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Exploring the role of liberation theology in the African context through the lens of African music

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Dates:

Received: 6 November, 2024

Accepted: 6 August, 2025

Published: 20 October, 2025

Disclaimer:

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Competing interests:

The author(s) declare that there are no financial or personal relationships that could have inappropriately influenced the writing of this article.

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Exploring the role of liberation theology in the African context through the lens of African music**ABSTRACT**

This paper examined the intersectionality between liberation theology and African music; it ascertains the role of African music in the liberation of Africans and how its connection influences social justice and liberation movements in Africa. It also provides a brief background and typology of African music, and how it plays the role of liberation and consciousness-raising in the life of Africans spiritually and socio-politically, illuminating some exceptional ways in which liberation theology finds expression through music in Africa. Liberation theology emerged as a response to social injustice and oppression, advocating for marginalised communities and addressing other forms of inequality. African music is indigenous to the African in composition, performance and consumption, and it intertwines with liberation theology to liberate and provide hope to the marginalised. The methodology for this study is primarily qualitative and interpretive, with historical, phenomenological, and multidisciplinary elements. Findings reveal that African music fosters a spiritual connection with God, which leads to liberation from bondage. African music also fosters economic, political, social, and therapeutic liberations. It is therefore recommended that the sanctity, beauty, and originality of African music be sustained to ensure the continuity of liberations already achieved, particularly in the political, social, economic, and therapeutic spheres. Festivals and events that showcase values and liberation milestones should be sustained. African music must be protected from the impact of fusion with foreign genres, and finally, departments of African music should be established alongside African studies in institutions of higher learning.

Key words: Africa, music, African music, traditional, liberation, theology, justice, and injustice

A. INTRODUCTION

For a long time, liberation theology has been a powerful force in shaping social and political movements around the world; its impact is reverberating more in the African context. Its first stance was against colonialism, then to the struggle for civil rights. Liberation theology plays a crucial role in advocating for justice, equality, and empowerment among marginalised groups. Liberation theology emphasises justice, equality, and advocacy for the oppressed people; it plays a transformative role in social and political movements across the globe. Within the African context, histories of colonialism, systemic inequality, and cultural erasure remain deeply entrenched; liberation theology offers a compelling framework for confronting injustice and empowering marginalised people (Zhu, 2022).

Africa is a musically rich continent, and the music has penetrated all sections of society; few continents have such a great appreciation for music as the African continent. Music, singing and dancing reach deep into the innermost parts of the African people (Akombo, 2014). African music has a rich tradition, rhythm, and story that have long served as a powerful medium for expressing resistance, resilience, and hope. This article aims to explore the relationship between liberation theology and African music, examine how music reflects theological and social struggles, and actively contributes to the liberation process. From spiritual hymns in church gatherings to protest songs in political movements, African music channels the collective voice of the people, galvanising change and reinforcing cultural values and identity (Gunner, 2019).

While liberation theology has been widely studied within socio-political and religious contexts, there is limited scholarly exploration of how African musical expressions serve as a medium for articulating and advancing its principles. Specifically, it remains unclear how African music reflects, reinforces, and mobilises the theological and social imperatives of liberation theology. This gap raises critical questions about the extent to which music functions as a tool for spiritual empowerment, social justice advocacy, and political transformation in African societies. Addressing this issue is essential to understanding music's role in shaping and expressing the lived experiences, resistance movements, and theological aspirations of marginalised communities across Africa. This article explores the intersection between liberation theology in the African context and African music, highlighting how African music has been utilised as a tool for empowerment, resistance, resilience, and celebration in the pursuit of social justice and liberation.

B. BACKGROUND TO LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Liberation theology is a theological approach that emphasises the liberation of oppressed people from social, political, and economic injustices, particularly in Africa, where colonialism, imperialism and systemic inequalities have long plagued societies; it advocates for justice, equality and empowerment for the oppressed. It stresses the responsibility of Christians to the poor and oppressed of society based upon the perception of the dignity of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God (Zhu, 2022). This nullifies preferential treatment based on race, colour of skin, ethnicity, gender or religion. People are first and foremost seen as humans.

History traces the origin of Liberation theology to activities emerging from the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, which took place in the second and third decades of the 16th century. It was the forces of Christianity and some Christian elements that stood implacably against the inhuman exploitation of the labour of children and women in factories. Christianity also registered strong opposition to the 19th and 20th-century slave trade (Agunwa, 2017).

Extant literature and available historical documents have argued that in more modern times, the Christian religion has played a crucial role in promoting good governance and accountability in the world over (Ajaola & Aderoju, 2023). The church's prophetic stance obligates her to confront and challenge the systems of corruption and injustice which oppress, exploit and deprive the masses by criticising and judging them according to the gospel standard.

Christians are expected to take the lead to destroy all forms of injustice wherever they are found (Omidawura, 2018). This can be done by utilising official statements from ecumenical bodies like the Christian Association of Nigeria, Christian Council of Nigeria, and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, among others. The aim is to disturb the consciences of those who hold to ransom the happiness, livelihood and development of others through religious and socio-economic control. The cheapest and most effective major tool available to all in the fight against all forms of injustices in Africa is music, specifically African music.

C. BACKGROUND TO AFRICAN MUSIC

Scholars differ on what African music is. While some argue that African music is any music by an African either at home or in diaspora (Timothy, 2020), others hold that African music is any music written (composed) on the continent either by an African or by a non-African (Austin, 2013). Akpabot (1998) contends further that African music is any of the musical practice that originates from Africa before contact with external influences such as those from the Arabs, the Asians, Islam, and the West.

African music is simply seen as the music of Africa, produced by Africans either within the continent or outside; it reflects the heritage of the Africans. It is the aggregate of musical expression that characterises black people in Africa, which shows evidence of a common origin, common basic product, internal patterns, and similar contextual relationships. African music is the type that is performed in African societies, which is purely traditional and indigenous to the people; African music is very pure without foreign influence (Ajewole, 2001). For this paper, African music is classified into two groups.

First, there is the traditional African music. Aning (1973) defines Traditional African music sociologically, recognising its ability to withstand the changes identified as cyclic to a certain extent. He sees it as the music associated with traditional African institutions of the pre-colonial era. This music retains an original taste, devoid of foreign additives. It is the music that has survived the impact of the forces of Western and other forms of acculturation.

Ibitoye (2020) lends his voice to this when he contributes that indigenous music which can sometimes be opined or termed as traditional music is a type of music that celebrates and portrays the culture of the people, it becomes a part of the social life of the people in a culture and as such, the euphoria and ecstasy people get is real and present irrespective of location.

Second, there is the African popular music or the African contemporary music. African popular music today refers to the music crafted by both African professional and non-professional musicians all over the world. These compositions started in the late nineteenth century, and they meet the political, economic, spiritual, and social needs of the people (Taylor, 2005). Popular Nigerian music has traditional African music as its roots, and at the same time synchronises its features with Western musical idioms. Traditional music meets community needs while popular music appeals to the needs of people from different communities and ethnic groups, and sometimes with global effects (Forchu, 2019).

This implies that pure traditional African music without foreign influence, traditional African music with fusion of some or all foreign musical elements and contemporary African music are referred to as African music for this paper. Music serves as a basis for education in the traditional African society.

On the whole, music can be viewed ordinarily as an aspect of education which is directed towards training a holistic being, this includes teaching him to know and fight for his rights (Effiong, 2018). Idamoyibo (2012) posits that the Nigerian is known for strong intellectuality, industry, sincerity, integrity, honesty, religiosity, accountability and morality, which are all inculcated through musical activities during moonlight games, folktales at circumcision rites, initiation rites and religious activities, etc.

D. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Critical theory provides an insightful framework for understanding social and cultural dynamics, particularly in the context of liberation theology and its intersection with African music. Critical theory posits that the structures of oppression must be understood and dismantled to achieve social justice, particularly as articulated by the Frankfurt School, which emphasises the importance of critiquing social structures to foster human liberation and emancipation. Liberation theology, as articulated by scholars such as Gustavo Gutiérrez and Leonardo Boff, aligns with this perspective by advocating for the poor and oppressed and calling for action against social injustices (Sands, 2018).

Verhoef (2018) highlights the transformational role of African music in facilitating community organising and social change. Music acts not only as art but also as a form of activism, fostering solidarity among individuals in their quest for freedom. This aligns with critical theory's emphasis on questioning and challenging oppressive structures. Black Christian rap and reggae music serve as contemporary

vehicles for liberation theology, where these platforms are used to challenge injustice and encourage consciousness among marginalised groups (Moody, 2010).

E. METHODOLOGY

This poly-methodical strategy, as emphasised by Danfulani (1999), attempts to study phenomena from different angles; watching a masquerade from more than one spot. This provides an opportunity for phenomena to be properly studied from every angle. The methodology for this study is primarily qualitative and interpretive, with historical, phenomenological, and multidisciplinary elements. The qualitative research approach is demonstrated by engaging in narrative, descriptive, and thematic analysis, which explores non-numerical data such as music lyrics, historical contexts, and theological interpretations to derive meaning from African music and liberation theology.

The multidisciplinary aspect of this methodology integrates insights from theology, musicology, sociology, and political science. Historical and Contextual discussion traces the history of liberation theology and the evolution of African music, drawing connections between past events and present realities. The phenomenological approach focuses on human experience and meaning-making, drawing upon lived experiences and how music becomes a medium of expression, spiritual connection, and resistance.

F. MANIFESTATIONS OF LIBERATION THROUGH AFRICAN MUSIC

Liberation through music is manifested in various forms, each of which serves as a unique pathway to freedom, empowerment, and social change, allowing individuals to find their voice. These manifestations are discussed below:

Spiritual Liberation through African Music

Spiritual liberation through music is found in non-verbal communication, where music, dance, and ritual give impetus for achieving limitless religious experience. The idea that music is closely associated with religious and moral thoughts and practices is well established (Jorgensen, 1993). Onwochei (2007) supports this view when he says that music has been part of religious activities and ceremonies globally for ages, and there is hardly any religion that does not include some forms of music in its religious worship. Music plays a sacred role in the religious worship of the traditional African. It is used for the veneration of ancestors and the worship of the gods.

This worship is aimed at obtaining divine favour and sanctions by communicating with ancestors and gods, or spirits. The bond between man, ancestors, spirits and gods is reaffirmed (Agbidi, 2011). Music participation in church is as important as breath to the human soul. Through music, the transcendent, the affable, and the incomprehensible may be encountered as God's spirit brings revelation to the human spirit. Songs and musical instruments are used to praise, acclaim, invoke and conjure during worship. Singing is an important part of humans and who God created them to be. During worship, people are transformed on the inside and filled with the Spirit and devote everything to God.

Religious music inspires the worshippers to express their loyalty to the deity. It also provides a sense of connection to a higher power, which helps an individual release negative emotions and thoughts that might be holding them back. It also offers a sense of peace and comfort, allowing people to free themselves from baggage that has kept them trapped in life. Music is a momentous aspect of worship that is significant to the adoration of God and gods throughout the globe. It is a paramount aspect of worship activity being made to God, gods, spirits and ancestors.

Music brings to worship an opportunity for participation. Here, the hearts of the worshippers are uplifted into the spirit, and they feel a great sense of intimacy with God. Music plays an incredible role in Christian worship and devotion. It inspires individuals to seek a higher purpose and live in alignment with their spiritual beliefs, leading to a sense of freedom and liberation from worldly struggles and challenges of life. African music specifically promotes outstanding virtues of unity in diversity, social cohesion, respect for ancestry and heritage, expressiveness and emotion, education and transmission of knowledge, resilience and hope, and innovation and adaptability, among others. Thus, musical activities in the church serve as a means of creating a rallying point for creating a sense of community and cohesion among Christians (Akinloye, 2022).

Social Liberation through African Music

Liberation is seen in all social vices countered by music, because many people in Africa see particular spirits controlling every form of ungodly act. Music in Africa is a call to service, a medium through which an erring and ignorant person can be shocked back to awareness, inculcate and reinforce social norms and values while some music forms in Africa especially the parabasis, which is usually the end of the story, witnesses the musician telling the moral of the story as well as warning and advising the audience on future courses of action (Mbaegbu, 2015).

Music comes in as a handy tool to use in admonishing the wicked to repent from their evil ways. Songs have been written, referencing hazards and disastrous events, because of the compelling images that can be conjured through such references. Though regarded as entertainment, these songs have a way of promoting disaster risk reduction by enticing listeners to proactively consider their vulnerability (Titus, 2010/2011).

Africans always see in their artists, voices of reason and heralds of positive change, who can look at people and tell them their sins, either directly or philosophically and speak to the Government without fear. Any musician who stands in the gap between his people and the government is considered a hero. Recently, for example, a song trending on social media by Eedris Abdulkareem titled “*Seyi Tell Your Papa*” has projected the artist as a hero, even though banned by the government, the song continues to make waves among people who feel the pain of poverty and hardship in Nigeria.

Asigbo (2009) supports the role of musicians when he describes them as a moral censor, a genealogist, prophet cum visionary, a storyteller and an entertainer, all rolled into one. The roles of music in the life of man range from transferring and building moral values in society to communication and passing down information. Music is used as a means of teaching children, which helps them understand easily. Once the message is passed, it becomes part of the lives of the children, and they can stand their ground about the virtues taught.

Music is the voice of the oppressed; it restores silenced voices, empowers people to express pain and loss, and re-establishes personality and self-worth (Kurdi, 2017). Music monopolises our system when we listen to its melody and lyrics, and usually gives us the power in its creation and performance. Music can be experienced in three ways, namely, listening, performing and composing. Music is used for aesthetic enjoyment in some settings, especially where the audience adopts a contemplative approach to relating to the performance of music. Listening to good music of choice will affect your mood, and make you feel ‘cool’, some music can also make you moody, particularly when some unfortunate events associated with the piece of music come back to memory. It will alter your buying habits, make you buy beyond your budget, and make you spend money beyond normal during celebrations. It can also help relieve pain. It can reduce or increase stress. It can make you work more efficiently. It can even affect your eating habits (Kraeuter, 2011).

A 72-year-old indigenous woman in Jos, Mama Hamsatu, has attained fame through her songs sung during her ‘manual quarry’ work; always singing to ‘ginger her swagger’. The rhythm of her song has inspired her and others to efficiency. The song titled ‘*Takama*’ was produced by a Jos-based music producer, Mr. Kleb and released in January 2021. It became a digital hit, trending as a social media challenge (Onowu, 2021). Music is the perfect way to create a happy condition in one’s mind. When a person’s mood is low, listening to good music and change the moodiness to happiness. One can just relax, close their eyes and by the time the listening period is over, the person is fine.

Political Liberation through African Music

Politics, in the form of established administrative order or aspiration and struggles for the betterment of society, has always been part of the structure of all societies. Those in power do their best to retain and maintain power by oppressing those who are outside the circle. The political reawakening and the quest for self-determination became the impetus for the development of this music, which came along with human casualties. For example, Hachalu Hundessa in Ethiopia and Bobi Wine in Uganda faced severe consequences, including imprisonment and threats to their lives, because of politically charged lyrics and activism (Stein & Abebe, 2023).

There is a political tone to music that cannot be mistaken. In Africa, one cannot talk about the traditional political system without the place of music (Ajewole, 2010-2011). In political organisations, for example, the functions of music are apparent in songs sung in praise of chiefs, but many other manifestations may also occur. Different styles of music are played for the entertainment and listening pleasure of the powers that be. There are praise songs and music to get the best part of the leaders of various communities and various state governors, including any constituted authority. Wealthy men and craftsmen were not excluded (Lomax, 1973).

Politically, today, it is commonplace to find musical jingles being produced for different aspirants in political offices. Some songs come in the form of advice and guidance in the right direction to avoid mistakes in the choices of candidates, as exemplified in the song dedicated to all the ‘shady politicians’ by Tuface Dibia from the track ‘*E be like say*.’ Part of the lyrics read thus:

E be like say dey wan tell us wetin we never hear before..... No be small thing ohhh..... Looking back through the years that we have spent together; it seems you have been playing me all along. So many times, you asked me to put the whole of my trust in you. So many times, you betrayed and played me for a fool..... Another year has come and now you want my trust once more. E be like say them wan tell us another story again..... (AZlyrics, n.d.)

His advice comes in so handy, clearly and strongly, that media houses play it as an anthem whenever the political gladiatorial arena is opened in Nigeria. The campaigns go along with lots of musical concerts and a funfair. Some of the songs are to eulogise the candidates, others to encapsulate the manifestos of the prospective candidates, while others are for taunting opponents.

A commonly sung song in the February 2023 elections period in Nigeria, performed by Timaya, is worded thus: “as e dey sweet us, e dey pain them, as e dey pain them omo e dey sweet us”. Music serves as a base for freedom fighting from oppressors. In the times of oppression, injustice, suppression, and even apartheid, people yearn for freedom. Musicians come in handy to help project the cries of the masses through their songs. An example of this is seen in the song of Majek Fashek dedicated to Nelson Mandela ‘Prisoner of Conscience’ and all the freedom fighters all over the world because Africa must be free:

Now, now, now, Margaret Thatcher, eh, eh, eh, free Mandela. Now, now, now, Fredrick De Klerk, eh, eh, eh, free Mandela. Me want you free Mandela. Me want you free Mandela, Me want

you to free Mandela, me want you to free Mandela, Free Mandela me want you to Free Mandela. Pull up your hand if you are a freedom fighter, me want you to free Mandela, me want you to free Africa. For twenty-seven years he's been sleeping locked in jail. For twenty-seven years Lord he is still lying locked in jail. He left his wife, he left his children, for the sake of Africans...For so many years Lord, Africans got independence, but Africans are still dependent. Sufferation in the land, Nigeria got Independence, but Nigerians are still dependent, frustration in the land, confusion in high places, poverty stricken the nation now. Babangida, eh eh eh free Nigeria. (Maluca, 2022).

One of the liberation functions is to ensure that people are taught and guided on how to ask the “how” and “why” questions because they have a role to play in emancipating themselves. Robert Nesta Marley sings, “Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds.....” (Genius n.d.). Getting out of slavery of any sort is a herculean task, and ‘mental slaves’ must be encouraged to realise that it is possible despite the challenges. Jimmy Cliff sings, “You can make it if you really want.....but you must try, try and try, try and try, you’ll succeed at last” (Genius n.d.). One’s ability to think for themselves in all situations usually stands as a launching pad for liberation from challenges in life, be it spiritual, political or social. It is also expected that once freedom is achieved, one should not use the same strategy to oppress others.

Therapeutic/Emotional Liberation through Music

Music can serve several therapeutic functions for individuals with mental health conditions or physical problems. Robinson & Hatten (2012) see music agree that music has an especially intimate connection with emotions. Some of the therapeutic functions include emotional regulation, pain management, memory enhancement, cognitive function, physical rehabilitation and social expression. Music is a communal property which plays a social, therapeutic or magical role in society (Bunt, 2004). It frees people from the bondage of pain and suffering, and ill-health. The liberation functions of music are succinctly captured thus:

Among others, music facilitates communication more powerfully than spoken words, and it enables meaning to be shared. Music promotes the growth and sustenance of individuals, groups, cultural and national identities. Music can induce physiological, emotional, cognitive and behavioural responses in individuals. Music has therapeutic power. It promotes relaxation, it reduces anxiety and pains.....people variously employ music to alter their moods, reduce stress, and diminish boredom during and after serious and intellectual tasking activities (Babatope, 2012, p.170).

The tones produced on the drums generate a raw or cluster of harmonics, the healing energy of which massages the mind. Hence, experiencing the right type of drum sound and music means undergoing metaphysical management of mental tension. Research indicates that drumming can reduce stress and enhance emotional expression in therapeutic settings, especially for people facing serious health challenges (Harmon & Arpajian, 2020).

A body of research has emerged that sheds light on the intriguing links between music and cognitive functions. Music has been shown to improve memory, attention and focus, emotional regulation, language and communication, motor skills and neuroplasticity. Research has also confirmed that music has been shown to enhance memory in patients with stroke and multiple sclerosis (Ferreri, 2016). This effect varies from person to person because of an individual’s prejudices and preference for different types of music (Thaut, 2010).

The Bible supports the therapeutic liberation function of music as seen in the story of David and Saul:

At that very moment, the Spirit of God left Saul and, in its place, a black mood sent by God settled on him. He was terrified. Saul's advisors said, "This awful tormenting depression from God is making your life miserable. O Master, let us help. Let us look for someone who can play the harp. When the black mood from God moves in, he'll play his music and you'll feel better." Saul told his servants, "Go ahead. Find me someone who can play well and bring him to me. One of the young men spoke up, "I know someone. I've seen him myself: the son of Jesse of Bethlehem, an excellent musician. He's also courageous, of age, well-spoken, and good-looking. And God is with him." So, Saul sent messengers to Jesse requesting, "Send your son David to me, the one who tends the sheep." Jesse took a donkey, loaded it with a couple of loaves of bread, a flask of wine, and a young goat, and sent his son David with it to Saul. David came to Saul and stood before him. Saul liked him immediately and made him his right-hand man. Saul sent word back to Jesse: "Thank you. David will stay here. He's just the one I was looking for. I'm very impressed by him." After that, whenever the bad depression from God tormented Saul, David got out his harp and played. That would calm Saul down, and he would feel better as the mood lifted (I Sam 16:14-23).

Economic Liberation through African Music

Beyond its artistic, emotional and entertainment impact, music has served economic liberation purposes. In Zimbabwe, the music of Mai Charamba and Fungisai Zvakavapano Mashaveve intertwines the issue of land ownership and liberation theology. Their songs advocate for resource control and economic freedom to allow females some opportunities in a male-dominated culture (Rwafa et al., 2013).

Similarly, the songs of Frederic Rzewski bring to light political consciousness, addressing issues such as economic crisis and labour struggles. In this case, music serves as the medium for engaging with and challenging socio-economic structures (Abbinanti, 2010).

Popular African music has an undeniable impact on society. It serves as a means of employment and income for music producers, musicians and marketers; sellers of other products in the market use good music to attract the attention of people for patronage. The music has positive effects on the mood of people (Ferreri, 2016). Music controls the mood of listeners and provides a means of socialisation and relaxation during events.

The fame enjoyed by musicians has translated into lucrative economic deals that are beneficiary to the artists and their communities. Music as an enterprise goes through a lot of processes involving different stages and people. These will range from the writing of the song and production to the release and final consumption by the people. In between, studio producers, music vendors, food vendors, printers of fliers and shirts, electricians, security outfits, media houses, and so on benefit and make their cuts along the way, thereby giving a boost to the economic activities and condition of the society.

People's lives and fortunes have turned over at some time as a result of the economic benefits of music. For example, Wizkid, a young Nigerian Afrobeat musician who is in his early 30s, rose from nothing in the mid-2000s to being one of the scene's biggest names today. In 2008, Wizkid was invited from Nigeria to perform at a 300-capacity nightclub in East London and, after the performance, slept on the event promoter's sofa (Obkircher, 2020).

Ten years later, in 2018 and 2019, Wizkid performed in and sold out the 20,000-capacity O2 Arena in London. The popularity of an artist usually rubs off on their financial status and fame. His single '*One Dance*' with the Canadian rapper Drake was a big success internationally, topping the prestigious

US Billboard Hot 100 chart for ten consecutive weeks in 2016. The song also became number one in 15 different countries, including Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, and France (Stets, 2023).

G. THE NEXUS BETWEEN AFRICAN MUSIC AND LIBERATION

An important factor that birthed a classification of African music shifting the paradigm from the indigenous class is the struggle for independence, freedom from marginalization and subjugation; this gave rise to African musical freedom fighters like Robert Nesta Marley, Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela, Joseph Shabalala to mention but a few (Noko, 2021). Notably, among the songs of one of the most iconic heralds of the reggae genre of music, Bob Marley and the Wailers, calling for the unity and liberation of the African people, is the song titled ‘*Zimbabwe*’ from the album *Survival* 1979. Part of the lyrics say;

Every man got the right to decide his own destiny, and his judgement there is no partiality, so arms in arms with arms, we’ll fight this little struggle, cause that’s the only way, we can overcome our little trouble. Bother you ‘re right, you’re right, you’re so right! We gon’ fight, we gonna, we gonna fight, fight, for our rights (Azlyrics, n.d.).

Indeed, no marginalised person will listen to the lyrics of this song over and over again without taking a step to liberate himself/herself. Ngobili (2016) also agrees that it is one of the offshoots of that nationalistic drive and Pan-Africanist movements of the 1950s and 1960s, which gave rise to the struggle for self-determination of the African and Black people all over the world. Different aspects of human existence call for liberation. There is a need for spiritual liberation, giving people the power to resist the urge to commit evil, to strife and live a pious and chaste life; remain committed to the ways of righteousness despite challenges.

Political liberation themes in songs will push people towards the direction of holding their leaders accountable for injustices done, and also call them to better governance for the good of all citizens. Citizens will be liberated socially and economically when there is stability and good governance. Music articulates the pain of oppression and gives voice to the voiceless. Every opportunity is a teachable moment within the African society, values are transmitted through different mechanisms such as storytelling and oral tradition, where moral lessons and cultural values are taught.

These values are taught through narratives, rituals and ceremonies such as weddings, funeral rites, rites of passage where the values of social cohesion; other societal values are taught through music, social commentaries through protest songs to address injustices, political issues, to raise awareness, community identity and solidarity taught through dance and participation; and lastly among many others, intergenerational transmission of values from older generations to younger generations.

African music has always been more than mere entertainment. It keeps a living record of the history, struggles and hopes of Africa. This music has formed a support base during the dark days of colonialism, civil wars, apartheid, neo-independent movements, and neo-self-colonisation by African leaders. African music has helped people to resist oppression and to unify people. Every form of resistance goes along with music. For example, during the END SARS protest of 2020 in Nigeria, wooden and iron platforms were erected where songs were played across the regions where the protests happened. Protested unified as a body to cry out for justice.

H. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. African music is already a natural tool in the hands of Africans where knowledge, wisdom, and skills are transmitted from one generation to another; its sanctity, beauty, and originality must be sustained to ensure the continuity of liberations already achieved, particularly in the political, social and economic spheres. This can be done by regularly organising festivals and events that will showcase values and milestones attained.
2. Without a doubt, the traditional aspect of African music is gradually fading as a result of the impact of fusion with foreign genres; however, to preserve its originality, traditional ‘gatekeepers’ should ensure its survival through proper supervision of its practice in its original form.
3. Departments of African music should be established by the Government alongside African studies in institutions of higher learning. These departments are to ensure that relevant curricula are developed for teaching theories and practice of African music.
4. Individual musicians within Africa should constantly speak against societal ills through their music; by this pressure will continue to be mounted on the government to live up to expectations.

I. CONCLUSION

Music forms an integral and undisputed part of the daily life of man and society as a whole. Music comes into play where emotions are involved, it bridges the gap where non-verbal communication is required and where social integration needs to be established or enhanced. It therefore serves as a link for the understanding of some of the other aspects of human actions, whether it is religious, political, social, or cultural. African music serves as a tool for liberation, resistance, resilience and connecting people to their heritage and empowering them to fight for equality and freedom; to also be able to hold government accountable. Liberation theology finds a vibrant and dynamic platform for advocacy and transformation through the celebration of traditional rhythms and lyrics that reflect the aspirations of African people. This paper inspires hope, solidarity, and resilience in the face of oppression and injustice.

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