Sometimes for one street, you go dey hear/sometimes in one street, you will hear  
 Catch am catch am, thief, thief/ catch him catch him, thief thief

In the next lines, Fela writes that “ looking go start/looking will start, chasing go start/chasing will start, when dem grab am/when they catch him, dem go beat am well-well/they will beat him mercilessly, dem go lynch am well-well/they will lynch him, police go come well-well/police will come, dem go carry am go court/they will take him to court, dem go put am for jail/they will put him in jail”. The above line exposes the consequences that await a thief so described; that is petty stealing and armed robbery. In the succeeding lines, Fela reveals that the jail term that awaits anybody caught in this kind of stealing ranges from six months, two years, five years, seven years to ten years or worst still, the person may be executed for armed robbery: “if not dem go shoot am for armed robbery/if not he will be shot for armed robbery”. This brings to limelight the decadent and unjust judiciary system that characterised the society especially during the military era. Innocent citizens were either unjustly jailed beyond the weight of the crime committed or if they were target victims, they would be unjustly killed without trial.

In the next stanza, Fela beams light on the calibre of thieves on the right wing:

I say turn your face small to the right wing/I say turn your face little to the right wing  
 Ogapatapatadey for there authority people dey for there/the main boss is there people in power are there

Instead of workers, we have officials, instead of buses/Instead of workers, we have officials,  
instead of buses

Dem dey ride motor car instead of motorcycles/they drive cars instead of motorcycles

Na helicopter, instead of demwaka/they fly helicopters instead of trekking

Na worker go waka for dem/ it is only the worker that treks for them

There is a distinction between those that use their positions of power to loot public treasury and the common thief on the street who steals in order to survive due largely, to the ailing economy of the society as a result of various forms of authority stealing. It is obvious that many Nigerian citizens, among them university graduates in various disciplines resort to stealing and armed robbery to make both ends meet because of the perennial corruption in the country. The “authority stealers” dichotomise themselves from the citizens by driving in tinted cars or flying in helicopters. Fela tells the masses that the leaders do this because of the fear of being mobbed by the angry masses. The masses are largely ignorant of the ravenous greed of the leaders and the depth of their financial squandermania. Fela aims his satires at conscientising the polity as to the causes of their misery. Hence, he admonishes the people that

Authority people dem go dey pick/People in authority will be stealing

Public contribute plenty money/the public contributes a lot of money

Na him authority people dey steal/that is the money that authority people steal

Authority man no dey pick-pocket/ authority man does not pick-pocket

Authority man him need pen/people in authority need pen

Authority man in charge of money/people in authority in charge of money

If gun steal eighty thousand naira/if gun steals eighty thousand naira

Pen go steal two billion naira/pen will steal two billion naira

Fela’s honest *tètè a tètè* revelation and outcry with the masses is a revolutionary gesture. It appeals to the masses to be aware of who the real thief is and to channel strength in revolutionary torrents to salvage the deplorable condition of the society. The use of pen as against the use of gun unparallels the general saying about the mightiness of the pen. Specifically, Greenfield (1993:27) argues that “... pens should be used to increase the anxiety of all oppressive regimes. At the very least, the pen should be used to murder their crimes against the people and make them know that they are being seen. The pen ... used in the service of truth, can be a mighty force”. Nevertheless, the above argument does not literally or metaphorically vindicate the pen of authority stealers as a mighty force because it is not used in the service of truth. Fela is therefore optimistic that if the artist resorts to the use of the pen in the service of truth, the looming space between social classes in the society will be caulked. In the successive lines, Fela cries out to the masses that in the midst of all the authority stealing

You no go hear them shout/you will not hear them shout

(thief! Thief!! Thief!!!)/ thief! Thief!! Thief!!!

You no go hear them shout at all/you will not hear them shout all

(Robber, robber)/ robber, robber

Na different way be dem way/their method is a different one

Na civilise style be dem style/their style is a civilised one

The above epithets reveal an implied and obvious juxtapositioning of alternate conditions to mirage the fiendish ingenuity of oppressive leaders. It is a satirical outcry and a Marxist call on the masses to shout thief, robber and rogue against those who use pen in the service of massive robbery. Fela calls on the people to resist all of their deceptions. He makes this clear in the following lines:

Hear the words dem dey take/listen to the words they employ  
 Deceive the people/to deceive the people  
 Misappropriation/Misappropriation  
 Maladministration/Maladministration  
 Nepotism/Nepotism  
 Mitigation/Mitigation  
 Reguerylisation/regularisation  
 Embezzlement/embezzlement  
 Vilification/vilification  
 Mismanagement/mismanagement  
 Public inquiry/public inquiry

Like a Marxist, Fela wants the people to see that honesty is least on the minds of those in authority. He implores the people to liberate themselves even if it means using force. Fela expresses the universal and inevitable paramount power of force in effecting any revolution. This view is shared by Fanon. Fanon (1967:158) believes that for a people to be liberated, they must be ready to use "... all means, and that of force first and foremost". Also, Ngugi's view is more trenchant. He holds that "violence in order to change an intolerable, unjust social order is not savagery, it purifies man" (*Homecoming*, 1972:28). Furthermore, Nelson (1968:21) avers that "the right and duty of the oppressed to go against his oppressor is unquestionable". Fela's vision and belief in mobilising the oppressed masses for a revolution underscores the realistic presentation of life in his music. In the ending lines of "Authority Stealing", he solemnly echoes:

Authority stealing pass armed robbery/authority stealing is more than armed robbery  
 We Africans we must do something about this nonsense/We Africans we must do something about this nonsense  
 Because authority stealing pass armed robbery/because authority stealing is more than armed robbery

Fela beckons on the people to see the dangers inherent in authority stealing. He invariably calls for a commensurate punishment to be meted out to each thief according to the gravity of the offence committed. Shina and Opeyemi (2013:83) explain that "Fela identified social inequality in the form and administration of punishments in Nigeria. Ironically, the weight and magnitude of the punishment is not always proportional to the crime committed. Rather, socio-economic class of offenders determined the weight of punishment received". Fela's "Authority Stealing" therefore piques the ever ready, angry and seemingly frustrated mob to key in their lynching threats and actions to those in authority because they are the real thieves and the root cause of various social vices in the Nigerian society.

In another song, "ITT" which paradoxically stands for "International Thief Thief" but realistically, the acronym represents the multinational expatriate company known as International Telegraph and Telecommunications, Fela continues to expose the mindless looting of public treasury between the military rulers and their civilian collaborators in various offices. OkeOgunde (2002) argues that "in this particular masterpiece of an album, Fela was able to bring out clearly, how millions of dollars (in the form of exaggerated contract fees) were being siphoned out of Nigeria by the ITT under the local chairmanship of MKO Abiola, with the active connivance of the Obasanjo and Yar'adua of this world. The album, ITT

remains a song that will continue to have a clear revolutionary class approach to the past and present day Nigerian political and economic crisis". In the first stanza of the song, Fela addresses the looters as

International thief thief, ITT  
International rogue

In the second and third stanzas, he satirically labels them and makes clear his intention to mock them by revealing the truth about them, probably for the people to see beyond their camouflage and made-up smiles. He thus sings:

Bastard motherfuckers/bastard motherfuckers  
We yabdem yeah/we will satirise them sure  
Furthermore, to buttress the truth that he wants to expose, Fela implores the gods to punish him if he is telling lies. This is obvious in the following lines:  
If I dey lie o/if I am telling lies o  
Make Osiris punish me/let Osiris punish me  
Make Ifadey punish me o/let Ifa punish me o  
Make Edumare punish me o/let Edumare punish me o  
Make the land punish me o/let the land punish me o  
Make Edumare punish me o/let Edumare punish me o

The above lines bring out Fela's belief and practice in the African traditional religion. His extremist disposition and inculcation of pan-Africanist tenets explain his trenchant criticism of what he sees as deceit that embodies foreign religions like Christianity and Islam. Nevertheless, Ogunde (Ibid) argues that the reflection of this belief in some of his songs "does not automatically make him a scientific materialistic-atheist. On the contrary, he shed the "white deceits" for another confusion – African religion, where he proclaimed himself the chief priest at his African shrine and he normally worshipped past pan-Africanists like Kwame Nkrumah and his (Fela's) late mother". The invocation of the punishment of the gods on himself obviously attests to the solemnness that is enshrined in the song. He reminds African people that right from time immemorial, African people are not reckoned with any form of financial corruption. Fela makes it more emphatic that African people do not carry excreta. He mentioned the names which various African tribes gave to the big communal pits into which they used to defecate. These include Shalanga in Yoruba-land, onunu-insi in Igbo-land, salaga in Hausa-land, tiafi in Gaa-land, yari in Ashanti-land, sagarabe in Ethiopia-land, cho-cho in Kagyu-land, chimbuzi in Bembe-land and echibuzi in Tunga-land. Fela holds that all these were in existence "long time ago" before the coming of the Whiteman or the colonizers. That is, as he puts it

During the time dem come force us away as slaves/during the time they forced us as slaves  
Na European man, na him dey carry shit/it's the European man that use to carry faeces  
Na for dem culture to carry shit/it is their culture to carry faeces

Fela makes a glaring case for the pristinely honest nature of the African man. Africans are naturally not corrupt entities in their seemingly uncivilised state. "ITT" is an emphatic accusation of Europeans in corruptly civilising the Africans. As part of human development, every set of people acculturate the lives, culture and traditions of another, presumably more developed, to step up on the ladders of civilisation. The images of "shit", translated more formally as faeces connotes and stamps corruption, financial crimes and other social vices as rotten and smelling. In the following lines, Fela identifies the foreign companies that are collaborators of the local perpetrators:

I read about one of them inside book like that/I once read one of them in one book (2x)  
Dem call him name na ITT/they know him as ITT (2x)

Dem go cause confusion/they will cause confusion  
Cause corruption/cause corruption  
Cause oppression/cause oppression  
Cause inflation/cause inflation

ITT which stands for International Telegraph and Telecommunications, Shell, Mobil are some of the expatriate companies that help to implant and escalate corruption in Nigeria. Fela, in the above lines maintains that the after effect of their nefarious activities have left the country in perpetual state of confusion, corruption, oppression and inflation. This explains why the power of the naira has continued to depreciate in the international market and many Nigerians, especially the masses have continued to suffer untold hardships. The European man's strategy in corrupting the African man is bedevilled with much kick-backs. First, they will lure these crop of low-mentality Africans into high positions or into becoming some kind of useless chiefs who will gradually become friends with journalists, commissioners, permanent secretaries, ministers and Heads of state in order to perpetrate corruption, inflation, oppression and looting of public treasury "like Obasanjo and Abiola", for themselves and in the interest of the Westerners whom they serve at the detriment of the collective dreams of the Nigerian people. The above lines make it clear that the European man is naturally tuned to corruption. Hence, even the process of civilising the African man is bedevilled with forms of corruption such as bribery, nepotism and undue familiarisation. The allusive images of Obasanjo and Abiola serve to project the images of other Nigerian leaders and office loafers involved in various forms of looting of the national treasury. In the last lines of the song, Fela's revolutionary lyrics piques and appeals to the masses:

We go fight dem well, well .../we will fight them very well...  
We don tire to carry any more of their shit/we are tired of taking any more of their mess

There is a creation of a quintessential revolutionary picture in the above lines. The images trail and imprint a revolutionary zeal on the minds of the masses to realize the extent of impoverishment at which the looting of public treasury has kept Nigeria. Fela invariably admonishes the oppressed who are at the receiving end of this mess that there is an urgent need to put an end to this "shit".

### 3. Conclusion

This study has attempted to evaluate Fela's songs in the light of their revolutionary appeal on the masses. In doing this, the paper has succinctly extemporised that Fela's rise in the early 1970's parallels the downfall of the hopes Africans placed on their nascent independence. The reality of life at this time reveals that Africans were living in incarcerated societies under the baleful eyes and thieving hands of kleptomaniac scoundrels who only wreck the society in order to sustain their greedy lifestyles. To save the masses from this decay and rot therefore becomes Fela's obsession. This obsession resonates in the revolutionary appeal of the songs explicated in the study. Fela beckons the oppressed masses to return to their senses and principles of self-pride, self-reliance, fearlessness and decency that is deeply rooted in the traditional norms of Africa. The artist used pidgin and yabis to jibe at the corrupt ways of the western societies and its capitalist greed. The Marxist framework offered insights into the songs in creating awareness of the impact of corruption, mismanagement, poverty and unemployment in the Nigerian society. The songs display

vibrant repulsions on the predatory nature of capitalism and corruption. Fela's music, as it seems, did much to infuse freshness of thought into rotten politics. His songs thus serve to fulfil the synthesis between aesthetic satisfaction and social relevance in a way that both could be agreeably realised in order to criticise such social vices that are inimical to the growth of the Nigerian society.

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