

OVERLOOKING MISOGYNY: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF FELA ANIKULAPO-
KUTI'S MUSIC, LIFESTYLE AND LEGACY.

A Thesis

by

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This thesis meets the standards for scope and quality of
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and is hereby approved.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the ways in which misogyny is projected through the media and how patriarchal norms and expectations have contributed to misogyny being overlooked in society. This is achieved by looking at the extent to which misogyny is being projected and overlooked in the media through popular music, specifically Fela Anikulapo-Kuti's music, lifestyle and legacy. Prior scholarship on feminist theory, gender studies, and cultural hegemony theories form the theoretical framework on which this study relies. The analysis finds that one of the frequently occurring themes in Kuti's music is the objectification of women and prejudiced portrayal of men as being dominant over women. Also, Kuti's polygamy and the role of his wives in his performances and publicity did little to enhance the positive perception of women which proves that women also play a role in social prejudices against women. Despite this, Kuti was and is widely celebrated for being a human rights activist because he kicked against the military rule and corruption prevalent in Nigeria at that time. This underscores the extent to which misogyny is being overlooked, especially in patriarchally dominated societies. Misrepresentations of women must be challenged and eradicated from all forms of media to make any headway in successfully tackling misogyny. Findings from this study will provide suitable framework for scholars and future researchers hoping to further explore on eradicating misogyny and the devastating consequences of this social injustice if left unchecked.

Keywords: misogyny, stereotypes, media, popular music, feminism, patriarchy, objectification

DEDICATION

To God, the ultimate source of my success, my pillar of strength and my inspiration.

Thank you, God, for my new dawn era. Indeed, “eyes have not seen nor ears heard what the Lord has prepared for those that love him.”

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CHAPTER 1

OVERLOOKING MISOGYNY

“The human rights came to Nigeria because of Fela. There are political activists because of Fela... Who stood firm against corruption? Fela’s name will come up. Who stood firm fighting for the masses of this country? Fela’s name will come up first worldwide, because he stood firm as an African” –

Femi Kuti (as cited in Babalola, 2011, para. 50)

Fela Anikulapo Kuti (October 15, 1938- August 2, 1997), a legendary Nigerian music artist and an inventor of the Afrobeat music genre, is widely celebrated as a musical phenomenon, as well as a political and human rights activist. Kuti was as controversial as his music; he was fearless, outspoken and used his music to oppose the corruption prevalent in Nigeria and the oppressive rule by the government in the period of military rule beginning from the 1960s to the 1990s (Library of Congress, 2008). Kuti’s passion for music was evident in the powerful rendition of his songs, his energetic stage performances and in his thought-provoking song lyrics. Kuti sang in *Yoruba* and *Pidgin English* which is generally known as the lingua franca of Nigeria (Grass, 1986; Ogunnaike, 2003). As a result, he was able to connect better with the masses. For Kuti, “music is the weapon” (Kino Lorber, 2014; Savali, 2011), and he did not hesitate to use this weapon to pursue his agenda which was, in part, to encourage the African people to free themselves from the chains of colonialism. It is no secret that Kuti thought colonialism was responsible for many of the problems being faced by Africans. In an interview, Kuti condemned European education because, in his estimation, Africans are taught by the colonials that the languages of the African people are uncivilized while the English language is a standard. Kuti believed that through this imposition of European traditions and culture on

Africans, the African people lost their identity (as cited in Madain, 2008). Despite being arrested and imprisoned on several occasions for his rebelliousness and continuous condemnation of the corrupt government in power, Kuti stayed true to his fight by refusing to cave in to the pressures from the authoritarian leadership to desist from his commentaries against them. According to Gilberto Gil, Brazilian singer and former Minister of Culture in Brazil, who penned the foreword for Kuti's only authorized biography, *This Bitch of a Life* written by Carlos Moore, Kuti was "an authentic contemporary African hero whose genius was to make his scream heard in every corner of the globe" (Moore, 2009, p. 5). Many considered Kuti to be a prophet who sacrificed his entire life to kick against corruption and the abuse of power by the military rulers.

In "Zombie," Kuti's contempt for Nigerian law enforcers was made evident as in the song lyrics, he compares Nigerian law enforcers to puppets in the hands of their benefactors, the government. Despite Kuti's sometimes outlandish behavior, Kuti had one thing going for him – his honesty. While his fellow celebrities accepted deals to endorse powerful politicians through their music, Kuti did the opposite – he refused to back down from his criticisms of powerful political figures despite being beaten, tortured and imprisoned (Baldwin, 2009). According to Kuti, he would "never compromise his ideals and the attacks only made him stronger" (as cited in Townes, 2014, para. 7). Also, the fact that money was never an incentive to Kuti, also aided his cause as he was known to turn down major deals that would have fetched him huge financial gains. According to Denselow (2010), Kuti once turned down a two-million-dollar record deal because the spirits had told him the time was not right (Denselow, 2010). Even though Kuti's unconventional display of effrontery, his controversial song lyrics and jaw-dropping views during interviews, were enough to send the faint-hearted to a near swoon, his second marriage on February 20, 1978 to 27 women simultaneously, sent a ripple of shock waves to the world.

Notably, Kuti's first marriage was to Remilekun Taylor, who bore Kuti's first four children. Meaning, Kuti had 28 wives in total. It was hard to understand how one man could throw convention to the wind and seemed to purposefully work to remain controversial. Kuti dubbed his wives "queens" and they came to play a major role in his stage showmanship, where the queens acted as his backup singers and dancers.

When Kuti passed away in 1997 from HIV/AIDS, the city of Lagos in Nigeria came to a standstill. Over one million people showed up at his funeral procession to bid him farewell (Lynch, 2000; Ogunnaike, 2003). Kuti is one of the few African artists who had international success. His death was published in popular papers like the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Wire U.K.*, etc. This shows the magnitude of the influence of Kuti and his music on the world at large. According to Dixon (2011), Kuti was loved not only for his music but for his political activism and Nigerians still get misty-eyed at the mere mention of his name. Even after Kuti's death, he remains a brand, often referenced by renowned celebrities and visionaries for his global impact.

Since 1998, Felabration, a musical concert has been held annually at the New Afrika Shrine (an entertainment center established by Kuti) in Nigeria to honor Kuti. This week-long event features performances of Kuti's music by top music celebrities from all over the world and is usually held in the week of Kuti's birthday, attracting visitors from around the world. As a result, New Afrika Shrine became listed as an official tourist destination by the Lagos state government in Nigeria (LASG governor's office, 2016).

Kuti's global popularity shows no signs of fading soon. Ahmir Khalib Thompson, popularly known as Questlove, is an American percussionist and drummer for the band – The Roots. He became an associate producer of *Fela!*, a Broadway musical that highlights the life

and times of Kuti. According to Questlove, not so many people are willing to suffer for their craft, and the fact that Kuti showed no fear and was willing to go to jail for every song churned out, made him to be adored by the people (Okayplayer, 2014). Questlove recalls pitching the idea of *Fela!* on Broadway to megastar Sean Corey Carter, popularly known as Jay-Z. Jay-Z ended up buying into the idea and came on board as a co-producer of the musical alongside fellow celebrities, Will Smith and Jada Pinkett-Smith. Questlove also stated that Jay-Z's wife, Beyoncé Knowles, one of the most revered African-American singers in the history of music, called him with tears in her eyes and stated that the musical was the most powerful thing she had ever seen (Okayplayer, 2014). Yes, Kuti's creative works seemed to have that profound effect on people regardless of their nationality, class or race and to hear Questlove put it, "the Fela cycle has travelled across the earth" (Okayplayer, 2014). On Saturday, April 15, 2018, Kuti's effect on Knowles was made even more apparent, when performing on stage as the first black woman to headline Coachella, an annual music festival in California, Knowles showed her admiration for Kuti's artistry by playing her version of Kuti's 1976 song, "Zombie" during an interlude (Durosomo, 2018; Egbo, 2018).

Undoubtedly, Kuti was widely respected by most and his political activism was never in doubt, however, Kuti's songs, lifestyle and legacy seems to be tainted by his projection of misogyny, bringing into question, the exact nature and credibility of his human rights activism.

I still recall my first face-to-face encounter with the Kutis' in 2011 at the New Afrika Shrine, where I had the opportunity of interviewing Femi Kuti, the eldest son of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti. Besides the incredible talent Femi Kuti shares with his late father, they both do not believe in the institution of marriage and yet, they fathered children from multiple women. Like a doting son, Femi Kuti shared fond memories of his father's mastery of music and the world's regard of

his father as a political and human rights activist (Babalola, 2011). This glowing praise of his father as a human rights activist is expected from a son who loved and greatly admired his father but from the rest of the world, this reflects the one-dimensional approach through which celebrities are being viewed. Misogyny, defined by Academic Room (2013) as “the hatred of women or girls which is manifested through sexual discrimination, denigration of women, violence against women and sexual objectification of women” (para. 1), should not be found in someone celebrated as or purporting to be a human rights activist. Yet, a closer look at the lyrical content of Kuti’s music, exemplifies not only how popular media culture can contribute to the normalization of sexist, abusive, and violent behavior toward women, but also how it reflects the powerful and male dominated global society we live in, where women are sexually objectified on a regular basis.

Kuti’s music, its associated performances, his lifestyle and legacy continue to deprive women of agency to this very day, yet they fit a common stereotypical portrayal of women in society as sex objects. Despite Kuti’s misogyny, he was and is still being showered with praise and admiration from a majority of his audience who seemed to overlook his grave shortcomings. This study is an attempt to rectify this social injustice by shining a spotlight on the role of gender in Kuti’s music, lifestyle, and legacy.

Misogyny Then and Now

Kuti’s misogynistic projections were a part of his cultural experiences since his earliest days as it was already a widely-shared belief that women were inferior to the men and were to be treated as such. This scourge of misogyny is not only prevalent in Nigeria but in other parts of the world as well. According to King (2017), “misogyny is rife in America and in the entire world, no woman is safe from unwanted sexual advances, the threat of sexual violence and crude

remarks” (King 2017, para. 1). A Harvard report on misogyny, young people and sexual harassment, showed that women are more in danger than is perceived as nine out of 10 women in the United States, have been sexually harassed (King, 2017). Also, it is worth noting that Nigeria is not the only country where you will find a record of influencers with misogynistic notions being celebrated. Besides Kuti, Rick James, R-Kelly, Woody Allen, Roman Polanski provide historical illustrations of celebrities who are being honored despite their alarming views and attitude towards women. Furthermore, that patriarchy and misogyny still underpin much of global culture is apparent in the rise of the #MeToo and Time’s Up movements that have pushed for the awareness and eradication of sexual abuse and harassment in the culture industries. While these movements are positive forces, the very fact that the movements are unmasking so many men in positions of power across industries, points to the enduring misogyny that still pervades.

Misrepresentations of women in the media is prevalent globally, especially in patriarchally dominated societies. Hence, to create a backdrop for understanding the past and current context for Kuti and his work, my first chapter will delve into pre-existing scholarship on media’s portrayals of women globally and then narrow down to media’s representation of women in Nigeria. This will include dialogues on the portrayal of women by cultural scholars and critics. According to Drew and Miller (1998), researchers have found that women are cast in traditional roles in broadcast media e.g. musicals, music videos, TV commercials, TV programs, films and magazines. Evidently, this pervasiveness of the stereotypical portrayal of women by the media has allowed women to be seen as little more than objects belonging in subjugated roles associated with the bedroom, kitchen or child rearing. The review of findings from this research will establish that society has associated and still associates females with domesticity and submissiveness while males are associated with dominance and more authoritative roles.

Additionally, Sandra Bem's gender schema theory, Antonio Gramsci's hegemony theory and Laura Mulvey's male gaze theory will form the theoretical framework for this study. These theories will be helpful in analyzing Kuti and his legacy. Once this is established, my research on Kuti will be guided by the following questions:

RQ1: What ideologies of patriarchy and/or gender equality does Kuti's music and public persona represent?

RQ2: What are the various interpretations given by Kuti's audience to Kuti's message about women in society?

RQ3: What are the various interpretations made by Kuti's audience to Kuti's message about women in society?

To get to the crux of the first two questions, my third chapter will highlight Kuti's foundational history, background information and his artistic output. This will include his biography, musical background, lifestyle, how he referenced women in his music as well as in interviews. Some of Kuti's album covers illustrated bare chested women in kneeling positions highlighting the submissiveness expected from women. Kuti's queens were known for their stirring and sexually charged performances. They would appear on stage scantily clad, sometimes on bended knees, dancing provocatively while their "master," Kuti, performed. This portrayal cast them in the role of docile, sex objects and helped reinforce the stereotypical beliefs regarding women. Kuti's marriage to these 27 women simultaneously, further gave credence to his low regard for women. Analyzing such elements of his music and public persona will allow for an answer to RQ1 to emerge. To Kuti, women appeared to be objects, fit to be ordered around and conquered while being muted in the background. This is certainly not the traits expected of a gentleman in a decent society. To be fair, Kuti has never claimed to be a

gentleman. In his 1973 album *Gentleman*, the title track had lyrics like: “I nor be gentleman at all, I be African man, I nor be gentleman at all.”

Clearly, somewhere in Kuti’s schema, being an African man does not equate to being a gentleman. Yet, Kuti was loved by the people – women included. Women flocked around him and considered it a privilege to be singled out by Kuti. To better understand why women were attracted to Kuti, and get at the answer for RQ2, I will analyze his wives’ utterances, as captured primarily in Kuti’s only authorized biography.

My fourth chapter will highlight the critical reception of Kuti and his music globally. This will allow a window onto RQ3. Indeed, as Kuti’s profile continues to rise, there is a surfeit of commentary on the African enigma from critics, musicians, and fans. This chapter will critically analyze selected commentary in order to highlight the areas of Kuti’s music and legacy, which are mostly prominent or hidden.

We need not delude ourselves into thinking that we live in a post-feminist era, where issues of gender inequality have long been overcome. Society should be held accountable for portraying women and girls in ways that promote stereotypical perception of women. This is not just a recurring problem in developing nations. In the United States of America, there is little difference in the degree of stereotypical beliefs about women. If Donald Trump could still be elected 45th President of the United States despite being caught on tape using derogatory terms to refer to women and the manner in which he approaches them, it is clear that the oppression of women is a continuing global problem. By critically examining the ways in which women are portrayed in Kuti’s music, lifestyle and legacy, we can gain better insight regarding the extent to which global celebrities play important roles – actively or implicitly – in the subjugation of women. Hence, the overall objective for this study is to critically examine the extent to which

women are being stereotyped and how misogyny is being overlooked in society specifically through the lens of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti's music, lifestyle and legacy.

This study is important in bringing awareness to gender discrimination and the stereotypical portrayals of women still evident in today's society. In addition, this study will add relevant literature to the communication discipline and allow scholars to critically engage with the norms governing society through popular culture. It is relevant to the communication discipline in the sense that this study will add to our understanding of how popular culture reflects and informs our perceptions of and assumptions about gender. Popular culture creates, reflects, and reinforces norms which are influential in determining how individuals conduct themselves in society. Through popular culture, expectations are defined regarding how we understand others based upon identity characteristics such as race, class, sexuality, and, most important to this study, gender. Gaining insight into how gender is portrayed in global popular culture will provide an opportunity to confront biases and inequalities that gender roles may perpetuate.

As a native of African descent, who takes great pride in being an independent woman, I am deeply aware of the deterrents created just from being labelled a woman in contemporary society. Hence, my interest in this study is that it stands to help us better ascertain how Kuti, one of my native country's most notable cultural exports, has been and continues to be complicit in perpetuating misogyny and resulting gender bias.

CHAPTER 2

PORTRAYALS OF WOMEN IN THE MEDIA

“Men compose symphonies, women compose babies”

– *Time*, January 10, 1975 (as cited in Shapiro, 1977, p. 226)

For years, women all over the world have been either underrepresented or stereotypically portrayed by the media in a distorted light across most forms of media and this has contributed largely to women being subjugated and oppressed. That the media plays a strong role in defining society is a premise that has generated heated debates for centuries. Negative and demeaning stereotypes of women bound across a variety of popular media and cannot be swept so easily under the carpet. Susan Faludi, an American journalist and author laments these stereotypical portrayals of women in her 1991 book, *Backlash*, where she stated that eighty percent of 20th century women are stuck in traditional female roles — as secretaries, administrative support workers, etc. (1991, p. 5). These roles being ascribed to them by culture eventually leads to a decline in a woman’s level of self-esteem (Makama, 2013). If a woman manages to break free of this stereotype to become a revered voice in society, she is labelled as aggressive, bossy and unladylike. There have been arguments that the fight for women’s rights has been won because women now have more opportunities compared to what was witnessed years ago (Faludi, 1991). After all, women now have the rights to vote, borrow money, go to college and even serve on a jury, which were rights once denied to women. Despite these landmarks achieved where women are concerned, the fight for gender equality and women’s liberation is far from over. According to Faludi (1991), if the fight for women’s equality had largely been won, women would not lack the basic requirements to achieve equality in the work force and their reproductive freedoms would not be in such a great jeopardy as they are in in recent times. Today, even in the 21st

century, women still experience subjugation not only in the United States, but in other countries of the world. There are still disparities between the wages of men and women, unequal opportunities for advancement and misconceptions that men are more effective leaders than women, which have contributed to the poor representation of women in leadership positions (The Rockefeller Foundation, 2016). Given the global persistence of objectification and subjugation of women in various forms of media, especially in the entertainment media e.g. politics, music, sports, motion pictures etc., a rich body of work offering feminist critical perspectives on media representations in popular culture is paramount. This chapter will first, offer an overview of media's portrayals of women in the United States, then other parts of the world, known to be governed by patriarchy. It will then conclude by reviewing work on the representations of women in popular music, a form of entertainment media, which has been regarded as a medium for human social expression and a reflection of the cultural and political climate from which it emanates from (Adams & Fuller, 2006).

Women in the U.S. Media

When as recently as 2017, Clay Travis, a sports journalist, stated repeatedly and unapologetically on a live CNN news broadcast that he believed in the first amendment and “boobs” (Baldwin, 2017), the extent of the degradation of women's dignity in society was put on full display. An outcry ensued when Courtland Sykes, United States Republican Senate candidate, criticized career women and what they represented by stating the following words about his daughters on his Facebook page – “...I do not want them to grow up into career obsessed banshees who forgo home life and children and the happiness of family to become nail-biting, manophobic, hell-bent feminist she-devils who shriek from the top of a thousand tall

buildings...” (Sykes, 2017). Sykes also stated that he expects to come home to a home cooked dinner fixed by his fiancée, every night at six (Sykes, 2017).

Goudreau (2011) chronicled ten of the worst stereotypes faced by powerful women in society. “Ice queen, single and lonely, tough, weak, masculine, conniving, emotional, angry, token and cheerleader,” (Goudreau, 2011, para. 4) were the stereotypical terms surmised to describe strong, powerful women.

It is worthy of note that women also contribute to their own subjugation. Erykah Badu, Legendary American Singer, stated that girls should wear long skirts to school so as not to distract male teachers (Real, 2016). As can be expected, this generated a backlash from the public. One Twitter user, Luke Starkiller (@canuckyoutoo) tweeted the following words – “good to see the rape culture and misogyny is alive in Erykah Badu’s heart. Used to like you. Bye” (Real, 2016). Another twitter user, Decolonially Queer (@decolonialqueer) tweeted – “Erykah Badu is literally entrenching heteronormativity, rape culture and ignorance right now, sobering reminder that we are all problematic” (Real, 2016). The backlash against Badu stemmed from her comments being interpreted to be promoting rape culture and suggesting that women should be held responsible for their own objectification, based on what they wear. This logic is apparent even in the legal system; according to Tetlow (2009), studies have shown that the “appropriateness” of a female victim’s behavior is one of the most accurate predictors of conviction for gender-based violence.

American lawyer Judith Susan Sheindlin, popularly known as Judge Judy, stated that there are core differences between the role of a woman and the role of a man (O’Brien, 2017). She believes that a man is a warrior by nature, while a woman is a nurturer. Sheindlin also stated that “she enjoys being the spouse who makes the lunches, drives to family events and keeps the

train running” (O’Brien, 2017, para. 9). Considering the fact that Sheindlin makes a whopping 47 million dollars annually for her job as a TV judge (White, 2017), that might be easier for her to say. Not every woman can be as fortunate as Sheindlin, though. A recent United Nations Report estimated that women do 2.6 times the amount of unpaid care and domestic work that men do (Carpenter, 2018). Cooking, cleaning, child care and other domestic duties thought to be “women’s work” are done without compensation and as a result, women have less time to unwind and grow their careers (Carpenter, 2018). Melinda Gates believes that poverty is sexist because there are more women than men in vulnerable situations, even in the United States (Carpenter, 2018). This can be attributed to the high number of single mothers that are struggling to make ends meet. Even with a spouse, a working woman usually gets a “second shift,” resulting to an extra 90 minutes a day, as she comes home from work to do far more domestic work than the men do (Carpenter, 2018).

However, self-subjugation might be activated by the cultural ideologies predominant in that society. For instance, in a patriarchally dominated society where men assume more influential roles over the women, the behaviors of the less dominant group of people, become influenced by the dominant ideologies in that society. In cases of this nature, the women are sometimes, unaware that they are being subjugated as their active participation in their subjugation are encouraged by societal norms. Antonio Gramsci’s hegemony theory (1971) explains the process in which a dominant class rules over society by presenting its own particular interest as the interest of society in a form of hegemony. Hegemony is characterized by force and consent without force predominating (Gramsci, 1971). The everyday assumptions of the working class, their thoughts, their common sense become dominated by the bourgeois (Newcomb, 1994). This means that the desires of the dominating class are manifested by gaining some form of

consensus around those desires. We can therefore deduce that through this consensus, subjugated groups such as women become actively involved in their own subjugation.

Gender disparity is overwhelmingly present in contemporary society with popular music, being no exception to aiding the projection of this disparity and its associated stereotypes to listeners and viewers, who in turn, may internalize these messages.

Popular Music Culture and Gender Stereotypes

Popular music plays a vital role in the way the views of society are projected and shaped because a song at the top of the charts will not only sell hundreds of thousands of copies, but will be played over and over again, on radio and television stations, thereby causing the music to receive even more exposure. According to Taylor and Spradley (2017), music is more than an avenue for entertainment only and can be used to motivate educational leaders to transform the culture. There are quite a number of examples of significant events in history where music has been used to motivate the masses. Songs of protest like, “I Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around,” inspired thousands to participate in sit-ins, marches, bus boycotts and marches throughout the United States (Taylor & Spradley, 2017). Also, in the 1960s, the song “We Shall Overcome” motivated civil rights and freedom fighters. Notably, American Abolitionist Harriet Tubman (1822-1913) used the songs, “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” and “Wade in the Water” to influence runaway slaves following the underground railroad to freedom (Harriet Tubman Historical Society, 2018). Through music, the cultural beliefs and values of a society have been preserved and reinforced through storytelling. In ancient Greece, people believed music could penetrate the conscious mind and provide healing to the soul of listeners (Taylor & Spradley, 2017).

While music's contributions to intellectual, social and creative potentials cannot be overlooked, care should be taken in assimilating the messages being spread to listeners via this medium. Studies have shown that lyrical and visual contents of popular music have contributed to stereotypical views of gender (Fischer & Greitemeyer, 2006; Timmerman, Allen, Jorgensen, Herrett-Skjellum, Kramer & Ryan, 2008; Ward, Hansbrough & Walker, 2005).

A study conducted by Ward, Hansbrough and Walker (2005) showed that viewers of music videos which contained gender stereotypes, showed more traditional views about gender than viewers of music videos which contained less stereotypical content. Taking a meta-analytical approach using social learning theory, excitation transfer theory and a review of literature, Timmerman et al. (2008) examined the effect of popular music on its consumers. They found that listening to music generates an effect on listeners that is consistent with the lyrical content of the music. This indicates that if the content of music contains stereotypical beliefs about women, then the listeners or viewers of the music content are likely to have stereotypical beliefs about women. Timmerman et al. (2008) believes that this provides ample reason for restrictions to be placed on access to music content that are associated with negative attitudes towards women, violence, drug use and other anti-social behaviors (Timmerman et al., 2008). However, the researchers emphasize that results from their meta-analysis research should not be taken as final but should instead serve as a basis for future research. To this end, more investigation is needed in determining the extent of the effect of music content on listeners.

Fischer and Greitemeyer (2006) found that men who listened to misogynistic song lyrics were more likely to have negative perceptions about women compared to when they listened to song lyrics that did not contain misogynistic song lyrics. Likewise, men-hating song lyrics generated negative perceptions of men in women. This indicates that regardless of gender,

negative song lyrics usually generate a negative response among people. Not only is the perception of the audience influenced by the music they listen to, but the creators of the music can be influenced as well. Taylor and Spradley (2017) add credence to this when they stated that music, though inspired by the creator, inspires its creator as well.

When it comes to visual representations associated with music, research has shown that women are being more sexually objectified in music videos than the men (Frisby & Aubrey, 2012), with women being portrayed as subservient to the men, sex objects or docile beings and inferior to the men. Frisby and Aubrey (2012) developed a coding system to examine the correlation of objectification and music videos. They found that objectification was a common theme in contemporary music videos, where male artists were found to be significantly more likely to engage in the “male gaze,” a term defined by the researchers as checking out a woman’s body with sexual longing or lust. Mulvey (1999), a feminist theorist, explains the masculinization of cinema spectators and the portrayal of women as objects of the male gaze. Although Mulvey focuses on film for her analysis, Mulvey’s concept can also be extended to other media forms, where females are regarded as objects of the male gaze. According to Mulvey (1999), viewers are taught to identify with the main characters which are usually predominantly male while positioning the women as objects of the male desire. This helped to reinforce the notion that women were only valued for their bodies and appearance (Frisby & Aubrey, 2012). A content analysis of rock music videos showed that a majority of the sampled videos presented women in a condescending manner (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2009). Women were depicted as unintelligent, sex objects or victims and only 14% of the videos presented women as fully equal to men (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2009). This supports the notion that the content of music videos plays a huge role in the objectification and stereotypical portrayals of women. In an online survey

conducted by Peter and Valkenburg (2007) among 745 Dutch adolescents, it was found that exposure to the sexualized media environment contributed significantly to the perceptions of women as sex objects. The researchers, however, stated that there is a possibility that the sampled adolescents who believed that women were sex objects after being exposed to sexual media content, might have engaged with the media content more frequently than the average audience (Peter & Valkenburg, 2007). This indicates that casual viewers of sexually explicit music videos might not be as easily influenced to objectify women as frequent viewers would.

Ling and Dipolog-Ubanan (2017) analyzed the extent of the objectification of women in rap and hip-hop music, using a sample of 10 rap song lyrics by five male artists from Billboard's top rap airplay within the period of 2013 to 2014. In the sampled song lyrics, the researchers found that women are usually described as the subordinate gender and also treated as sex objects. Textual analysis was used to discern the misogynistic words contained in these sampled lyrics, leading to the identification of demeaning words like bitch, hoes, pussy and chick, being used to describe women (Ling & Dipolog-Ubanan, 2017). Ling and Diplog-Unbanan believe that these misrepresentations of women in music lyrics have reinforced sexism and discrimination against women. The researchers also believe that these negative depictions in popular music might result to members of society, believing that treating women as subordinate and inferior is completely normal (Ling & Dipolog-Ubanan, 2017).

According to Carpentier, Knobloch-Westerwick and Blumhoff (2007), exposure to sexually provocative music can activate sexual thinking and influence the judgment of individuals. Cooper (1985) analyzed popular music lyrics in over three decades – 1946 to 1976 – by coding the lyrics of a representative sampling of over 1,000 popular songs in that time period. Of the popular music lyrics sampled, at least one of eleven stereotypical female images

examined, were identified in the sampled lyrics. According to Cooper (1985), these eleven images included “woman as evil, physical characteristics, need for man, possession of man, woman as mother, woman as sex object, woman as delicate, woman as childlike, woman as attractive, woman as supernatural and woman on a pedestal” (p. 503). There were significant changes recorded in the percentage level of stereotypical female images within the span of four decades examined which led to the conclusion that even stereotypical images recorded within a certain period are dependent on the trends prevalent in the society at any given time. Cooper’s findings add credence to the belief that lyrics of popular music have the potential to influence attitudes about women in the society. Notably, within the time frame examined by Cooper, 90 to 100 percent of the lyrics analyzed were written by men. It is possible that results would have been different if the music lyrics had been written by women. According to Pounder and Coleman (2002), the common perceptions are that men dominate senior management positions and there is a lack of women in senior management positions due to women not having the qualities of leadership. Pounder and Coleman (2002) also cite works of other researchers that show both men and women equating successful leadership with male gender qualities. These gender qualities usually are defined by society, culture, workplace, organizational demographics and nature of the organization. Aggression, independence, logic, objectivity, assertion and confidence, are some of the leadership qualities usually attributed to the males. On the other hand, gender leadership qualities usually attributed to females include being emotional, sensitive, talkative, empathetic and submissive (Pounder & Coleman, 2002).

Flynn, Craig, Anderson and Holody (2016) in their investigation of music lyrics in six genres of music, R&B/Hip-Hop, Rap, Pop, Adult Contemporary, Rock and Country, within a period of 2009 to 2013, found out that out of all the sampled songs with single gender lead

performers, 77.8 percent were male lead singers while 22.2 percent were female lead singers (Flynn et al., 2016). The conception that men dominate popular music probably explains why objectification is dominant in the music terrain. Since women have been described as the most frequent targets of objectification while men have been described as the most common sources of objectification (Flynn et al., 2016), it is justifiable to state that men dominating popular music, will create more opportunities for men to engage in objectification. Hence, there is a need for more women to hold more leadership roles in the music industry. According to Woods (1994), some media analysts believe that if more women held positions of higher authority in the media, including authoritative positions like film directors, producers, television script writers, etc., then women would be portrayed more positively in the media. This might not necessarily ring true in all circumstances.

Grabe and Hyde (2009) showed that music television consumption is positively related to self-objectification among women, which would in turn, negatively affect the confidence, psychological well-being and the esteem that women derive from their bodies. It is worthy of note that Flynn et al. (2016) showed that though men were the most common sources of objectification, women were more likely than men to objectify themselves through their music lyrics. This means that female artists, through their music lyrics, also participate in their own objectification and in the objectification of other women. If this is the case, then there is no guarantee that women would not objectify themselves if they held authoritative roles and wrote their very own music lyrics. For example, Britney Spears' first hit, which was originally titled "Hit Me Baby One More Time," was believed to have promoted the abuse and sexualization of girls within school-related contexts. Britney Spears is a female American singer, dancer and actress whose persona was considered to be equivalent to that of a sexy school girl in the 90s.

Although the title of the song – “Hit Me Baby One More Time” was later changed to “Baby One More Time” because operators of Jive Records, the record label that released the hit song, were concerned that the words would show approval of domestic violence, Schick (2014) believes that Britney Spears’ 1998 hit song and other popular songs of a similar nature, show that many of the problematic actors in the normalization of sexist and abusive behaviors towards women are women themselves.

Another instance where concerns have been raised about a female artist participating in the objectification of women was when Beyoncé Knowles, a female African American artist, performed live at the 2013 Super bowl Halftime Show. Many viewers sent in complaints to the Federal Communications Commission, exclaiming their displeasure at the profanity of Knowles’ performance. Viewers were mostly upset not only at the sexually provocative dance moves of Knowles and her back up dancers, but also at the barely-there costumes. Derogatory words like slut, prostitute, stripper, raunchy were hurled at Knowles with one complaint even stating that the performance was ample reason for misbehaviors among the youth (Petchesky, 2013). There were others that jumped to Beyoncé’s defense stating that empowerment of women is exactly what Beyoncé was trying to promote by her scantily clad performances because no woman should be defined by her appearance. Also, Beyoncé’s artistic talents should outweigh how she looked (Allisonlynnn, 2013).

Atkins (2015) uses the phrase ‘feminist sex wars’ to describe the dispute that has ensued among feminists, due to their conflicting point of view over the sensual or sexualized displays by female performers (Atkins, 2015). Finlay (2013) recognizes that there is a thin line between empowerment and objectification. Beyoncé’s talent got lost in the process because of the overemphasis on her sexuality through her choice of costumes which did nothing but undermine

her overall artistry (Finlay, 2013). Women are being stereotyped on a daily basis and their talents are being overlooked or undermined, especially since many female artists bring more focus to their sexuality rather than on their talent, which does nothing to promote the cause for female empowerment. While radical feminists refer to pornography and prostitution as vices that encourage the objectification of women, post-feminists tend to believe every woman should have the freedom of choice to express themselves in any way they deem fit as long as their expressions are not under exploitation (McRobbie, 2004). Clearly, there appears to be little or no consensus among feminists over what aspects of sexualization should be embraced or rejected (McRobbie, 2004). Influenced by the anti-slavery movement, the first-wave feminism movement, which spanned in the mid-19th through the early 20th century phenomenon, was more concerned with women's suffrage, that is, gaining the right to vote, equal rights for women; however, this first-wave of feminism was also characterized by controversial issues on sexuality and pleasure, as well as reproductive rights and birth control (Hammer & Kellner, 2009). Advocates of the first-wave movement also addressed the legal aspect of rape and abuse by husbands and fathers (Hammer & Kellner, 2009). The second-wave and third-wave of feminism were characterized by feminist sex wars. Spanning from the 1960s through the 1980s, the second-wave was focused on sexuality, family and reproductive rights (Dorey-Stein, 2015). The second-wave first began with campaigning against all violent and sexist media images about women then shifted to condemning pornography. Second-wave feminists accused the media of projecting images that "depicted women as of being desirous and deserving of degrading sexual use" (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2004). The third-wave feminism on the other hand, were more of the sex-positive movement (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2004). According to Hammer & Kellner (2009), although there appears to be no consensus as to

what constitutes the third-wave feminism, the term has been used interchangeably with the term, “post-feminism” and is described as the modern versions of feminisms that evolved from the 1980s to the present. Hammer and Kellner (2009) cull from Michelle Goldberg’s quote to describe third-wave feminism as the “shopping and fucking feminism where women’s liberation is synonymous with hotter sex, better food, ever multiplying pairs of Manolo Blahniks shoes, drawers full of Betsey Johnson skirts, Kate Spade bags and MAC lipsticks” (Goldberg, 2001, para. 2). Hammer and Kellner (2009) also believes that the media has helped to project the aforementioned qualities as depicting of what feminism entails. Faludi (1991) buttresses this point when she stated that women are now being characterized in current movies and music videos as fully liberated, free to vote, free to work, free to display their sexuality, thereby creating a false sense of security for women with the motive of putting an end to the feminist movement (Faludi, 1991).

From the perspectives of many post-feminists including sex-positive post-feminists, it is now acceptable for women to wield their sexual powers, even working in the sex industry, rather than attempting to reject being judged on that basis. To post-feminists, embracing the objectification and sexualization of the female body is liberation. That, is success. Hence, feminism is no longer necessary. Angela McRobbie, a feminist and British cultural theorist disagrees with the perception that feminism has already achieved gender equality. She explains that post-feminists suggest that feminism has been attained in order to establish a new range of meanings (McRobbie, 2004). Using magazines as a media source for her study, she observed that stereotyping of women was still prevalent as teenage girls were encouraged into submissive and stereotypically feminine behaviors through this medium (McRobbie, 2004). If feminism means advocating for the rights of women as it pertains to gender equality, then feminism is far from

achieved. The Rockefeller Foundation (2016) adds credence to this when they highlighted the inequalities that still persist as regards better opportunities given to men over women. This is made evident in the fact that to date, men occupy more leadership positions and earn higher wages than women (The Rockefeller Foundation, 2016). Women are still being objectified in work places and are still being portrayed as shallow by the media. Though some progress has been made with the advent of the #MeToo Movement, women are still afraid to speak up against oppression, especially being in a society that is clearly dominated by men. Society even goes as far as punishing women who go against the dictates of the male dominated status quo while rewarding women who reinforce the status quo. If Donald Trump still ended up in the White House as President after being caught objectifying women via a recording in 2005, where he stated that one can do anything to women when one is a star, including “grabbing ‘em by the pussy,” after which he then dismissed his lewd remarks as locker room banter, then, patriarchy’s dominance in society is still prevalent and can no longer be overlooked (North & Klein, 2017). It is high time that women assumed their potential roles in society without living in the shadows of men, especially the men who are so insecure, that they would rather hold on tight to their patriarchal dominant roles in society, than create any avenue where threats of being upstaged by the women might loom ahead. It is worthy of note that upstaging the men is not the aim for the incessant calls by feminists for equality and respect, but a plea to be given an equal platform to realize their full potentials in society without the fear of prejudice. The #MeToo campaign was created in 2007 by Tarana Burke, an African American civil rights activist, after drawing inspiration from the story of a 13-year old girl who had been sexually abused (Garcia, 2017). The #MeToo Movement which became viral in 2017 and witnessed celebrities speak up collectively against the assault and abuse they had to endure in the hands of some notable male personalities,

made one wonder why the victims stayed silent for so long, through the years of assault. Perhaps, a reason for their silence was that the world had not been ready for the truth years ago. This is not to say that the world is fully ready now; however, awareness and consistent backlash against all matters relating to objectification of women will go a long way in setting the stage for the eradication of gender-based discrimination.

It is worthy of note that there are fewer male artists who prance around on-stage half naked compared to the women and when even when men are caught in this sexualized display, reactions are different. In a study conducted by Bernard, Gervais, Allen, Campomizzi and Klein (2012) published in the journal of psychological science, it was found that while both men and women see sexualized appearances of women as objects, men and women see sexualized appearances of men as people. Therefore, women encouraging the objectification of women through their sexualized appearances on stage causes more harm than good. Chicago writer, Neumann (2013) concurs with this when, in her article, she highlights the double standards prevalent when women accuse male artists of objectifying women in their lyrics. Since women also contribute to their own objectification when female artists objectify themselves through their lyrics and appearances, they are also guilty of the social ills they preach against. Therefore, prancing around half-naked in music videos or stage performances might not be the smartest thing to do given our reality which music and pop culture has had a hand in shaping (Neumann, 2013). In Neumann's 2013 article, she samples from the lyrics of songs by female artists who have been on the radio top 40 list — “Check on It” by Beyoncé, “Don't Cha” by The Pussycat Dolls, etc. — and deduces that radio is filled with the very thing that women complain about. She then goes further by stating that if women do not want to be viewed as objects, the first step would be women refusing to promote their own objectification (Neumann, 2013).

Likewise, in Bretthauer, Zimmerman and Banning's 2007 research study which involved a qualitative content analysis on the lyrics of top 20 songs from the Billboard Hot 100 lists within the period, 1998 to 2003, it was observed that female artists communicated misogynistic messages. Examples of those transmitted messages included "the projection that women who use sexual appearance to attract attention is satisfactory, staying in a relationship regardless of shabby treatment is permissible, being with a man despite feeling used, ignored and unappreciated is tolerable" (Bretthauer, Zimmerman & Banning, 2007, p. 44). The researchers also identified six themes in the sampled music lyrics and these themes are as follows: "men and power, sex as top priority for males, sexual violence, objectification of women, women defined by having a man and women not valuing themselves" (Bretthauer, Zimmerman & Banning, 2007, p. 35). Many female artists had sung about not being able to live without a man and women were being conditioned to believe that the sexual satisfaction of men was the role of women (Bretthauer, Zimmerman & Banning, 2007). This reflects the extent of the level of poor self-esteem women experience in society which has contributed to the subjugation of women.

Many men and even women believe that a woman's sole driven purpose should be building a home and making her family happy. If a woman manages to break free of that stereotype to pursue her dreams inconsistent with the expectations by society, she is given derogatory names. According to Felony (2014), women are being labelled bossy for the same behaviors that signal leadership in men. Women are judged more harshly than men for expressing their opinions and are instead favored based on their outward appearance (Felony, 2014). Of the sampled songs by female artists in Bretthauer, Zimmerman and Banning's study, only three talked about women's self-care and the necessity to take care of their own needs before others (Bretthauer, Zimmerman & Banning, 2007). There is a possibility that women's

participation in their own subjugation is as a result of being brainwashed or misled to believe that women are indeed, inferior to the men because society has defined what gender roles should entail. This reflects the concept of hegemony that Gramsci (1971) highlighted, where a dominant class forms some sort of consensus around its ideologies by presenting its own particular interest as the interest of society.

According to Dunu and Ugbo (2015), the dominant representation of gender roles in popular music lyrics has not only affected women's sense of identity as individuals, but has also affected the way society views women. Even the very assumption that women might have been brainwashed by the men, seems to give the women no credit of being able to take a stand on relevant issues without being influenced by the men. Does that mean women have no willpower and cannot think for themselves or make their own decisions? After all, the belief that women are emotional beings and cannot be trusted in decision making is the public impression (O'Neill, 2014), albeit erroneous. No doubt, popular music has also helped to project these impressions. Becker (1990) believes that "the music industry, in its promotion of certain acceptable female roles, should assume responsibility for the propagation of negative stereotypes and the inundation of sexist material" (Becker, 1990, p. 2). Music reflects the culture and folklore of a society which entails the history, values, norms and mentality of that society (Zia, 2013). However, music is much more than just a mirror of society as it serves as a potent force in the shaping of society (Davis, 1985).

Patriarchy and Misogyny in African Culture

In Africa, patriarchy is so firmly embedded, that trying to separate stereotypical lyrical content preached in a majority of African popular music from the lived reality of Africans is next to impossible. Even the women in Africa acknowledge that gender equality is a Western notion

that will never work within an African environment (Bvukutwa, 2014). This is because African women are still so firmly ensconced in patriarchy that they cannot see that they are being subjugated, despite minority voices advocating against gender inequality.

Bvukutwa (2014) tells the story of a young bride in Shona culture in Zimbabwe, Africa, who has to go through a series of traditional rituals before she is welcomed into her new family. The women in her new family, that is, her mother-in-law, sister-in-law and other relatives by marriage, are usually in charge of ensuring the new bride performs the rituals properly and other tasks a woman “should know how to do.” Not once did Bvukutwa (2014) mention in her article that the same treatment is dished out to the groom. It is evident that women participate in their own subjugation. The women in the new family probably felt they were doing the groom a favor by making sure his wife is fully capable of taking care of him. In other words, ensuring the bride is well taken care of by the groom is secondary to ensuring the groom is well taken care of by the bride. We can then deduce that one of the reasons that patriarchy has been able to sustain itself in Africa is that women are active participants in the oppression and suppression of other women. Popular music of Africa bears the marks of this ideology.

Analysis by Makura (2017) found a glorification of patriarchy in the body of work of Zimbabwean musician, Paul Matavire. Matavire was a popular Zimbabwean musician who was born blind. His music gained prominence, largely because of his willingness to use the Shona language in his songs, coining phrases that have remained a vital part of everyday conversation among the Shona-speaking people in Zimbabwe. Three of Matavire’s 1980s hits — “Dhiyabhorosi Nyoka (Diabolical Snake),” “Taurayi Zvenyu (Just Speak Please)” and “Tanga Wandida (Love Me First),” collectively glorify patriarchy while portraying women as objects of scorn and abuse (Makura, 2016). Although Matavire’s music reflected already formed

perceptions about men and women in the Zimbabwean culture, Matavire's music lyrics helped to implant the stereotypical notions and practices such as the internalization of messages of self-pity and objectification in women, as well as the glorification of masculinity in the Zimbabwean society (Makura, 2016). In Ghana, major musical genres that speak to issues of gender enjoy tremendous popularity; these include the high-life and hip-life genres of music. In a study by Ampofo and Asiedu (2012), which highlighted the changing representations of women in Ghanaian popular music, a participant stated that most of these music genres in Ghana, do not say anything good about women. Rather, the music most often talks about ladies' style of dressing and their body parts. Some other male Ghanaian participants acknowledged that they use songs to control or manipulate women (Ampofo & Asiedu, 2012). One female participant notably complained about the music in Ghana being always about the women and the need for them to be humble or submissive and yet, nobody places the men in stereotypical roles in songs. Women are not that fortunate (Ampofo & Asiedu, 2012).

In Uganda, a video clip shared by NTV Uganda, a local television station, emerged on March 11, 2018, where Onesmus Twinamasiko, a Ugandan Legislator, could be heard saying that men needed to discipline their wives by beating them to streamline them (Meixler, 2018). As can be expected, these comments sparked outrage and members of the public called for his resignation but Twinamasiko defended his statement by saying violence helped sort out differences in his own marriage. In Uganda, a 2016 Demographic and Health Survey found out that 38 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 experienced physical or sexual domestic violence and 68 percent of women were fearful of their spouses (Meixler, 2018).

Nigeria, located in the western part of Africa, is another country where patriarchy, the subjugation and objectification of women has thrived for decades. The patriarchy prevalent in the

Nigerian society even extends to the Nigerian constitution. For instance, while male foreigners who marry female Nigerian citizens are not allowed to become citizens except through naturalization, female foreigners who marry male Nigerian citizens are allowed to become citizens. This is according to Section 26 (2) (a) of the 1999 Nigerian constitution (Constitution of Nigeria, 1999). Also, Section 55 (1) (d) of the Penal Code permits a man to beat his wife as the man will not be persecuted except he causes grievous hurt to the wife. As stated – “Nothing is an offence which does not amount to the infliction of grievous hurt and upon any person which is done by a husband for the purpose of correcting his wife such husband and wife being subject to any native law or custom in which such correction is recognized as lawful” (Nnochiri, 2016, para. 3-4).

According to Muoghalu (2012), women have always been subjugated and oppressed in most cultures in Nigeria. In Nigeria, men have always been considered the makers of meaning in broadcast media and this was made evident when on October 2016, Nigeria’s president Muhammadu Buhari stated in a press conference held in Berlin, Germany, that his wife belongs in his kitchen and the “other room” and therefore, should not be involved in political matters (BBC News, 2016). His misogynist statements caused an uproar and many could not believe such comments could come from a leader. If the president of a nation holds such stereotypical beliefs, what then is expected of the citizens?

Nigerian night club owner, Mike Nwogu popularly known as “Pretty Mike” caused an uproar when he showed up at an event with an entourage of young women being led on a leash. The picture detailing this act was first made public via social media (Babatunde, 2017). As can be expected, Pretty Mike did not get very pretty comments for his obnoxious behavior. Critics labelled him a beast because only an animal would be capable of treating another human being

like an animal (Babatunde, 2017). Nollywood actress, Georgina Onuoha took to social media to relay her displeasure by questioning the morals of society and wondering how the nation could have sunk so low (Babatunde, 2017). Then again, we must not forget that these women had not been forced to wear a collar and leash like a dog being led by its master. Rather, these women had chosen to be devalued and stripped of all dignity. Reportedly, these women were paid a paltry sum for their services (Ikeji, 2017). However, no amount, no matter how huge, is justifiable reason for subjecting oneself to such demeaning conditions. If attention was what Pretty Mike had been seeking, he definitely got an overdose of it.

Yaba market is one of the most popular markets in Lagos State, the economic hub of Nigeria. In Yaba market, music can be heard playing at full blast as traders display their wares which might include but are not limited to music CDs/DVDs, clothes, shoes, jewelry, etc. As a female, it is not unusual to go out shopping in the overcrowded Yaba market and have your hands pulled or body touched by market men trying to cajole the ladies to buy their wares. If the lady complains, she is called offensive names and is embarrassed. This act is not regarded as harassment in Nigeria as no arrests are made in this regard rather, the ladies are told to enjoy the attention because being touched or pulled means the lady is being admired for her good looks and therefore, should be taken as a compliment. Instead of calling out these aggressive forms of harassment or reporting the crime to local authorities, a popular newspaper in Nigeria — *Vanguard*, published an article in January 2017 titled “5 Ways Women Can Visit Yaba Market Without Being Harassed” (Vanguard, 2017). These five solutions proffered by Vanguard include: “dress the way you want to be addressed, keep a straight face, always go with a man, avoid walking at the center of the market and don’t go to the market” (Vanguard, 2017, para. 3). No mention was made in this article about the need to bring the perpetrators of sexual

harassment to book or the need for the woman to report the harassment to the police. If a sexual harassment case is even reported to the police, there is a strong likelihood that the police would laugh off reports and instead of making arrests, advise the victimized female to be grateful for the attention because a woman is created to be admired by the men. According to Muoghalu (2012), sexual harassment and rape cases are often dismissed in Nigeria because the country does not have stringent laws about the crimes and existing laws are rarely enforced. As a result, women suffer in silence and never report the abuse to law enforcement authorities. Often victims of sexual abuse are blamed for inappropriate behavior which must have led to their abuse. The power-gender relations that occur between the rapist and his victim stems from patriarchal practices that have resulted in women being regarded as second-class citizens Muoghalu (2012). In domestic violence or rape cases, juries put female victims on trial for failing to meet their proper gender roles instead of focusing on the defendant's behavior (Tetlow, 2009). Patriarchy dominates the Nigerian society, where men are being trained for leadership activities, while the women are being discriminated upon and relegated to domestic activities (Makama, 2013). Under these patriarchal practices, women are regarded as inferior and are expected to be pure and gentle. This means that if a woman experiences rape, she is regarded as impure and is subjected to mockery, humiliation and stigma (Muoghalu, 2012).

This gender stereotyping ideology and the normalization of objectification and subjugation by the Nigerian people can be translated into Nigerian popular music, videos and live performances on the stage. After all, the sociology of music has rested on assumptions that music reflects or is homologous to the social group or society that makes it (Frith, 1996). Hyden and McCandless (1983) suggest that popular music teach people the different ways of understanding not only themselves, but their social relations as well. Popular music may also

encourage people to regard popular figures in the media as authoritative figures, whose expressed opinions become legitimate. Youths try to emulate their idols and as they become older, the ideas that have been internalized from their idols become transferrable and becomes the ideology of the entire society (Becker, 1990).

Fela Anikulapo-Kuti was Africa's most controversial musician (Grass, 1986) and is considered by the Nigerian youths to be an idol (Ehusani, 1998). In 2015, a young man showed up to a music audition for the television series *Nigerian Idol* in his underpants and chose to sing one of Kuti's songs (Liquorfood, 2008; The Cable News, 2015). When he was accused of obscenity by Dede Mabiaku, a judge on the audition panel and a big fan of Kuti himself, the young man replied by stating, he was representing Kuti who performed on stage in his underpants. Mabiaku, who was visibly angry, immediately jumped to Kuti's defense and asked the man to shut up, stating that Kuti never wore briefs on stage but in the privacy of his home (Liquorfood, 2008; The Cable News, 2015). Notably, it is a well-known fact that Mabiaku is a protégé of Kuti as he was a part of Kuti's Egypt 80 band for over a decade (The Cable News, 2015). Mabiaku went further by stating that the young man's performance was insulting to the "great one" called Kuti (The Cable News, 2015). Emotions of this nature, which Kuti is still able to evoke years after his demise, show the magnitude of Kuti's influence and the emulations of his doctrines by members of society. This indicates that Kuti's Afrobeat music and style, which have been observed to contain themes that objectify women, still have the ability to influence society.

Double Standards of Gender Stereotypes

Even more problematically, there is a persistent double standard between male and female celebrities in how sexuality is perceived. In recent events, American model Blac Chyna's

sex tape was released in February 2018 and she was called a whore and slammed for her sex skills falling short, whereas, American Rapper Safaree Samuels was praised for his sexual prowess after his nude nether region was leaked not long afterwards (Hazlewood, 2018). In fact, people responded to Safaree's nude leaks with porn job offers and marriage proposals (Brow, 2018). "Common double standards of society" is the phrase American Singer Christina Aguilera used to call these situations, where a man gets all the glory for the more he can score and the woman is labelled a whore (Railton & Watson, 2005). How about when Anthony Joshua, British Professional Boxer, stated in a 2017 interview with GQ magazine that he is stricter with his niece than his son because his niece will go on to become someone's wife and needs to learn family morals and how to be a good woman? On the other hand, Joshua believes his son is going to be a man's man and will want to spread his wings (Henderson, 2017). By Joshua's statements, his niece will not be allowed the same level of freedom as his son for the mere fact that she is a woman. Also, recall that U.S. Republican candidate, Courtland Sykes stated in 2018 that he hoped his daughters would not grow up to become career obsessed banshees (Stracqualursi, 2018); what do these views say about contemporary culture? Clearly, these views from recent times are not any different from Kuti's sexist portrayals about women, as relayed in his decades-old music.

Researchers have found that some genres of music contain more objectification in their content than others. From six genres of music sampled, Flynn et al. (2016) found out that a significant number of the sampled genres contained objectifying themes, with R&B/Hip-Hop and Rap genres showing more objectification in their lyrical content compared to the other sampled genres of music (Flynn et al., 2016). Frisby and Aubrey (2012) found that country music genres contained less objectifying themes probably due to the conservative nature of the genre, while

Hip-Hop/RnB and Pop music genres contained more and similar amounts of objectifying themes in their music videos. The Afrobeat genre of music developed in the 1970s and conceived by Kuti, is one popular genre that is yet to be explored by scholars in the context of its misrepresentation of women. This study will not only help contribute to discourses of the misrepresentations of women in popular music, but will also shed light on the objectification of women in the Afrobeat music genre, a genre that is magnanimous in its projection of misogyny and gender stereotypes. Gender stereotype discourses are not easy dialogues to have. Like Adiche (2014) so aptly explains, men and women are resistant to talk about gender or are quick to dismiss the problems of gender because the mere conception of changing the status quo is always uncomfortable.

CHAPTER 3

KUTI'S PROJECTION OF MISOGYNY THROUGH HIS MUSIC AND LIFESTYLE

“Men and women are on two different levels. You can say different wavelengths... Equality between male and female? No! Never! Impossible! Can never be! It seems the man must dominate” – Fela Kuti (as cited in Moore, 2009, p. 234)

Fela Anikulapo-Kuti was widely celebrated as a music genius who gave “voice to the voiceless” because through his music, Kuti often derided governmental powers in Nigeria and even Africa, for the oppression being meted out on the people (Agovino, 2017; Alimi & Anthony, 2013). He criticized the Western culture and the adoption of this culture by Nigerians (Alimi & Anthony, 2013). Prior to gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria had been under British rule after the British imposed a Crown Colony government on the area of West Africa which later came to be known as the country, Nigeria. Kuti went on to blame colonialism for the political and socio-economic problems faced by Africans. As a result, Kuti was labelled a human rights activist (Alimi & Anthony, 2013; Jackson, 2014).

On the other hand, many of Kuti's songs celebrated misogyny and portrayed a society dominated by the masculine gender where women were little more than objects, subservient to the whims and expectations of men. Kuti's songs are clearly a reflection of his beliefs and an avenue to “educate” his audience as he has stated in an interview, that his “music is an attraction to inform the people” (OneLoveRVR, 2012). Although Kuti's misogynistic portrayals of women are reflective of the practices typical of Africa and the rest of the world at large, there is no denying the fact that Kuti's music also sought to bring about reform to the corrupt Nigerian military government in leadership beginning from the 1960s to the 1990s. This chapter will

provide an in-depth analysis of Kuti's music, lifestyle and how his misogynistic portrayals of women have contributed in no small measure to culture supporting the subjugation of women.

Kuti as a Postcolonial Crusader

Kuti was regarded as Africa's most controversial musician and grew up in colonial Nigeria during the 1940s and 1950s (Grass, 1986). Kuti used his music to forewarn the people of the dangers of military dictatorship and colonialism (Shonekan, 2009). His songs – “Shuffering and Shmiling,” “Army Arrangement” and “International Thief Thief,” brought attention to the sufferings of the masses, the oppressive rule and corruption prevalent in Nigeria during the period of military rule.

“Authority Stealing,” the title track from the 1980 album, *Authority Stealing*, was a message calling out the government in Nigeria and Africa for corrupt practices. The hit single had lyrics like: “Authority stealing pass armed robbery. We Africans must do something about this nonsense...” In another verse, Kuti chants: “People contribute plenty money, na authority people dey steal...” By the lyrics to this song, Kuti calls out the government for siphoning off funds that rightfully belong to the public as funds should have been used to create better living conditions for the masses. Kuti compares the rate of pilfering by those in government with armed bandits. According to Kuti, stealing by the government far outweighs that of armed bandits and there was a need for the public to take necessary actions to bring this scourge of corruption to an end. Kuti believes the only difference between an armed robber and those who hold authoritative positions in government, is that the former uses a gun, while the latter uses a pen to steal. However, when it comes to stealing, the power of a pen far outweighs the power of a gun. This is evident in the lyrics, “Armed robber im need gun, Authority man im need pen...” and “Pen get power gun nor get. If gun steal eighty thousand naira, pen go steal two billion naira.”

Kuti's consistent critique of a dictatorial government who abused power, landed him in jail several times (Grass, 1986) but this did not deter Kuti. He was basically a thorn in the flesh of corrupt leaders and his unrelenting critique of the government despite reprisal attacks, made him a hero of the people (Culshaw, 2004; Spencer 2010).

“Army Arrangement,” the title track from the 1985 album, *Army Arrangement*, was a message criticizing the civilian regime after over a decade of military rule in Nigeria. In 1979, Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigeria's fifth Head of State handed power to a democratically elected civilian government, hence, becoming the first military head of state to transfer power to a civilian regime in Nigeria. In “Army Arrangement,” Kuti calls out Obasanjo in his lyrics: “Obasanjo plan am very well, him take all politicians who rule Nigeria before, the same old politicians who spoil Nigeria before, Obasanjo carry all of them. All of them dey there now.” Kuti was not afraid to identify powerful names at the helm of corruption. He wanted the world to know that even though Obasanjo had transferred power to a civilian government, Obasanjo still held the cards and was very influential in determining who held leadership positions in the country. Today, little has changed, Obasanjo is still regarded as highly influential in the political terrain in Nigeria – to the extent, that it is believed that if an aspirant to the presidency hopes to win an election, the aspirant must have the endorsement of Obasanjo (Maduku, 2017; This Day, 2018). In 2018, Obasanjo was described in *This Day*, a Nigerian national newspaper, as the man who rules Nigeria by proxy (This Day, 2018).

It was the norm in the culture industries for celebrities like Kuti to become so idolized that their lifestyles are even emulated by the youth. According to Darnton (1977), Kuti was idolized by thousands of young Nigerians as some sort of African Bob Dylan, an American singer and poet who was highly influential and prominent in the 1960s (France-Press, 2016). A

clear illustration of the continuing power of Kuti's influence on the youth in recent times is evident in the *Nigerian Idol* incident recounted in the previous chapter (The Cable News, 2015). It is clear that celebrities, their music and lifestyle have an impact on the attitude of the audience. Therefore, if Kuti's moral inadequacies, such as his misogynistic views about women, are not pointed out as appalling and unacceptable, the youth, middle-aged and old, most of whom are fans of Kuti, are bound to be influenced by these views.

“Shuffering and Shmiling,” the title track from the 1977 album, *Shuffering and Shmiling*, was a message to Africans asking them to open their eyes and acknowledge that they are to blame for their sufferings. The single had lyrics like: “every day my people dey inside bus, forty-nine sitting, ninety-nine standing. Dem go pack themselves in like sardine... everyday nah the same, suffer suffer for world.” In the additional lyrics, “suffer suffer for world, enjoy for heaven, Christians go dey yab, in spiritum heavinus, muslims go dey call allahu akbar. Open your eye everywhere, Archbishop na miliki, Pope nah enjoyment, Imam nah gbaladun,” Kuti pointed to the fact that despite poverty in the land, Africans were still smiling amidst their sufferings because religion and religious leaders had deceived them into thinking that they should smile through trials and tribulations because their reward is in heaven. Kuti then goes on to point to the fact that these same religious leaders who preached endurance, were living in luxury at the expense of the people who were smiling and suffering through the hardships.

Songs of these sorts portray Kuti as a mouthpiece for the people because he is able to connect with the sufferings of the people. In Nigeria, there are some who believe Kuti was a prophet because his lyrics as far back as the 1970s still resonate with the happenings in Nigeria today. For instance, in a study published in the United Kingdom's *New Scientist* magazine in 2003, Nigeria was ranked number one in the world by the World Values Survey, to have the

highest number of happy people in the world (BBC News, 2003) and yet, poverty remained the most critical challenge facing the country. Today, years after Kuti released his “Shuffering and Shmiling” single, little has changed. Life and the quality of governance in Nigeria has not improved since the days of Kuti. However, people are no longer smiling in their poverty-stricken state. On March 14, 2018, the World Happiness Report, which was released by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network for the United Nations, showed Nigeria being ranked at 91 in the list of happiest countries in the world with Finland, taking the number one spot (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2018).

Kuti’s calls for social change should not exclude the call for a gender-neutral society, where women are included in decision making and visible leadership roles. However, one cannot call for change if one does not believe in that change. Kuti has admitted that he hated to give women any credit (Moore, 2009). Clearly, Kuti did not believe in the equality of women and never shied away from airing this view. For this reason and more, it is not far-fetched to state that Kuti’s legacy is tainted by his misogynistic beliefs about women.

Many of Kuti’s songs have not only chipped away at the dignity of women but have succeeded in underlining the extent of male domination over women in society. In Kuti’s world, which corresponds with popular beliefs in a patriarchally dominated society, men’s superiority over women and their entitlement to sexual access to women is a normalcy.

According to Sandra Bem’s gender schema theory, children are influenced by ideas emanating from society about what it means to be a man or woman (Cherry, 2017). Gender theorist – Judith Butler argues that gender or sex is socially constructed. In other words, society defines masculinity and femininity which explains the reasons society has expectations where men or women are concerned (Butler, 1990). For instance, right from birth, male and female

children are taught to walk in their different roles that are culturally defined. A man is taught to act, dress and think like a man. A man is taught that crying is a sign of weakness and assertiveness is the norm. On the other hand, females are taught that tears are endearing and vulnerability is lady like. Females are taught that cooking, cleaning and general care of the home is their responsibility.

Mothers who are of course, 'women', play a vital role in imparting these teachings to their children right from the womb or how would one explain a pregnant mother upon discovering the sex of her unborn baby to be a male, going for items that are blue in color and buying toy guns or toy cars for their baby boys and dolls for their baby girls? These categorizations defined by society, contribute to the stereotyping of women. Therefore, Kuti's descriptions of his expectations of what a woman's duties constitute should not come as a surprise as his views are no different from the general beliefs of society, especially one that is patriarchally dominated. Butler (1990) cites the work of Monique Wittig where it was stated that there is no reason to divide up human bodies into male and female sexes except that these division suits the economic needs of heterosexuality (Butler, 1990). It is possible that the economic needs of heterosexuality stem from a politically motivated system, aimed to satisfy the needs of a patriarchally dominated society. If a woman is allowed full liberation or becomes independent of men, how then can a husband derive the benefits of having his wife close by and able to perform her "wifely duties," which includes cooking, cleaning and satisfying their sexual urges? According to Baxandall, R. F., Baxandall R., and Gordon (2001), all men receive economic, sexual and psychological benefits from male supremacy. This explains reasons that Kuti tried to kick against the liberation of women in his music. Apparently, Kuti is content with the stereotypical ideology that women belong in subservient roles.

Asides the sexist lyrics of Kuti's songs, his relationship with women, including his wives, and utterances about them, cast him in the role of a sexist and misogynist.

Kuti's Positioning of Women as Objects

In Kuti's 1976 song, "Na Poi," from the album, *Yellow Fever*, Kuti is explicit about the sexual acts that occur between a man and a woman. This is apparent in Kuti's lyrics – "Mo ri e lobirin, mo mu e lowo dani. Mo ri e lobirin, mo mu e lole. Mo ri e lobirin mo mu e wo yara lo ooo, odi poi," which when translated to the English language means, "I see you woman, I hold you by the hand. I see you woman, I take you home. I see you woman, I take you to a room and have sex." By these lyrics especially in the use of the first-person singular, "I", Kuti is depicted as the male with agency while female agency is undermined. The lyrics show that Kuti believes that men are rulers over the bodies of women as women have no say in sexual activities. In these "Na Poi" lyrics, Kuti's suggestion that women are sex objects is in line with the "women as sex objects" theme identified by Cooper (1985) in his identification of feminine images found in popular music lyrics over three decades. As typical of a patriarchally dominated society, women are expected to be passive participants in sexual activities as they are little more than objects to be showcased like a piece of artwork on a mantelpiece, for the sole purpose of bringing pleasure to the men. Clearly, this depiction appears to normalize rape and sexual assault. With a growing increase witnessed in the rate of sexual violence experienced by women all over the world (King, 2017), Kuti's lyrics pose a threat in encouraging the victimization of women. A recent Harvard study in the United States showed that 87 percent of women between the ages of 18 and 25 had experienced sexual assault at some point in their lives (King, 2017). In Lagos State, Nigeria, a total number of 150 cases of rape and sexual abuse were reported within a year as of April 27,

2016 (Punch, 2016). In a survey carried out in Nigerian universities, it was reported that 100 percent of rape or sexually harassed students are females (Punch, 2016).

In Kuti's song, "Mattress," from his 1975 album, *Noise for Vendor Mouth*, Kuti point-blank refers to women as objects. Specifically, he uses the word, "mattress," a pad used for supporting the reclining body or as a bed, to describe women. From Kuti's "Mattress" lyrics, "e be mat, e be plank, e be spring, e be cushion. Anything wey we dey sleep on top, call am for me, mattress, mattress. So, when I say woman na mattress, I nor lie," Kuti wants the world to know that there is little or no value to women aside being used as a resting place. In other words, just like a mattress is made to be slept upon, a woman is also created to be slept upon. Kuti's degrading use of metaphor to describe women does not end here, as he goes on to compare women with more objects – a mat, a plank, a spring cushion. Looking on the bright side though, Kuti deserves some credit; at least, Kuti's comparison of women to mattresses does not portray women as completely useless. Without women – oh, I meant mattresses – men would have to sleep on the bare ground and probably die from the cold. For those who had doubts about how Kuti really felt about women, the song "Mattress" is quite "the revelation" as it leaves no iota of doubt of Kuti's perception about women as mere objects, simply created to service the men.

One might argue that artists sing for entertainment purposes or just to garner attention and the lyrics might not necessarily be a compulsion to shape the attitudes of society; however, as it is often said – "the words we speak shape our reality." Renowned Irish musician Paul David Hewson, popularly known as Bono, has stated that music has the ability to sway people emotionally. In his words: "When you sing, you make people vulnerable to change in their life. You make yourself vulnerable to change in your life but in the end, you've got to become the change you want to see in the world..." (Tyranziel, 2002, para. 26). Recall that even Kuti

himself has stated that his “music is a weapon,” as well as a revolution but is not for entertainment purposes (Kino Lorber, 2014). Clearly, Kuti was well aware of his choice of words as he recognized the influence his music could have in shaping the perceptions of his audience. Taylor and Spradley (2017) add credence to this when they state that music is more than an avenue for entertainment only and can be used to motivate educational leaders to transform the culture. Kuti’s utterances about women in interviews showed the extent of his sexist beliefs which indicated that a man was ruler over a woman’s body and called the shots in sexual activities: “Can’t you see that a woman has a body to be violated? Soft breasts, a soft ass, a hole to dig into? She has a body that needs to be violated” (as cited in Palombit, 1981, para. 7). Kuti also had no qualms with being labelled a sexist as he has stated in an interview that he does not believe that being labelled a sexist is negative as he considers the sexist label to be a gift. In his words, according to Stewart:

“To call me a sexist... for me, it’s still not a negative name. If I am a sexist, it is a gift. Not everybody can fuck two women every day. So, if I can fuck two women every day and they [critics] don’t like it, I am sorry for them...” (1992, p. 119)

For Kuti, all a man had to do was identify a sexual interest in a female and take her to his home for sexual gratifications, with no regard to whether the woman had given her consent. After all, according to Kuti, when a woman says no, she actually means yes. This is evident in Kuti’s “Shakara Oloje” lyrics, a title track from the 1972 album *Shakara*, where Kuti chanted, “To ba fowo kan mi, jowo fi mi sile, tabi ki lon se e, o m’egbe e ni, nibo lo ti jawa, emi pelu re ko, iro ni o, o fe se o, oje lon yo.” Translating the aforementioned lyrics from Yoruba to English, the lyrics simply mean, “Don’t you dare touch me, please leave me alone. What is wrong with you? Don’t you know your class? It’s not me and you. It’s all lies. She is interested but just

showing off.” By these lyrics, Kuti is simply mimicking a woman’s typical response, in his estimation, when being singled out by a man as a love interest. For Kuti, a woman’s typical reaction would initially be rejection to a man’s advances and followed by a disposition that she was too good or classy for the man who had shown an interest in her. However, Kuti believes that in these kind of situations, the woman is only putting on an act and playing hard to get, so as not to appear cheap. In other words, the woman actually wants to be hit on. This means that when a woman says no, she actually means yes. Kuti’s depiction of a woman wanting to be touched in spite of vocally rejecting a man’s advances helps to propagate the culture of sexual assault and rape. Clearly, when a woman says no, she means no and going ahead to have sexual relations with her if she has withheld her consent, would constitute rape.

Kuti showed a blatant disregard for a woman’s self-worth, to the extent that he believed all he had to do was flick his fingers and the women would come running. While recalling her first meeting with Kuti in an interview (Moore, 2009), Sandra Isidore, Kuti’s former girlfriend (never married to Kuti) and a member of the Black Panthers, a black militant political organization set up in the United States to fight for the rights of black people, stated that when Kuti met her for the very first time, he asked for her name and she responded. Kuti then asked if she had a car and she responded in the affirmative. Right afterwards, Kuti said the following words to her: “You’re going with me” and well, that was that. Notably, Kuti has often stated that his meeting with Isidore was a catalyst to his education on black history and politics (Moore, 2009). Here, at least, Kuti acknowledges a woman’s contribution for something not akin to sexual activity. However, Kuti clearly expected to be obeyed without being questioned when he summoned Isidore like one would summon a lapdog. Isidore’s recollection of this first meeting

with Kuti, clearly underscores Kuti's thirst for control and dominance, while objectifying women.

Kuti has stated that his mother, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti (1900-1978), influenced him politically (Moore, 2009). She was Kuti's source of mental stimulation and psychological strength (Olaniyan, 2004). Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, who was a leading feminist activist and builder of women's institutions (Olaniyan, 2004), led a group of local women to confront deep rooted traditional patriarchy and colonialism in the 1940s (Shonekan, 2009). She was a former president of the Abeokuta Women's Union which had over 20,000 members and during her reign as president, she led the union to successfully topple the leadership of the King of Abeokuta who had been in an alliance with colonizers in administering unjust gender discriminatory colonial tax laws (Olaniyan, 2004). Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize by the Soviet Union for her work in the advancement of women in 1960 (Olaniyan, 2004). While there is no doubt that Isidore and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti were influencers in Kuti's evolvment as a politically transformative figure (Savali, 2011), it is uncertain to what extent, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti influenced Kuti musically. According to Olaniyan (2004), Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti had advised Kuti to play more highlife and less jazz. If suggesting a music style was the only direct influence Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti that had on Kuti, musically, it is no wonder that Kuti's songs failed to project the advancement of women in the manner his mother's actions did.

The Symbolism of Kuti's Queens

In Kuti's classic hit, "Lady," from his 1972 album, *Shakara*, Kuti is unapologetic about his misogynistic views of women being inferior to the men. Notably, "Lady" and the album's other single, "Shakara Oloje" were massive local hits and emerged as one of the urban folklores of Lagos, the biggest commercial city in Nigeria (Barrett, 2011).

By Kuti's "Lady" lyrics – "She go wan take cigar before anybody, she go want make you open door for am, she go want make man wash plate for am for kitchen... She wan salute man, she go sit down for chair..." it is clear that Kuti believes a woman's place is in "the kitchen" and a man should always take dominant roles. Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari shows how widespread such sentiment still is when he stated at a press conference held in 2016 at Berlin, Germany, that his wife belongs in "his kitchen" and the "other room" (BBC News, 2016). Not content with one wife, Kuti was married to 28 women, whom he referred to as his queens. His first marriage was to Remilekun Taylor, and his second marriage was to 27 women simultaneously. Gauging from Kuti's lyrics, it wouldn't be presumptuous to state that his marriage to 28 African wives succeeded in keeping him away from the kitchen and away from washing his own dirty plates, for the rest of his life.

Kuti's expectations about a woman's place in a household is highlighted in his lyrics where he chants that a woman should not be seated to greet a man. This is consistent with the patriarchal beliefs in a traditional African home where a woman is expected to kneel to welcome her husband. Kuti manages to translate his beliefs to his stage performances where his "queens" would often times, fall to their knees while swaying to his music as Kuti struts on stage while up on his own two feet.

The lyrics "If you call am woman, African woman no go gree, she go say, she go say, I be lady o...Market woman na woman," relay Kuti's notion that the word, "lady" is the westernized version of an "African woman." Kuti believes African women are becoming influenced by the Western culture through education. Hence, African women appear to have abandoned their values to adopt the Western culture, which includes the desire to be equal to the man, the belief that she is as strong as the man, etc. This is made evident in the "Lady" lyrics – "I

wan tell you about lady. She go say im equal to man, she go say she get power like man, she go say anything man do imself fit do.”

It is a general belief in a patriarchally dominated society that a “lady” from the Western culture is over-pampered and is not as hardworking or domesticated as an African woman. Hence, if an African woman decides to follow in the path of a lady, there will be a total neglect of her domestic duties. It is no secret that Kuti blames the Western culture for trying to sabotage everything related to the African movement. He accuses the Western world of stealing African music and their history (Culshaw, 2014; Kuti, 2013b); he accuses the Western culture of influencing African women to begin questioning their subjugated positions in society, causing them to be dissatisfied with their docile roles and to attempt to reach higher and demand for an equal platform with the men (Moore, 2009). He also condemns the European legal concept of statutory rape, where there is a specified age or age range that must be reached before a woman is allowed to give her consent to engage in sexual activities with her partner and thus, restraining a man from having sexual intercourse with a woman until the age of consent is reached (Palombit, 1981). According to Kuti, if a woman is ready to have sex, a man should have sex with her, regardless of her age (Palombit, 1981, para. 6).

Another instance of Kuti resisting the Western culture was in Kuti’s expressions that safe sexual practices via the use of condoms were “un-African.” This was relayed in his song “Condom Stalawagy and Scatter.” In the song, Kuti is quick to dismiss AIDS as a white man’s disease. According to the Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook, Nigeria has the world’s twentieth largest prevalence rates of HIV/AIDS with 3.17 percent of the population living with the disease (Chepkemioi, 2017). Therefore, denying the existence of this deadly disease and projecting the falsity of the inexistence of HIV/AIDS poses danger to individuals who may then

choose under false pretenses to practice unsafe sex. It is clear that Kuti did not concern himself with the well-being of his 28 wives as he had no worries about exposing them to unsafe sexual practices. Ironically, Kuti ended up dying of HIV/AIDS, even though he refused to acknowledge, even until death, the existence of the disease. There are speculations that some of his wives might have gotten infected but it is unclear exactly how many (Savali, 2011). However, Seun Kuti, one of Kuti's sons has admitted that Fehintola Kayode, his mother and one of Kuti's queens, did die of HIV/AIDS (Apphiaanna, 2017; Savali, 2011).

Kuti was so against colonizers and their practices, that he failed to see any positivity in their projections, including the benefits of protected sex. Kuti's critique of anything Western did more in clouding his judgment on significant societal issues that should be curbed. By viewing all aspects of the Western culture as a damaging influence, including the projection of gender equality, pedophilia and women's liberation, Kuti mixes a progressive postcolonial critical stance with a regressive conservative patriarchal stance. Kuti's seeming inability to separate the wheat from the chaff should not be allowed to serve as justification for his reactionary patriarchal stance. Extremists usually attach one reason or the other for their repulsive beliefs – even religion, has been cited as justifiable reason to treat women as inferior. Kristof (2005) adds credence to this when he stated that some religious leaders, out of their selfish motives, chose to interpret holy teachings to subjugate women. The belief that women are inferior in the eyes of God has been used as an excuse for the brutal husband who beats his wife, the soldier who rapes a woman and an employer who pays a lower wage to female employees (Kristof, 2005). Should this religious belief then be accepted and justified as good reasons for subjugating women? Never! Neither should Kuti's aversion for colonialism be allowed as an excuse to oppress women.

Going back to Kuti's "Lady" lyrics, with "African woman go dance, she go dance 'fire dance,' she know im man na master, she go cook for am, she go do anything im say," Kuti brings his song to a crescendo by informing his audience of his startling beliefs of what should denote acceptable duties for a true African woman. Apparently through these lyrics, Kuti wants the world to know that a true African woman knows that the man is her master and hastens to obey her master's every wish. From the live performances of Kuti's queens on stage, it is evident what Kuti refers to as the "fire dance" (Anikulapo71, 2011; Babalola, 2014; Jaboromaj87, 2017; Kuti, 2009; SAHU, 2014). Erotic hip swiveling movements, head bowed with hands and knees on floor while "twerking" in barely-there attires all fall in this exuberant "fire dance" category (Kuti, 2013a; MyAfricanBargains, 2012; Stone, 2012). While twerking as a descriptor of a dance style has become popular only in the time after Kuti's era, the style can be likened to the fire dance that Kuti sings about. Reference to twerking was first heard in 1992, when a New Orleans American rapper, Jerome Temple, also known as DJ Jubilee, used the term in his 1992 song – "Do the Jubilee All" (Gaunt, 2015). According to Gaunt (2015), "twerking is correlated to a network of contemporary dances that involves the erotic isolation of the hips throughout the African continent and its diaspora" (p. 245). Twerking has been described as a dance involving the dropping, popping and bouncing of one's derrière or buttocks in a sexually provocative manner (Gaunt, 2015). These bodily movements were often exhibited by Kuti's queens, who were known for their stirring and sexually charged performances. Gaunt (2015) also pointed to the fact that the degree of control that creators of content have of their own twerking does not belong solely to the creators alone as viewers also share in this control as well, as their views contribute to the perception of the identity formed of the created content. Hence, viewers of creative content are likely to form perceptions of the viewed content based on their history, prior

assumptions and interpretations (Gaunt, 2015). It is a given fact that engagement with videos of black girls twerking usually result in slut-shaming and sexual objectification (Gaunt, 2015). This explains the perceptions of Kuti's queens as prostitutes (Atoyebi & Adeniji, 2013; Lee, 2009; Savali, 2011), perceptions that might have been formed as a result of the queens' public performances and persona, as well as the stereotypical beliefs of viewers about women that twerk. Usually, Kuti's queens appear on stage scantily clad, sometimes on bended knees, dancing provocatively while their "master," Kuti performed (Kuti, 2013a; MyAfricanBargains, 2012; Stone, 2012). This portrayal cast them in the role of docile, sex objects and helped reinforce the stereotypical beliefs regarding women. These roles reinforce the tenets of the male gaze (Mulvey, 1999). The erotic musical performances from females whether on stage or in cages, portray the queens as objects of the male gaze and never the bearer. By so doing, Kuti's queens exhibit that 'to-be-looked-at-ness' that Mulvey (1999) describes.

In Kuti's "Lady" song, the use of the Pidgin English phrase – "im man na master," translated to meaning "her man is master" in plain English, shows possessiveness. Clearly, Kuti wants the world to believe that a woman belongs to the man, who is her master. Since the word, "slave" is the direct antonym of "master," it would not be presumptuous to state that Kuti believes women, his queens included, are slaves. Since a slave really has no say in a household, the seeming willingness of Kuti's queens to cater to Kuti and his whims, and be placed in subjugated positions, might just be a case of helpless women who had assumed subjugated roles for far too long, leaving them no access to the dividends of liberation and human dignity. Perhaps, the queens were well aware of their docile roles but were unable to help the situation because they did not feel capable of speaking up for themselves.

It is also possible that Kuti's queens were very much cognizant and accepting of what they signed up for. It is not unheard of, even if it is problematic, to find women who would rather function as slaves as long as their needs (financial, sexual, etc.) are being met. Striking out and surviving on their own might have been beyond the comprehension of the queens and thus, a seemingly impossible feat. After all, in the modern business world, men still receive higher wages than women for performing the same tasks (Bloch, 2013). This makes the general position of women more financially precarious, leaving them more susceptible to exchanging sexual favors for roles usually bestowed upon them by the men, who in turn, are usually at the helm of decision-making. The Rockefeller Foundation reported that only 21 women were found to be at the helm of Fortune 500 companies in 2016 (The Rockefeller Foundation, 2016). How then, is society to believe it truly isn't a man's world? How then can you blame a woman who is in an abusive marriage or relationship but refuses to leave her tormentor because she is terrified that she might not be able to take care of her bills and that of her children? There is no denying the fact that we also have women enveloped by greed and laziness who would rather bear an abusive relationship than strike it out on their own. How can we differentiate between these different categories of women? The answer to this question might be entirely subjective; however, despite the angle one might choose to analyze this, there is no denying the fact that every human being deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. Kuti's treatment of his "queens" showed a complete lack of respect. In one of Kuti's live performances, Kuti can be seen leading his queen to a position where she had her palms to the floor and her buttocks facing the audience. Kuti then humps, grinds on his "queen" and slaps her playfully on the buttocks as she dances on stage amid catcalls from the predominantly male audience (Jaboromaj87, 2017). Indeed, "the queens'

popularity stemmed from their exotic facial makeup which entailed controlled gyrations of the buttocks and thighs to Kuti's Afrobeat music" (Ayobade, 2017, p. 144).

Clearly, Kuti's reference to his wives as "queens" is in direct contrast to the life of servitude and abuse that the women were faced with. The word "slaves" would have been a far more befitting title, considering Kuti's brutal and degrading treatment of his wives. However, it is worthy of note that like Kuti's other women, this dancing "queen" had not been forced into that objectifying role. She could have decided to stay away if she had wanted to. The call and response format of the song, "Mattress," is another example where Kuti's queens can be heard willfully participating in their objectification. In "Mattress," the queens echo the objectifying lyrics after Kuti, thereby, showing concurrence to the theme of the song:

Kuti: So when I say woman na mattress, I nor lie.

Queens: You know lie, my friend.

Kuti: Mattress, mattress, call am for me.

Queens: Mattress, mattress.

The lyrics above, speak to the thorniness of hegemony and help to reinforce the conception that women participate in their own subjugation. However, anyone placing the blame in its entirety on women, has probably never experienced the vulnerability that comes with emotional abuse. It is possible for victims of emotional abuse to be completely unaware of being abused. In an abusive relationship, the victim becomes conditioned to respond in ways that reinforce the abuser's attitude. Women need to know that their sole purpose in life does not have to revolve around a man. Like the men, women also constitute an integral part of society and can be agents of change themselves. Therefore, it is important to keep highlighting relevant literature where contemporary culture has significantly contributed to the way women are being viewed by

society. Women need to recognize and acknowledge that participating in subjugation, regardless of the extent of their participation, is synonymous with contributing to their subjugation, for example, staying in an abusive relationship. Kuti's songs are part of the cultural fabric that such enlightenment must expose.

Kuti and the Visual Rendering of Black Femininity

In Kuti's classic hit and title track, "Yellow Fever," from his 1976 album, *Yellow Fever*, Kuti expresses his disgust for women who bleach their skin and he shows no hesitation in relaying his views about such women to his audience. From Kuti's "Yellow Fever" lyrics: "You dey bleach o, you dey bleach. Sisi wey dey go, yellow fever, stupid thing, yeye thing, fucking thing, ugly thing," it is evident that Kuti's use of abusive language to show contempt for women who bleach their skin is taking his misogyny to the extreme. Bleaching is not an uncommon practice among Nigerian women who try to conform to what society has portrayed beauty should look like. The general projection dominating media, though erroneous, has always been that being light-skinned is the primary determinant of beauty. There was a time when one could only find light-skinned models and actors on television, to the extent that darker skinned models were relegated to minor roles. Women who resort to changing the color of their skin usually do so because they're not happy with how they look and believe that being light-skinned is synonymous with beauty. Also, women who bleach their skin might be doing so to appeal to the colonial and cultural imperialist-inflected vision of beauty, where women in the Western culture are usually fair-skinned. The preconceived notion that fair-skinned women are more beautiful than dark-skinned women might be coming from a deep sense of insecurity and a lack of confidence. Also, the fact that some African women desired to be fair-skinned like the women from the Western culture, causing them to go as far as bleaching their skin, provided additional

reason for Kuti to justify his criticisms of Africans who try to adopt the practices of the Western culture. However, every woman is entitled to her beliefs just like a man is also entitled to his beliefs, even though perspective does not always equal truth.

Illustrations on the album covers of *Yellow Fever*, *Expensive Shit* and *Shakara* show Kuti's queens, who also act as his backup singers and dancers, in docile and provocative positions. The cover art on the *Yellow Fever* album showcases a bare-chested woman and another, baring a bit more – a naked derrière. Oversexualizing women's bodies on the album cover was clearly to grab the attention of viewers, thereby reinforcing Kuti's message that women should be regarded as sex objects instead of human beings. Little or no attention is paid to a woman's intellect or her individuality. As a result of the misrepresentation of women in Kuti's music and other popular music, the youth are led to believe that the sexuality of a woman is the driving force of a woman's value.

The cover art on the *Shakara* album showcases a lineup of bare-chested women (Kuti's queens) on their knees. This portrayal of Kuti's queens, bare chested and on their knees places them in the subservient position expected of women. Recall Kuti's "Lady" song lyrics, "she wan salute man, she go sit down for chair?" Clearly, Kuti expects his women to be on their knees when addressing him. This portends that Kuti's attitude to women is sexist. Also, oversexualizing these women is not only degrading to the women, but likely to promote the objectification of women.

The cover art on Kuti's 1975 album, *Expensive Shit*, also showcased his queens bare-chested, behind a crisscrossing of barbed wires, with their right fists raised high in the air in a Black Power salute. The Black Power salute is usually used to show unity, strength, resistance and solidarity in the face of human rights violations (SBS News, 2013), but considering the

queens were little more than slaves themselves, there is a fundamental contradiction in their participation in the Black Power salute while appearing in half-frontal nudity. This undermines the seriousness of those who had historically fought hard for black empowerment and challenged the status quo. Others might argue that at least, “unity,” a characteristic recognized in participants of the Black Power salute, was present among Kuti’s wives. Any argument suggesting the aforementioned can be put to rest when Funmilayo, one of Kuti’s queens burst into tears in the middle of her interview and stated that the other wives were jealous and did not like her (Moore, 2009). Sewaa, another of Kuti’s queens, stated that there were bouts of fights and jealousy among the queens. Sewaa also accused two other queens of witchcraft (Moore, 2009, p. 272). Also, Kevwe, another of Kuti’s queens stated that she was one of Kuti’s favorite wives and as a result, the others got jealous. Kevwe also admitted to fights among the wives even though they got punished for it (Moore, 2009).

The Sexist Nature of Kuti’s Lifestyle

Kuti’s portrayals of his queens does nothing to curtail the criticisms that his queens were the equivalent of glorified prostitutes (Atoyebi & Adeniji, 2013; Lee, 2009; Savali, 2011). As one who has been referred to as a “human rights activist,” Kuti’s attitude to women, his queens included, lacked the traits expected of one particularly perturbed about the rights of women or aren’t women human too? Kuti’s lifestyle and responses about women in interviews also helped project his misogynist perception about women. Some are of the opinion that Kuti’s second marriage to 27 women simultaneously, proved that he actually valued his wives as his marriage to them was spurred from wanting to reward the women for their loyalty and save them from the stigma of being labelled prostitutes (Atoyebi & Adeniji, 2013, para. 7). In actuality, his second marriage to 27 women proved otherwise as that didn’t stop the women from being labelled

prostitutes, instead, the marriage only helped to prove that Kuti had regarded women as possessions, objects he could just lay ownership to, anytime he desired.

Not only did Kuti's music contain lyrics that subjugated women, his physical and emotional abuse of his wives was recorded in his only authorized biography – *This Bitch of a Life* – where Kuti admitted to slapping his wives (Moore, 2009). Savali (2011) adds credence to this as she states that Kuti did not hesitate to strike one of his 27 wives if they did anything to displease him. The emotional abuse experienced in the hands of Kuti was observed when Kevwe Oghomienor, one of Kuti's wives, stated that Kuti had introduced her to smoking marijuana and when she refused to smoke, he would get angry and shame her in public (Ohai & Onyema, 2010, para. 19). Apparently, Kuti's wives were not allowed to have a voice and were instead, suppressed. Hitting his wives was a way of keeping them in check. Even Kuti admitted to this when he claimed as justification, that a woman would disrespect her husband if she wasn't slapped when guilty of wrongdoing. As typical of extremists who try to find reasons to justify their actions, Kuti also implied that slapping his wives made him a good husband as his wives wanted to be slapped because they needed an authoritative figure as a husband (Moore, 2009, p. 162). Furthermore, a majority of the queens had not attained the legal age of consent when Kuti married them or at the time of Kuti's earliest copulation with them (Ohai & Onyema, 2010; The Guardian, 1999). This shows that Kuti was a perpetrator of unlawful sexual practices, of which he was never convicted (The Guardian, 1999). Kuti showed no remorse for his reckless sexual dalliance with the underage girls, after all, according to Savali (2011), it was Kuti's belief that some young girls are ready for sex at the age of nine. Kuti's marriage to his 28 wives was definitely not borne out of love and his wives did not seem to mind this. Remilekun, Kuti's first wife and mother of his first four children, even admitted that Kuti did not believe in love,

however, she confessed to loving Kuti (Moore, 2009). It was clear Kuti did not reciprocate her feelings as Kuti's second marriage to 27 women all at once, took place without Remilekun's knowledge (Moore, 2009). For Kuti to have thought it appropriate not to inform Remilekun that he was having a second wedding and to 27 women simultaneously, for that matter, showed exactly how insignificant Remilekun was regarded by Kuti. Moore (2009) believes Kuti loved his wives from his observations of Kuti but it is uncertain what Moore observed to come to this conclusion. According to Kuti, sex is the only factor that attracts him to women and since he had been having sexual relations with the women for a while, even before his marriage to them, he felt marriage to them was the right thing to do (Moore, 2009, p. 156-157). Also, in an interview, Kuti once shared his conception about marriage saying that the institution of marriage is not good for the mind. He then goes further to liken a man getting married to a woman to a man getting married to affliction (Olu, 2016).

There are allegations that Kuti craved more publicity and that was the reason for his marriage to 27 wives simultaneously (Moore, 2009, p. 157-160). Kuti has however, denied the allegations. According to Mba (2018), Kuti's marriage to his wives served to protect him and his women from accusations by authorities that he was abducting women (Mba, 2018). Atoyebi and Adeniji (2013) also quote Femi, Kuti's first son, as saying that his father's mass wedding was his way of rewarding the women for staying with him despite experiencing varying levels of police brutality on his account. While there could be some truth to this, Kuti's agreement to extend an invitation to the press to witness his wedding which took place in a hotel on Monday, February 20, 1978 (Moore, 2009, p. 158), showed that he wanted the publicity.

Sex was a favorite pastime of Kuti's and it is beyond comprehension to even begin to understand how one man could keep 28 women satisfied. Kuti solves this riddle when he

explained in an interview, “I manage to keep these women together because I love sex. I sleep with two or three women a day. If they don’t get their share, they become moody” (Palombit, 1981, para. 2). While Kuti shouldn’t be criticized for his love for sex as it was his personal business and right to love sex, engaging in unprotected sex with so many women and hence, exposing his wives to sexually transmitted diseases, which could prove fatal, deserves condemnation. In his aforementioned 1975 song “Condom, Stalawagy and Scatter,” which was often performed but never recorded, Kuti stated that he did not believe in the use of condoms during sex. It can then be deduced that his marital relationship with 28 women was basically Kuti saying, without a care in the world, that he could have as many women as he desired, at any given time, however way he wanted them and owed nobody any explanations.

It is not far-fetched to state that Kuti’s queens were vulnerable upon their first meeting with Kuti and his offer of marriage to them sounded like the perfect opportunity to escape from the confines of their homes. Reports not only showed that the women were underage at Kuti’s initial meeting with them, but also came from polygamous homes, had no place to call home or were just plain rebellious and out to prove a point. Moore (2009) gives a good insight into the background of the queens and how they had met Kuti.

For instance, Olubukola Alake Adedipe, one of Kuti’s queens stated that when she met Kuti at the age of 17, she had not been in school. Coming from a polygamous family with her father marrying 5 wives, Alake sated that she had “disliked her stepmother’s treatment of the household” (Moore, 2009, p. 198), which suggests that she had disliked her stepmother’s treatment of her as well, since she was a part of the household. Therefore, it is apparent that these uncomfortable situations in Alake’s home had made abandoning her home for Kuti’s home, a better alternative. Alake recalls being given money by Kuti on their first meeting despite the fact

that Kuti had not known who she was. She then followed Kuti to his house and had sex with him on that very day (Moore, 2009). It is clear that Kuti had been financially buoyant, especially in the early years of his career and Kuti's generosity with money provides the stability and comfort that these women might have been seeking.

Najite Makoro, another of Kuti's queens stated that she had left her home to live with Kuti at the age of 14. She was from a family of nine children who had been living with her father and stepmother after her mother died when she was just 10 years of age (Moore, 2009). Choosing to live with Kuti must have been a better alternative than living without a mother and having to deal with a stepmother who might have been cruel to her.

According to Ihase Osayemeri Obotu, another of Kuti's queens, at the age of 15, she quit her studies and went to live with Kuti. Ihase also recalls being fed up at home, where her father had lived with four wives and 11 children (Moore, 2009). According to Hudson (2004), many of Kuti's 27 wives had been saved from the streets (Hudson, 2004). With a majority of Nigerian people living in abject poverty (BBC News, 2012), the chances of thriving in a polygamous average household are slim, if not impossible. Though polygamous, Kuti had been above average financially, especially in the early phase of his career. Remilekun, Kuti's first wife, has stated that Kuti was overly generous to people who didn't even deserve his generosity and that irked her sometimes (as cited in Moore, 2009, p. 172-173). Moore (n.d.) adds credence to this as it states that Kuti had been a very generous man and was extremely loyal to family and friends. Though Kuti was sexually unfaithful, he appeared to be honest and forthright as Remilekun has pointed out that Kuti had told her before their marriage that he could never stay faithful and she could either take it or leave it (as cited in Moore, 2009, p. 169-170). Clearly, living with Kuti had been perceived as the better alternative of the limited choices the queens had.

Interestingly, the queens have claimed that they stayed with Kuti because they loved him. Like the popular saying goes, “It is crazy what people do for love and it is even more crazy what love does to people.” Notably though, when things started to go sour, the wives started leaving Kuti and they ended up being down to 15 (Moore, 2009). Eventually, in 1985 upon Kuti’s release after spending some time in jail, Kuti divorced all of his wives, claiming he no longer believed in marriage (Gerstein, 2012).

Another of Kuti’s queens, Laide Babayale in an interview with Nigerian journalist Abdul Okwechime stated that she had abandoned boarding school to go be with Kuti at the age of 16, leaving her father and school officials in pursuit (Uncensored, 2013a). Evidently, seeking refuge in Kuti’s home was a more palatable choice to the queens when they first met Kuti. When Adejonwo Iyabode Oguntiro, one of Kuti’s queens was asked in an interview why she stayed with Kuti, she replied by stating that Kuti satisfies her and gives her anything she wants. In her words: “The things he used to give me when I was working, I don’t use to have. I don’t use to have the amounts of money he gives to me and he satisfies me” (as cited in Moore, 2009, p. 205). The key phrase here is “when I was working,” meaning, Adejonwo no longer worked as she realized, probably after carefully weighing the pros and cons, that she would make more money staying with Kuti than working. Apparently, Adejonwo does not consider being a backup singer and dancer in Kuti’s band to be a real job.

Ihase Osayemeri Obotu, another of Kuti’s queens, has stated that before meeting Kuti she didn’t really know “what” she was and had looked up to a white man as the master of everything (as cited in Moore, 2009, p. 217). It is evident that Ihase credits Kuti for bringing value and a sense of purpose into her life as she appears lost before Kuti, the “knight in shining armor,”

comes along to “rescue” her, the “damsel in distress.” This is consistent with how men and women are stereotypically portrayed in various forms of media and popular culture.

Also, Fehintola Kayode, one of Kuti’s queens, stated that she sees Kuti as a benefactor. In her words, “I see Kuti as my father, as my husband, as my mother because he takes care of anything in life” (as cited in Moore, 2009, p. 227). Clearly, Fehintola holds Kuti in high regards and doesn’t think she has the capacity to take care of herself.

Call it being blinded by greed, hoodwinked, brainwashed or hopelessly in love, one thing is certain, the women were not held by Kuti against their will. Despite the shabby treatment the queens got from Kuti, they still held him in high regard as to them, Kuti’s sexism was perfectly normal and expected, being the “alpha male” he was. This consensus displayed by Kuti’s queens is in line with Antonio Gramsci’s Hegemony theory which explains the desires of the dominating class being manifested by gaining some form of consensus around those desires (Gramsci, 1971). The queens were right in the middle of a patriarchally dominated society where men are expected to assume authoritative roles and the women are supposed to assume subservient roles. Anything outside this would be regarded as abnormal. This show of consensus by Kuti’s queens to society’s expectations of gender roles, provide further evidence that subjugated groups, such as women, become actively involved in their own subjugation.

In their Own Words: Kuti and his Queens

Even apart from Kuti’s lyrics, his visuals, and reports of his personal life, his statements and that of his queens to the press and to Moore, Kuti’s biographer, repeatedly revealed their beliefs that Kuti believed women were inferior to the men. Specifically, when Kuti was asked by his biographer if he believed that women were equal to men, Kuti stated – “No, never, impossible” (as cited in Moore, 2009, p. 234). If this doesn’t prove in clear terms that Kuti saw

women as inferior, then nothing will. To Kuti, his queens were mere slaves to be used to fulfill his lust in the bedroom or as backup dancers. How convenient! Think of all the money Kuti would have had to cough out if he were to employ backup dancers from outside of his queens. While Moore (2009) reports some sort of compensation was given to the queens for their roles as members of Kuti's band, it probably would be nothing compared to what Kuti would have had to pay professional backup dancers outside of the queens. Kuti was physically abusive with his queens and the women never thought to retaliate against him, their benefactor. One of Kuti's queens, Sewaa, even admitted that Kuti had beaten her in at least, one instance because she had not wanted to do rehearsals (Moore, 2009, p. 231).

Kuti has stated that producing babies is a woman's job because it is more tender while the more vigorous job belongs to a man (as cited in Moore, 2009, p. 234-235). Kuti has also expressed more misogynistic views about women when he made the following statement, "In Africa, men are the boss, there's no doubt it. Women think this is perfectly normal" (as cited in Palombit, 1981, para. 7). Kuti is not wrong about his latter statement as it is this very sense of normalcy, where Kuti's queens have assumed subservient roles because they're convinced that dominant roles rightfully belong to the men, that has resulted in the men feeling entitled to subdue women, thus strengthening misogyny in society.

Again, Kuti's queens were not totally blameless for their subjugation as some of them have shown support and agreement to Kuti's misogynistic views about women, thereby participating in their own subjugation. In an interview, Remilekun Taylor, Kuti's first wife, not only acknowledged that Kuti was an authoritarian but also stated that she believed that was exactly how a husband should be. Remilekun also went further by stating that she does not believe in women's liberation (Moore, 2009, p. 173). In an interview with Carlos Moore, the

writer of the only authorized biography of Kuti, another of Kuti's wives, Kevwe Oghomeinor stated that she likes Kuti's hands even when the hands beat her (Moore, 2009, p. 190). However, it must be acknowledged that in Moore's accounts of his interviews with Kuti's wives, Moore's own agenda seems to cloud any potential view of his work neutrally representing the wives' beliefs. A good illustration of this was when Moore asked Kevwe what happened when she first met Kuti and Kevwe responded by saying they had both liked each other and Kuti then decided to look after her. Moore then responded with the statement, "you told him I want to stay." Kevwe then responded, "yes, I told him that" (Moore, 2009, p. 188). There must have been events leading up to the exchange between Kuti and Kevwe but based on Moore's line of questioning, it can be deduced that Moore seemed more interested in proving that the women had stayed with Kuti of their own freewill. In another instance of Moore being a leading interviewer where he tries to influence the responses of the queens, Moore asked Omolara Shosanya, another of Kuti's queens, what she liked the most about Kuti. Specifically, Moore's question was, "What do you like most in Fela? The man? His mind? His sex?" This is a clear illustration of Moore asking a question of the interviewee, Omolara but rather than allowing the interviewee to provide her response, Moore asserts only three options for Omolara to pick from. Omolara then responded by stating that she liked Kuti's mind and "prick" (as cited in Moore, 2009, p. 223). The word "prick" is a vulgar word for "penis" or "manhood." Moore goes on to encourage this vulgarity by asking if "it" was special. By "it," Moore was referring to Kuti's manhood. Omolara then responded by stating that Kuti's "prick" was "sweeter than sugar" (Moore, 2009, p. 223). Such colorful language from Kuti's "queens" is likely to send shockwaves down the spine of true feminist activists who have spent their lives fighting for the dignity of women.

According to Moore (2009), Kuti's biography was spurred as an attempt to make it clearer to the audience that Kuti's queens were not prostitutes as widely depicted in the media (Lee, 2009, para. 22). Clearly, many of Moore's demeaning questions do little to portray Kuti's wives as intellectuals but instead, succeeds in portraying the women as flighty. According to Ayobade (2017), Kuti recruited the queens to tickle the fantasies of his audience who were mostly male. During Kuti's performances some of the queens appeared in suspended cages and after the performances, the queens freely interacted with male audience members if they so desired (Ayobade, 2017). Subjecting the queens to the objectifying gaze of the predominantly male audience, further underscores the positioning of women as objects of the male gaze, which Mulvey (1999) highlights.

No doubt, Kuti's queens encouraged their own subjugation. Laide declared that Kuti was a messiah and could do no wrong (Uncensored, 2013b). She explained rather coyly, how Kuti threatened to withhold sex from some of the women herself included, who initially had reservations about marrying him (Uncensored, 2013b) and as Kuti expected, that threat was enough to make them come scrambling after him. This implies that sex with the legendary Kuti was an added incentive for the queens to stay married to Kuti. As for the queens' other aspirations after marriage to Kuti, "having babies for Kuti," was a frequently occurring theme from the queens' responses to the interview with Moore (2009).

Clearly, while some of Kuti's songs sought to end the political travails Africans were faced with, Kuti's music also contained misogynist messages that have helped to project the stereotypes that serve as barriers to women's empowerment. These stereotypes include women being regarded as sex objects, domestic servants, intellectual inferiors, weak, housewives, cooks, nurturers etc. It is also conspicuous that the queens participated in their own subjugation.

However, the views of the queens only reflect those views predominant in a patriarchally dominated society. Here, a woman's role is believed to be all about caring for the men and their children, while a man takes on more positions of influence. Within patriarchal culture, this anomaly has become a norm. Regardless of how pervasive this has been, globally and throughout the past, the counter-ideologies of feminism have created a space from which to see the damage and inequity it inflicts upon society. While popular figures such as Kuti and his wives might make these stereotypes continue to seem normal, that should not be the case.

CHAPTER 4

GLOBAL AND CRITICAL RESPONSE TO KUTI'S MUSIC AND LIFESTYLE

“Music is another lady that talks charmingly and says nothing” – Austin

O'Malley (as cited in Shapiro, 1977, p. 228)

Kuti's foresight in Nigerian politics, his audacity to speak against the injustices levied on fellow Nigerians and Africans, garnered him respect and a worldwide following. Kuti was a revolutionary and inventor of the music genre, Afrobeat (Culshaw, 1989; Darnton, 1977). He is highly respected in Africa and regarded as one of the continent's most important voices (Burney, 2017). It has therefore, clearly been easy to overlook his inadequacies, however significant. However, Kuti's flaws, despite his championing of political rights of Nigerians through his music, should not be overlooked. His relationship with women and utterances about them, cast him in the role of a sexist and misogynist, thus helping to propagate demeaning views about women. Kuti's attitude to women was deplorable and despite his demise from HIV/AIDS two decades ago, his essence and beliefs about women still reverberate in contemporary society. The fact that, to this very day, Kuti's supporters still celebrate him as a figure of postcolonial advancement and a promoter of human rights, exemplifies the one-dimensional approach by which celebrities are often viewed. Woody Allen and Roman Polanski are examples of notable entertainment celebrities who maintained public support even after their misbehaviors became well known. In 1992, Woody Allen, an American filmmaker and comedian was accused by Dylan Farrow, his adoptive daughter, of sexual assault when she was only seven years of age. Although Allen vehemently denied all allegations, a judge denied Allen, visitation rights with Dylan even while ruling that the charges were inconclusive (Freeman, 2014). Fast forward to 2014, when Allen was honored with the Golden Globe Cecil B. DeMille Lifetime Achievement

Award, and the can of worms from years past was reopened. Debates from the public about Allen's morality and Hollywood's celebration of Allen despite his questionable morals, were generated (Freeman, 2014). Even Farrow, now grown up and married, penned an open letter questioning the propriety of the award given to Allen. Farrow stated that Allen was a living testament of the way society has failed survivors of sexual abuse (Farrow, 2014).

Roman Polanski, an acclaimed film director is another example of a celebrity who has managed to generate a massive following despite his misconduct. It is a well-known fact that Polanski has been repeatedly accused of sexual misconduct with underage girls. The most notable incident occurred in 1977 when Polanski was accused of drugging and raping 13-year old model, Samantha Gailey. Polanski pled guilty to the lesser offence – unlawful sexual intercourse and fled the United States for Europe to escape sentencing (Wakeman, 2017). In spite of these controversies, Polanski has continued making movies and has since been honored with several awards including Best Director Award at the 2010 European Film Awards for the movie, *The Ghost Writer* (Brooks, 2010).

It is worthy of note that there are no reports, at least to my knowledge, of Kuti raping or sexually assaulting women, however, his contributions to the projection of female subjugation are too significant to be regarded as trivial. Kuti's ability to fearlessly lash out at corrupt practices and exploitation of the masses by African governments is not in contention, however, it is paramount to recognize that political progressiveness, popularity, success, good looks or talent are not enough traits to measure the overall legacy of an individual. It is quite unfortunate though, that the aforementioned set of traits is what society has come to prioritize as worthy of esteem. The measure of the quality of an individual should be all encompassing and inclusive of a person's values. It is regrettable that society has come to regard the subjugation of women by

influential male artists as unimportant, a minor flaw or just unworthy of attention, such that the topic is given little or no scrutiny and these male artists and their bodies of work are widely celebrated, without any deep consequences meted out to them for their actions. Instead, the reputations of these celebrities are left intact because of the influence they wield in society. A common argument in favor of celebrities that fall into this criterion is that the personal life of a celebrity is the personal business of that celebrity and as a result, a celebrity's immense contribution to art should not be interwoven with the personal life of that celebrity.

With the advent of the #MeToo and Time's Up movements, which were made popular in 2017 and used to demonstrate the widespread prevalence of sexual assault and harassment faced by women (Leonard, 2018), more women are beginning to openly kick against their subjugation. There is now a public outcry for perpetrators of sexual misconduct and other forms of gender bias and subjugation to face the consequences for their actions. However, even in some situations where an accused male celebrity has not been indicted and yet, some members of society decide to show support for the victim of the perpetrator, for example, through refusals to further patronize the perpetrator's work, there seems to always be an audience for these culprits. Take for instance, Rush Limbaugh, a revered American radio talk show host who spurred a major boycott movement after he called Sandra Fluke, a Georgetown law student, a slut and prostitute on air in February 2012. Limbaugh's comments were condemned as sexist and misogynistic and popular musicians and advertisers began to distance themselves from Limbaugh. Despite Limbaugh later apologizing for his crude choice of words on air, his talk show ended up losing major sponsors and spurred a blacklist of radio stations that aired his show. Regardless, Limbaugh eventually found a way around the dilemma as he moved his show to smaller stations in big markets (Epstein, 2016).

Rush, a Canadian rock band sent a cease-and-desist letter to Limbaugh, instructing him to stop playing their music during his radio show because they did not want to take any chances that people would believe they were endorsing Limbaugh's views (Gardner, 2012). Apparently, the band – Rush, understood the importance of distancing their music from Limbaugh because they had not wanted the public to assume that the band were in any way, supportive of Limbaugh's views. Also, the fact that Limbaugh did not lose his show or even significant audience numbers – even if he did lose sponsors and had to shift programming strategy, buttresses the failure of our society to view misogyny as a deeply rooted problem with dire consequences. Epstein (2016) reports that Limbaugh is still as influential as ever as he attracts 13 million listeners each week.

Like Limbaugh, Kuti is still as influential as ever, even in death. Imitation, which is the greatest form of worship, is evident in the music of some renowned Nigerian artists as they show no hesitation in taking an entire phrase or paragraph from Kuti's music (Akande, 2018). According to Akande (2018), to say "Kuti's music has outlived him would be a limp shot at praise" (para. 22). Since 1998, Felabration, a music festival that celebrates the music and life of Kuti, has been held annually in Nigeria (Akan, 2007). This week-long festival, which is usually held in the week of Kuti's birthday, features cover versions of Kuti's music by top music celebrities from all over the world. In 2008, over 50 international artists from the United States, Great Britain, France and Senegal performed at Felabration (Akan, 2007). The Broadway musical *Fela!* which was based on events in the life of Kuti, led the Tony Awards nomination list for 2010, with a whopping 11 nominations including one for Best Musical (Los Angeles Times, 2010). Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, the drummer for The Roots, the Grammy Award winning

American hip hop band that currently functions as a house band for the late-night talk show, *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*, stated that *Fela!* was the best musical ever created (Pareles, 2009).

Over the years, individuals have reacted in various ways to Kuti's music and lifestyle. Responses have ranged from backlash, shock, praise, awe, amusement, but never indifference. Kuti's music and lifestyle continue to spark global interest, even years after his death. To this day, research is being conducted in an attempt to decipher the enigma, a man thought to be both hero and a curse. Kuti has been described as a musical phenomenon, a showman par excellence and the inventor of Afrobeat. On the other hand, Kuti's misogynistic views about women cannot be swept so easily under the carpet as Kuti's influence, even in death, remains highly significant. An honest assessment of both Kuti's strengths and flaws must be made so as not to mislead members of society, especially the youth, who can be highly impressionable.

Despite Kuti's "shortcomings," there are many who believe Kuti was an African hero because of the revolutionary lyrical content of his music and his outspokenness, which was aimed at admonishing the hypocrisy of corrupt political leaders. He was lauded for his courage in his unrelenting criticisms of corrupt leaders in Nigeria despite the backlash, torture and punishments he endured for daring to challenge the authoritarians in power, during the period of military rule beginning from the 1960s to the 1990s. The aim of this chapter is to analyze these global and critical responses to Kuti's music and lifestyle, looking at artifacts, articles, interviews and Kuti's solely authorized biography. Results from this study are obtained from a thorough investigation to identifying and analyzing reactions to Kuti's intriguing personality on a global scale.

Perceptions on Kuti's Love for Humanity

According to Spencer (2010), Kuti was a tornado of a man but he loved humanity. Despite being beaten and persecuted by authorities, Kuti refused to desist from using his music to denounce Nigeria's corrupt dictators. For this reason, he was regarded as a hero to Africa's working class (Spencer, 2010). Alimi and Anthony (2013) concur with this as they referred to Kuti as being the most fearless human rights activist ever to emerge from the Nigerian music industry. Not only did Kuti use his music to publicly condemn the tyranny of the Nigerian government, but he also used his music to encourage the oppressed class in Africa to keep fighting for their rights (Alimi & Anthony, 2013). However, Kuti's fight for the rights of humanity seemed to exclude women. Kuti's regard for women seemed to be built around their usefulness in his bedroom and how well they could perform on stage to the delight of his predominantly male audience; his relationship with his queens clearly highlights this. For Kuti, women were inferior to the men and deserved to be treated as mere objects. It has been recorded that Kuti physically and emotionally abused his women as he not only slapped his wives for wrongdoing but also withheld sex from them for failing to satisfy him (Moore, 2009). Other reports have recounted Kuti exposing his wives to sexually transmitted diseases by shunning protected sex and publicly embarrassing his wives for daring to go against his wishes (Ohai & Onyema, 2010). Furthermore, footage of Kuti's concerts exhibit the strong hold he seemed to have over his wives. He would often parade his wives on stage, having them perform half-naked and in subjugated positions. These are not actions one takes with loved ones if respect and equality are important parts of love in any relationship. There are reports that Kuti also passed around his women to other men. According to Ohai and Onyema (2010), Kevwe, his queen, stated that Kuti had encouraged her to marry one of his male relatives because the male relative

had expressed his desire to be married to Kevwe. This had occurred while Kevwe was still married to Kuti. When Kevwe refused, stating that she couldn't take another husband since Kuti was still very much alive, Kuti threatened to end his relationship with Kevwe (Ohai & Onyema, 2010). Clearly, Kuti was not only a sexist but a manipulator as well. This is in line with Jackson (2014) who highlighted that Kuti's wives were far from queens but were instead, slave wives, victims and survivors of gender based violence.

Not enough attention is being paid to misogyny with some, deliberately choosing to ignore the topic. However, ignoring a problem does not stop the problem from persisting. Many misogynists are not even aware that they are prejudiced against women. This is because the culture or practices in a society often become internalized, consciously or unconsciously, by members of that society. Loving humanity should connote loving the human race. By the "human race," I mean all humans.

Dialogues on Kuti's Projected Messages through his Music

According to Botchway (2014), Kuti's music projected messages from the Black Power Movement. Originating from the United States in the 1960s, the Black Power Movement was a political and social movement whose advocates fought against racial discrimination and white supremacy in the United States. Kuti became an advocate for the Black Power Movement and his musical career served as a bridge for the Black Power Movement to Africa (Botchway, 2014). Recall, Kuti has stated that his United States encounter with his former African American girlfriend, Sandra Isidore, who had also been a member of the Black Panthers, had opened his eyes to black history and politics (Botchway 2014; Moore, 2009). Botchway (2014) points to this education about black empowerment, the enslavement of Africans and the need to freeing them from oppression, as the enabling factor to Kuti finding his "Africa-ness in the U.S." (Botchway,

2014, p.17). It is ironical that Kuti who criticized beliefs and practices of the Western world, or more aptly put, criticized anything that did not reflect his beliefs about what Africa should stand for, adopted the messages of the Black Power Movement, a movement whose origin is from the U.S. Also, Kuti's acceptance of the projected messages by the Black Power Movement appeared to be selective or incomprehensive. According to Weber (1981), the Black Power Movement greatly influenced the direction of the Women's Movement. Thus, both movements shared similar ideologies and fought for similar causes which included the struggle for liberation, the realization that their collective action was a determinant factor for victory in the fight against oppression, the discovery that proper labeling was significant to having the right identity in order to overcome stereotypes and the conscious awakening to destroy myths that they were an inferior group (Weber, 1981). To this end, Kuti's misogynistic attitude which included portraying women as inferior to the men and kicking against the concept of women's liberation, was a deviation from what one would expect from an individual purported to be actively projecting the ideas of the Black Power Movement to Africa. Despite Botchway's glowing commendations of Kuti as a man of the people, a convener of the Black Power Movement message of empowerment to Africans through his music, an advocate for rescuing the African people from oppression, a visionary for restoring the identity of Africans for their emancipation (2014, p. 31-32), Botchway (2014) acknowledges that Kuti's reputation as a misogynist, a smoker of criminalized marijuana and a philandering husband to 27 women simultaneously drew criticisms. Botchway then goes on to point out that though these controversies persist, this angle to Kuti, was not a focus of his paper. The nagging question is – how does one “throw the baby out with the bath water” if one is attempting to decipher a person's contributions to humanity? The answer to this question is that it would be impossible to do so without disabling one's own

argument. Contributing positively to humanity should not only entail altruism but should also involve a deep reverence for the dignity of all humans. It would therefore, be inaccurate to categorically state that Kuti was an advocate against the oppression of the people in Africa if women were not considered as worthy members of that very African society or does the masculine gender alone make up the African society? It would be grossly remiss if we do not acknowledge that women deserve to be free from oppression, inferior and limiting stereotypes and other disadvantages stemming from discrimination. While Kuti's reputation as an ardent critic of corruption among African leaders deserves commendation, the quality of his character and his misogynistic messages should not be so swiftly dismissed. Like Abraham Lincoln so famously stated: "Character is like a tree and reputation like a shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing" (Hunter-Tilney, 2017, para. 3). Kuti's character was clearly faulty and should be denoted as such to draw a clear division between what should be emulated and what should be condemned.

Kuti's Musical Legacy

Today, many Nigerian artists are attempting to mimic Kuti's art (Akande, 2018). Samples of Kuti's music has been recorded in the works of Nigerian icons – 2face Idibia and Wizkid. Arguably, Nigeria's biggest pop star, Wizkid has referred to himself as the new Fela (Akande, 2018). Kuti was not only admired locally, but internationally as well. Paul McCartney, English bass guitarist and singer for the legendary band, The Beatles, stated in an interview that he wept when he first heard one of Kuti's songs during a performance at Kuti's club called "Afrika Shrine" in Nigeria. According to McCartney, that experience had been "one of the most amazing musical moments of his life" (Kuti, 2013b).

Erykah Badu, a multiple award winning American singer, believes “Kuti was a f-king genius” (Agovino, 2017, para. 2). Badu considers Kuti’s creations to be effortless as his music seemed to come naturally to him (The Wire Magazine, 2017). On December 20, 2017, Badu appeared on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* and performed a medley of her own song, “On and On” and Kuti’s song, “Sorrow Tears and Blood” (Hahn, 2017). She also used the opportunity to promote the Badu-curated fourth installment in the Fela Kuti Box Set series which was released on December 15, 2017. Knitting Factory Records announced Badu as the curator for the fourth box set of vinyl re-issues from the Kuti catalog and Badu selected seven albums, including the *Yellow Fever* album, as features in this box set (Cook-Wilson, 2017). The limited edition also included seven personal essays written by Badu about the albums. Previous curators of the vinyl box set series include American percussionist Questlove, English musician Brian Eno and English drummer Ginger Baker (The Wire Magazine, 2017). Badu has stated that Kuti’s unwavering fight for justice was an inspiration to her music (Hamilton, 2017). Hamilton (2017) believes that Badu is infatuated with Kuti, and this infatuation is permissible considering the fact that Kuti and Badu share a similar interest of tackling societal injustices. Here, it is rather unfortunate that Kuti’s contributions to viewing women as inferior in society are being ignored yet again and instead, Kuti is being portrayed a hero of the people and a defender of human rights. The standards to which people are celebrated for human rights achievements in today’s society seem to have plummeted. There will always be someone, somewhere, who celebrates or holds in reverence, a concept or pattern that should be torn down. Herein, is one of the reasons that misogyny might never be completely eradicated. However, there appears to be some light at the end of the tunnel. With the emergence of discourses against social injustice, people are becoming more sensitive to a broader conception of human rights that casts doubt on the way

historical figures in politics and popular culture are being uncritically celebrated. Nevertheless, there is a need for an increase in the level of intensity of discourses of this nature, especially among celebrities or influencers who wield enormous persuasive power over their audience as a result of their “star status.” Taking these valid points into account, celebrities and other key players in the media must recognize the importance of distancing themselves from music that celebrate or project misogyny so that the public would not assume they are endorsing the views being expressed in such music. A massive boycott of airing music that undermines the relevance of women in society would be a great place to start. Sadly though, not many male celebrities are as bold as Canadian rock band, Rush, who, as earlier stated, hurriedly distanced themselves from a bearer of misogynistic views about women. *The Guardian* reports that when the sexual assault allegations against American film producer, Harvey Weinstein became a focus of public attention, 20 male celebrities who had worked with Weinstein were contacted but all declined to comment or failed to respond to inquiries (The Guardian, 2017). It is not unusual to find some male celebrities or individuals refusing to speak up against the pervasive misogyny in society because doing so might bring scrutiny upon them, especially if they have their own record of subjugating women, but when the women remain silent, especially since women constitute a higher percentage of the population than men, for being victims of excessive sexualization by the media through popular music, then a deeper assessment needs to be made to figure out the crux of the problem. Therefore, while Badu’s adulation of Kuti is expected, considering Kuti’s strengths in the area of political activism, her refusal to speak up against Kuti’s idiosyncrasies where women are concerned, is disappointing and portend acceptance of areas in which Kuti has fallen short. Yes, silence implies acceptance. Badu’s influence in the music industry provides a great platform to speaking up against the stereotypical portrayals of women in popular music but

remaining tight-lipped when it matters most, brings skepticism to her depictions of aiding the cause of female empowerment. It is worthy of note that Badu has been touted as an artist who upholds the tenets of feminism by challenging the objectification and hypersexualization of women (Hartman, 2011). However, refraining from speaking up and even going as far as including Kuti's *Yellow Fever* album, which contains the controversial female demoralizing singles like "Yellow Fever" and "Na Poi," to her curated Fela Kuti Box Set series, sends a message of acceptance of the discrimination and oppression against women. As recounted in chapter 2, Badu once sparked outrage when she tweeted that girls needed to wear longer skirts so as not to distract male teachers. Right afterwards, Badu contradicted herself by saying that her daughters should be free to wear whatever they wanted but should be aware (Real, 2016). Again, Badu went back to her former argument saying everyone, that is, the feelings of men and women should be considered in matters of sexuality because girls are attractive and men can be easily distracted (Real, 2016). By Badu's statements, she implied that women are to blame if sexually harassed and men should be forgiven for the inability to control their lusts because it was their nature to lack control in their sexual desires. Like one Twitter user, jarred (@jaysmitty7) tweeted, "I love Erykah Badu as much as the next person but what was said is definitely the type of mindset that perpetuates rape culture" (as cited in Real, 2016, para. 7). Badu, who has stated that she is not a feminist but a humanist (Yates, 2010), appears to have forgotten that the word "humanist," which means devotion to the human welfare, encompasses the rights of women too. It appears that there is more than a bit of confusion as to what the rights or liberation of women truly entails. According to Dorey-Stein (2017), it is much more difficult to clearly define what a feminist represents because of the wide range of feminist issues in current times. No wonder, icons like Judith Susan Sheindlin, popularly known as Judge Judy, have blatantly refused to

identify as a “feminist” (O’Brien, 2017), because everyone seems to have their own version as to what the word truly means.

English musician Brian Eno, has described Kuti’s music as revolutionary and the “music for the future” (Kuti, 2013c). He went further to thank Kuti for changing his life positively and stated that Kuti was a real force for musical change and social change. Recalling how he stumbled upon a record of Kuti’s on the streets when he first moved to London in the 1970s, Eno stated that buying the Kuti’s 1973 album, *Afrodisiac*, changed his whole feeling about what music could be and for the next 40 years since then, he has been forcing people to not only listen to the *Afrodisiac* album, but the 40 other albums by Kuti as well (Kuti, 2013c). Eno has been described as “one of popular music’s most important and influential figures” (Steadman, 2012, para. 3), hence, his endorsement of Kuti, speak volumes and is capable of significantly impacting public opinions. It appears that many do not see misogyny to be a problem, women included. To this particular group of people, this is how the world is meant to coexist – having men in dominant positions and women in subjugated roles. Women were to remain as fragile creatures to be rescued by superheroes – the men. To some other groups, these gender stereotypes are acknowledged to be a problem but the problems generated are not so significant, hence, ignoring the problems would cause them to vanish with time. However, ignoring a problem does not make it go away, rather, it persists; it thrives. Like Shawn Corey Carter “Jay-Z,” American rapper and businessman Jay-Z rightfully stated, “if you don’t take care of a problem, what you would be doing is spraying perfume on the problem like you would on a trash can. You just keep spraying the perfume over the problems to make them acceptable, but eventually the problems grow to become bugs and then grows further to become super bugs” (Mahtani, 2018).

By these statements, Jay Z had been referring to racism and the refusal of the current leadership in the United States to effectively tackle racism; however, this analogy can be applied to other social injustices like misogyny and the oppression of women. Ironically though, Jay-Z, who agrees that a problem cannot be solved if tackled only from the surface, confessed to being inspired by the power of Kuti's music and life story (Roberts, 2009). There has been no record of Jay-Z addressing or publicly condemning Kuti's attitude to women. By not doing so, he joins the voices of others who have chosen to separate the art (Kuti's creative works) from the artist (Kuti's all-encompassing character), as though Kuti's flaws, a vital part of his character, are too insignificant to be addressed. Failure to condemn Kuti's misogynistic behavior by influencers who are fortunate to have a huge platform to effectively draw attention to the plights of the masses which includes the oppression of women, increases the problem of misogyny and thus, allowing the problem to persist like an incurable "super bug." It is not clear what areas of Kuti's music and life story inspired Carter, but it is not far-fetched to state that a "love for women" is shared between the two icons. Notably, Carter, who is married to the very talented African American singing sensation Beyoncé Knowles has admitted to committing adultery (Vogue, 2017). Carter was so inspired by Kuti and his music that in 2009, he, alongside Hollywood couple and celebrities, Will and Jada Pinkett-Smith, became producers of the musical, *Fela!* on Broadway (Roberts, 2009). The Broadway musical, which was nominated for 11 Tony Awards, is based on true events in the life of Kuti. Carter also confessed to being fascinated by the fact that Kuti had been influenced by James Brown but was able to evolve by creating his own genre of music. Interestingly, legendary African American singer, James Brown (1933-2006), also called the Godfather of Soul, had far more in common with Kuti than Jay-Z pointed out. Like Kuti, Brown was known for his misogynistic song lyrics and his lifestyle was reflective of one

who not only looked down on women but abused them as well. Brown was married four times and his controlling and abusive behavior towards his wives blemished his reputation as a humanitarian and musical phenomenon (Atkins, 2015). Yamma Brown, Brown's daughter released a memoir in September 2014 where she recorded horrific events of witnessing her father pummel her mother, Deirdre, repeatedly on several occasions. Brown had been married to Deirdre Jenkins, his second wife, from 1970 to 1979. Yamma particularly remembered witnessing her mother being brutally beaten by her father when she had been only five years of age. Brown had beaten Deirdre to such stupor, that "her eyes had turned purple and her face had been all covered in blood" (Brown, 2014, para. 10). That incident which had been the deciding factor for Deirdre to leave Brown, also left Yamma scarred for life (Brown, 2014). Yamma eventually grew older, got married and became a victim of abuse as well. It was not until after 10 years of being with her abusive husband, that Yamma found the courage to leave him. Yamma believes that growing up with an abusive father resulted in her belief that experiencing abuse was a norm in a relationship.

Before Brown's death, he had been arrested on several occasions for issues related to domestic abuse in his other relationships (Alexander, 2014). Yet, like Kutu, Brown had been celebrated as a role model to the youth and humanitarian. Lyndon Johnson, 36th President of the United States, praised Brown for being a positive role model to the youth (NMAAM, 2014). A role model should exhibit exemplary behaviors and achievements as children are often encouraged to emulate them (Jackson & Vares, 2015). The two keywords here are "behaviors" and "achievements." It is impossible to separate one from the other when describing a role model. Therefore, if an individual is highly successful but lacks good morals, such an individual is unfit to be called a role model. Although Brown advocated against violence and donated to

several youth-focused charities, his violent behavior towards the women in his life, his prejudice against women and the misogynistic messages which he projected through his song lyrics, are clearly in contrast with his “role model” label. Thus, we can deduce that like Kuti, Brown was unworthy of the honor of being declared a positive role model for the youth by President Johnson.

Beyoncé Knowles has been described as the most popular living artist and performer (Li, 2017). In 2014, she was listed by *Time* magazine as one of the 100 most influential people in the world (Gibbs, 2014), and in 2017, she was named the world’s highest paid woman in music (Greenburg, 2017). During a performance at the 2014 MTV Video Music Awards, Knowles performed in front of the bold glittering word – “FEMINIST” while sampling some empowering words of gender equality from the TEDx talk of Nigerian author, Chimamanda Adichie (Valenti, 2014). This performance was regarded as a seeming declaration of being a feminist by Knowles and a show of support for the gender justice movement (Valenti, 2014). Even in other scenarios, Knowles has claimed being a modern-day feminist (Ellison, 2013). However, some of her song lyrics, stage performances, imagery and scantily-clad choice of attires has earned her criticisms for not displaying the qualities of what is expected of a feminist (Ellison, 2013). In her defense, Knowles has stated that the word “feminist” can be very extreme and implied in her version of feminism, that a woman should be free to be sexy, wear anything she desires and be intelligent (Ellison, 2013). Still, the validity of her feminist image remains highly debatable and has spurred a wide array of conversations. Some of these critical conversations spurred from her endorsement of Kuti. In a tribute to Kuti, Knowles appeared on the front cover page of the March 2011 issue of *L’Officiel* Paris magazine (Brankley, 2012). She also stated that Kuti was one of her musical inspirations (Brankley, 2012). In 2015, it was reported that Knowles had

recorded a 20-track album inspired by Kuti; although, this album has not been released (Idowu & Adegoke, 2017). In addition, on May 20, 2017, Tina Knowles, the star's mother, posted a video clip of Beyoncé's push party where Kuti's "Shakara Oloje" song could be heard playing in the background (Knowles, 2017).

It is difficult to believe that a self-proclaimed feminist would choose to lay honor at the door of Kuti, an unapologetic user of women. Critics have accused Knowles of being uneducated for honoring Kuti, a wife beater (Brankley, 2012). Savali (2011) believes that Knowles' decision to honor Kuti is an example of the one-dimensional perspective through which Kuti is often examined. Knowles should have instead used that opportunity to condemn violent crimes against women and to honor Funmilayo, Kuti's mother, who had fought to eradicate sexism and colonialism (Savali, 2011). Savali believes that Knowles was "blinded by Kuti's skewed mythology" (2011, para. 10). Choosing to honor Kuti despite his flaws, is only one of the criticisms flung at Knowles for not exemplifying the actions of a role model and feminist. Scottish singer and activist – Annie Lennox has accused Knowles of being a "feminist lite" (Leight, 2014, para. 1). In other words, Knowles is not a genuine feminist in Lennox's estimation. Lennox condemns the over-sexualization of women in the media and explains that twerking is not feminism as being sexual on stage is neither empowering nor liberating (Leight, 2014). Renowned feminist, author and social activist, Dr. Bell Hooks has stated in a panel discussion at New York's New School that she "sees a part of Knowles that is anti-feminist, assaulting and a terrorist especially in terms of the impact on young girls" (as cited in Sieczkowski, 2014, para. 7). Hooks had been reacting to Knowles' *Time*'s "100 Most Influential People" May 2014 cover, where Knowles had been photographed in her underwear (Sieczkowski, 2014). Hooks believes that Knowles had little or no control over the cover image

and the media is to blame for the violating images of women because the media is responsible for the major assault on feminism (as cited in Sieczkowski, 2014). However, fellow panelist and transgender rights activist, Janet Mock, refuted this claim and stated that Knowles indeed, does have control over such media images of herself (as cited in Sieczkowski, 2014).

Author, Rakhi Kumar penned an open letter to Former First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama, who had praised Knowles for being a role model to her daughters. In the letter, Kumar expresses concern for the future of young girls because an endorsement of Knowles from Obama, considering Knowles' overtly sexualized image, would not only pose a threat to ending misogyny in the society, but would encourage women to be viewed as objects (Kumar, n.d., para. 1). Kumar believes that even though Knowles does not need to wear see-through clothes or body suits to sing, she had willfully done so (n.d., para. 12). This sexualized display from Knowles helps project the myth that women must be sexually available to be successful (Kumar, n.d.). Like Knowles, Kuti's queens exhibit the same sexualized display in their stage performances which helps to project this myth. We must not, however, ignore the fact that Kuti's queens have never given a false impression that they are feminists – "modern" or "old." Slee (2014) believes that Knowles lost the feminist game she had been playing when she appeared to trivialize domestic violence in the song lyrics of her "Drunk in Love" duet with her husband, Jay-Z, during a performance at the 2014 Grammys. According to Slee (2014), given the fact that domestic violence has become a societal scourge, staying consistent in the feminist fight is paramount and attempting to trivialize domestic violence, did nothing to project the true representation of a feminist. These debates over the views that Knowles might or might not be a true feminist do not appear to be ending anytime soon.

There are others, however, who consider Knowles to be a true feminist. Hanks (2014) has stated that Knowles is a feminist because she has declared that she is. Hanks believes that attempting to discredit Knowles for not exhibiting the traits of feminism, simply because of her choice of clothes is purely academic snobbery (Hanks, 2014). According to Hanks (2014), Knowles, who has contributed to projects that promote gender equality, including her work on the Chime for Change Campaign, deserves to be acknowledged as an awesome feminist.

Segun Oduolowu, an entertainment journalist who was a panelist on an episode of *The Wendy Williams Show*, described Knowles as an excellent example of what a feminist should be (Williams, 2014). Oduolowu was not just the only male panelist present, he was also the only one to defend Knowles on the panel of that particular episode of *The Wendy Williams Show*. According to Oduolowu, the fact that Knowles has been able to successfully juggle being a wife and a mother with outstanding success in pop culture, a territory usually dominated by the men, while also being able to rock her high heels, underlines empowerment (Williams, 2014). It is unclear how rocking one's high heels equates to feminism or empowerment. It is rare, if not impossible, for a man to be told that the combination of being a successful father and having the ability to rock his "flat-heeled shoes" is empowerment. One is more likely to hear that a man's intellectual capacity and not his role as a father, contributed to his accomplishments. This is probably because women have been relegated to performing domestic duties, hence, any achievement outside of adequately performing household chores is worthy of celebration for the women; whereas, a man is not expected to perform domestic chores as he is expected to be outside the home, working to make ends meet. It is a given fact that women also function as breadwinners, yet, still have to come back home to domestic "unpaid" chores. Let's not forget that not every woman can afford to have hired helpers. Hence, many women find themselves

either being laid off from work, because they are more likely to take long excused absences from work to take care of impromptu home emergencies, or find themselves having to voluntarily resign from lucrative jobs to become full-time housewives. If true gender equality is to be achieved, parenting should be mutually determined between partners whose perspectives are weighted equally as both are responsible for bringing a child into the world. However, this is not the case in many households, especially the traditional homes, as it is a general consensus that it is the responsibility for a woman to take care of the home and children. This stereotypical gender role is also exhibited by Kuti's wives as it has been stated that their major objective was to keep Kuti satisfied and that included performing daily household chores and preparing the daily meals (Moore, 2009). It might be easier for some individuals to try to appease these stereotypical societal expectations of gender roles rather than kick against it, however, life, can be very unpredictable. Imagine a scenario where a husband deserts the family, leaving his wife and children bereft or one in which the man unfortunately meets his demise, while leaving behind huge debts instead of investments. What happens to the woman? No doubt, a woman with children and without a source of income will be left struggling to make ends meet. For this reason, I am bound to concur with American philanthropist, Melinda Gates, who has stated that poverty is sexist (Carpenter, 2018).

New England Native and Songstress, Merrill Garbus, believes there is a hidden message that is aimed to project feminism in Kuti's "Lady" song. In 2014, Garbus joined forces with African born, Grammy award winning artist – Angelique Kidjo to do a rendition of the "Lady" song for a new compilation of Kuti's music. Garbus was quoted to have said she was on a mission to reclaim the hidden message about women empowerment in the song "Lady" (Edoro, 2012). The nagging question is – why would Kuti project women empowerment in a hidden

message? First, the contextual use of the lyrics in the song “Lady” does not in any way suggest there is a “hidden meaning” aimed at empowering women in the song. Second, Kuti was known to be uncompromisingly forthright. In fact, painfully so. He was not the type to mince words or have hidden connotations in his words. Kuti was not afraid to say exactly what he thought regardless of the consequences and that has been made evident in the course of this analysis. Therefore, Garbus’s re-interpretation of the “Lady” song, is a blatant fail and her views were probably due to the following reasons: a poor attempt to save face for re-working a song that has caused so much backlash especially where women are concerned, an attempt to re-interpret the song into what she would have liked it to mean, or an attempt to draw attention to herself by sampling a song so controversial and originally recorded by one so controversial. To even imply that Kuti had hidden meanings to any of his songs, discredits what Kuti truly represented – forthrightness. Despite all the drama surrounding the Kuti legacy, his unreservedness in expressing his genuine feelings was never in dispute.

Stevie Wonder, an American music legend, referred to Kuti as an incredible pioneer (Moore, 2009). Wonder believes that the musical world owes Kuti a debt of gratitude (Moore, 2009; Savali, 2011). When Wonder was named United Nations Messenger of Peace in 2009, the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon commended Wonder for using his voice for helping to create a more inclusive world to defend the civil and human rights and for improving the lives of the less fortunate (CNN, 2009). According to United Nations (2017), UN messengers of peace are distinguished individuals in their respective fields and are expected to dedicate their time and talent to help the UN bring attention to their activities in order to improve the lives of the people globally. Putting these expectations by the UN into perspective, the fact that Wonder believes Kuti, an abuser of the rights of women, should be recognized or

commended, be it in the musical world or anywhere else, is an indirect endorsement of Kuti's repulsive attitude to women. Attempting to separate Kuti's music from his misogynist views is terribly skewed. As long as some of Kuti's music projects misogyny, it would be a complete lack of judgement to ignore this fact and instead, embrace or celebrate Kuti in totality. It would have been more appropriate for Wonder to acknowledge that Kuti made some strides in the world of music, yet publicly condemn Kuti's horrendous behavior where women were concerned.

Reframing Kuti's Legacy

There are others who concur that there is a need for Kuti's legacy to be framed differently, in a way inclusive of his patriarchal leanings and misogyny. For instance, Jackson (2014) has condemned Kuti's attitude to women by referring to him as the "king of misogynoir" who failed to seek liberation for all but instead, sought equal access to the same patriarchal power enjoyed by colonizers. The word "misogynoir" is a relatively new term, coined in 2010 by gay black feminist, Moya Bailey to describe "prejudice, discrimination and unchecked fear aimed specifically at black women" (Anyangwe, 2015, para. 2). Jackson (2014) believes that men like Kuti are wrongly exalted. According to Jackson (2014), there was nothing revolutionary about Kuti and society should be ashamed for tolerating him because he hated and abused women. However, "tolerating" might be too mild a word as Kuti's praise, which has been sung from far and near, is reflective of one who is in good standing with society.

Savali (2011) believes that Kuti's legend is tainted with a blatant misogyny and intolerance that stand as the antithesis to the freedom and human dignity which he dedicated his life to achieving. An illustration of Kuti's abuse of human dignity is evident in the reports of Kuti's abuse of his wives and subordinates. John Darnton, West Africa correspondent for *The New York Times*, recalls witnessing an incident where Kuti had been "administering "justice" to

one of his 27 wives which led Darnton to turn away and walk out in disgust” (Darnton, 2003, para. 14). Though Darnton fails to give details of the exact nature of the so-called justice, it wouldn’t be presumptuous to assume that Kuti had been hitting his wife as his wives have admitted to being slapped by Kuti for wrongdoing (Moore, 2009). Darnton, who believes that Kuti was a dictator, has stated that Kuti had “meted out punishments including lashings of the cane for the men and confinement in tin-shed jails for the women” (Darnton, 2003, para. 14). Yet, in spite of Darnton’s lack of support for Kuti’s autocratic behavior, he acknowledges that Kuti was a brilliant, iconic musician who fought a powerful and honorable fight against British colonialism (Darnton, 2003). It is highly hypocritical for Kuti to incessantly call for an end to the lack of freedom that stemmed from colonialism and the authoritarian style of leadership that had been prevalent in Nigeria during the days of military government regime, when he was found liable to subjecting his wives and subordinates to that very same enslavement and autocratic style, which he had so vocally condemned.

Stanovsky (1998) makes a feeble attempt to defend Kuti when he suggested that Kuti’s polygyny has been used as supporting evidence for his pervasive misogyny. According to Stanovsky (1998), linking Kuti’s polygyny with his misogyny feeds on the Western stereotypes that black men have an excessive sexual drive and all African men are misogynists, especially since polygyny is peculiar to the Nigerian culture while monogamy, on the other hand, is a standard of the Western culture (Stanovsky, 1998). I am uncertain how Stanovsky came up with his deductions but attempting to blame Kuti’s blatant misogynistic attitude on the Western culture is in poor taste especially since even Stanovsky has admitted that Kuti’s views on women were far from progressive given the sexual politics of the lyrics of Kuti’s songs, “Lady” and “Mattress” (Stanovsky, 1998). Despite the personal convictions of anyone regarding the extent of

Kuti's misogynistic attitude towards women, the fact remains that Kuti was a misogynist, and there is no sound argument to refute this. From my analysis so far, it is clear that Kuti's fixation for polygyny was never used in synonymous contexts with misogyny. Rather, Kuti's display of prejudice against women through his sexist song lyrics, his physical and emotional abuse of his wives, his condemnation of the women's liberation movement, his vulgar and chauvinistic responses to interview questions about women, all point to the fact that Kuti was a misogynist. It is worthy of note that Stanovsky refutes any notion that he is attempting to dispute the fact of Kuti's misogyny and yet, he is quick to hint at the possibility that claims about Kuti being a misogynist, might be based on his polygamist nature. I am more inclined to agree with Stanovsky that Kuti's polygyny and misogyny contributed to Kuti's fame in the West, although not for the reason he cites. Stanovsky claims that "many" believed Kuti's marriage to 27 women simultaneously was to criticize the hypocrisy of prominent Nigerians who claimed to be monogamous but kept a huge number of mistresses (Stanovsky, 1998). I am highly doubtful that "many" believed this to be true as Kuti himself has stated that his reason for marrying the 27 women was because he had thought it was the right thing to do after reaching a point where he had been having rounds of sex with just the 27 women (Moore, 2009). Also, Kuti admitted that there were allegations that he had settled for a mass wedding because he wanted more fame (Moore, 2009, p. 157, 160). However, recall that even though Kuti denied these allegations, he wasted no time in inviting the press to his mass wedding which held at Parisona hotel in Lagos state, Nigeria. Clearly, for one who encouraged his wives, who doubled as his backup singers and dancers, to freely interact with the male audience after their stage performances (Ayobade, 2017), Kuti was no fool and his astounding success in the music business shows that he understood the rules of the game in the music business. According to Ayobade, Kuti "recruited

the queens to tickle the fantasies of the predominantly male audience” (2017, p. 144). Therefore, it is possible that Kuti’s controversial lifestyle, including his mass wedding to 27 women, were strategically calculated tactics to help catapult his brand to a global audience.

The global and critical responses to Kuti’s music and lifestyle show that Kuti was highly respected and acknowledged as a musical phenomenon. He was also regarded as a political and human rights activist, despite his flaws which entailed his misogynistic views against women. Critics agree that representations of women in Kuti’s music lyrics, recorded interviews, stage performances were mostly negative while the men are given a more laudatory treatment. From his sexist comments about women to his treatment of his queens as objects, Kuti exemplifies the typical model of a “misognoir.” Yet, Kuti’s demeaning portrayals of women seem to have been deemed passable or acceptable by society. This underscores that the social scourge, misogyny is not being given the seriousness it deserves especially in patriarchally dominated societies. Also, as demonstrated by Stanovsky (1998), that misogyny is acknowledged does not mean there will be no attempts to excuse it. This means that just acknowledging the existence of misogyny is not enough; all hands must be on deck in order to eliminate all messages that objectify women from all forms of media and popular culture, while re-defining more accurate representations of women. Many women today struggle with a low self-esteem, self-loathing, fear of being objectified or worse, the fear of being blamed for the inability of the men to keep their libidos in check and hence, refuse to report cases of sexual abuse or rape, as a result of the prevailing misogyny in society. If landmark strides are not made in nipping these social injustices in the bud, prejudice against women will continue to triumph.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the stereotypical portrayals of women and how misogynistic messages about women are often present but not always acknowledged in popular culture. Looking at the case study of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti's music, lifestyle, and his enduring legacy, it is apparent that he stands as an exemplar of the sort of moral blindness with which many famous cultural producers are met by their audiences. Using a combination of primary sources including Kuti's recorded music, album art, interviews, performance recordings, and music lyrics, it became evident that messages of misogyny like the sexual objectification of women, prejudice against women, encouraging violence against women, projecting women as inferior to the men, etc., are rife throughout, even if messages of political liberation are contained therein as well. Furthermore, in looking at the words and actions of his queens, it is apparent that misogyny is a deeply rooted philosophical thread that binds patriarchy and that those subjugated by it, often willingly take a role in their own subjugation. Examining more recent commentary (mostly celebrations) on his body of work by critics, musicians, and fans, reveals just how little attention is paid to the presence of gender bias in popular culture.

Clearly, Kuti's legacy lives on. One might then ask – should Kuti's accomplishments be ignored because of his attitude and portrayals about women? Absolutely not! This is not in any way implying that Kuti's contributions to music should be disregarded because clearly, not all of his music subjugated women, however, there is a need for members of society to make a clear differentiation between good, liberating music and repressive music. Contents of Kuti's music, lifestyle and legacy that subjugate women must be isolated and publicly condemned so as not to mislead the audience into believing that objectifying women is acceptable or is worthy of celebration. This concept should also extend to other celebrities and influencers that are cut from

the same cloth as Kuti, who seem to find gratification in projecting messages that objectify women. To this end, future researchers need to re-evaluate other artists whose legacies are being touted as worthy of emulation despite their disconcerting flaws. By clearly admonishing sexism and misogyny in popular music and culture, instead of regarding the aforementioned social injustices to be irrelevant or minor flaws, the audience will be better positioned to draw a clear-cut line between what is acceptable and what is not. Celebrities and individuals who boldly acknowledge the impact of the creative works of these misogynistic artists or individuals should also be bold enough to condemn the perpetrators' oppressive messages against women. Sexist or misogynistic messages should stop being normalized by society and should instead, be condemned for what it is – a hate crime. It is rather unfortunate that Kuti is being pedaled as a hero of the people and a defender of human rights. The standards to which people are being celebrated for human rights achievements in today's society seem to have plummeted. Awards based on talent and popularity alone should be discouraged, rather celebrities, individuals or influencers should be celebrated in their entirety. Factors that should be measured when celebrating an artist or individual for his/her achievements should include the individual's contributions to his/her craft as well as the individual's contributions to humanity and moral values. We must recognize that celebrities have a massive followership and wield enormous influence over their fans, therefore celebrities need to be kept in check to ensure they are spreading positive messages to their fans.

Also, more women need to take on more leadership roles in the media industry to become makers of meaning so that the right course can be set on how women are being portrayed in the media. We must also acknowledge that some women participate in their own subjugation and such women, if given the opportunity to define how they want to be represented through the

media, would still end up undervaluing themselves. For instance, women like Erykah Badu, a renowned singer, who blames women for distracting the men by exposing their bodies instead of dressing more conservatively, should be made to understand that victim-blaming is a huge setback in the fight against the oppression of women. Instead of victim-blaming, culprit-shaming should be practiced because holding a woman responsible for a man who is unable to control his emotions, does nothing but encourage violence against women. No doubt, misogyny contributes to the increase in rape culture where men are made to feel that they have the right to freely access the bodies of females because of their superiority over the women. From this, we can then deduce that there is a need to eradicate messages depicting women as inferior, docile objects or sex objects, from popular culture. Instead of portraying women as objects of the male desire in music, film, literature, and other facets of popular culture, more characters depicting strong, authoritative and intellectually sound women need to be projected and reinforced through the media.

Women need to cease and desist from participating in their own subjugation. In cases where a woman is unaware of what constitutes subjugation, the woman needs to be better enlightened. Everyone has a role to play in countering oppression against women and educating society on what it means to treat all humans with respect. Men should also get involved in the fight against gender bias. Men like former president of the United States Barack Obama, American comedian Seth Meyers, singer John Legend, who have been known to speak out against gender bias and in support of equal rights between sexes need to be encouraged by being celebrated for their human rights activism so that the right messages can be conveyed to listeners and they can in turn, follow suit in helping to project the need for equal opportunities for all individuals, irrespective of the gender they belong. Also, as the popular saying goes, “charity

begins at home.” The onus is on parents to instill the right moral values in their children.

Children should be taught to respect the opposite sex, regardless of the biological differences that exist between them as no gender should feel more entitled over the other.

The use of social media, which has become one of the fastest methods of broadcasting information to millions across the world, should be effectively employed in educating the masses about the harmful effects of misogyny in the society and reinforcing such messages that having the rights to freedom of speech does not justify prejudice against women. Oppressive messages against women and all other individuals need to be monitored on social media and taken down. Measuring the effects of harmful stereotypical messages against women on the minds and attitudes of social media users can be further explored by future researchers. This will serve as resourceful information in shedding light on the root of misogyny and how this scourge can be tackled effectively. Members of society need to know that misogyny will not be tolerated. It is pertinent that people be made to understand that misogyny still exists and is a growing problem because if problems are not acknowledged, solutions cannot be proffered. Not only that, information sessions on how misogyny can be crushed need to be organized and more work from credible agencies dedicated to fighting prejudice against women need to intensify. This should be made manifest not only in patriarchally dominated societies but globally as well since it is clear that misogyny is a global problem.

Also, female artists like Beyoncé Knowles who seem to have lost touch with the real essence of the fight against gender bias, need to be made to focus on the real issues at hand. While women have the right to dress the way they want to, they should also be made to understand that nudity is not empowerment. Projecting nudity as empowerment undermines the efforts of true advocates of women’s rights. There are far more important issues to focus on

regarding women's liberation – issues like women being underpaid compared to the men for performing the same role, women being shunned from assuming leadership roles because of the stereotypical belief that women are more incompetent or less intelligent than the men, women being tasked with performing household chores and raising children while the men are exempted from having to perform these duties because society sees these gender roles as befitting, women being acknowledged for their outward appearances alone and lacking in substance, etc., need to be addressed.

It has been established from reviewed literature that the lyrical contents and visual contents of music videos contribute to gender stereotypical views (Fischer & Greitemeyer, 2006), hence, eradicating themes from various forms of media that promote gender stereotypical views and instead, educating the masses of positive and credible representations of women in society is a positive step to combating misrepresentations of women in the media. Besides social media being employed to represent women in an objective light, celebrities and influencers should be solicited to help project a proper representation of women as these influencers already have a fandom, which can help in hastening the successful transmission of messages they want in circulation.

Furthermore, there is a need to pay attention to the lyrics and visual images of music videos. In the United States, some educators have channeled the power realized in popular music into advocating for the rewriting of rap lyrics to help counter the negative images of women in the media. Dr. Carla Stokes is an example of such advocates. Stokes, who is based in Atlanta, Georgia, is the founder of HOTGIRLS which stands for “Helping Our Teen Girls In Real Life Situations.” Stokes recommends that rewriting song lyrics help girls to critically analyze the messages that they might encounter in both the media and their daily lives (Ampofo & Asiedu,

2012). In this light, artists like Jay-Z, Beyoncé Knowles, Paul McCartney, Stevie Wonder, etc., who have expressed admiration for Kuti's music, need to take a cue from this by rewriting those song lyrics by Kuti that have shown contempt for women's liberation to expose Kuti's misogynistic attitude to women. By so doing, they will succeed in conveying their abhorrence for Kuti's demeaning views about women to their audience.

It is increasingly becoming evident that popular music's stereotypical portrayals about women contribute significantly to the way women are viewed in society. While eradicating patriarchy completely from society might not be feasible, it can be reduced to the barest minimum, such that the number of those in support of patriarchy, misogyny and gender bias will be rendered insignificant and ineffective. That way, voices of those individuals in support of gender equality, equality and empowerment of the sexes will be better heard and taken seriously. To this end, reigniting and sustaining dialogues about stereotypes, patriarchy and misogyny through a more informed selection of content in popular music, shunning messages or behavior that objectify women and fostering a culture where women are respected and valued, will go a long way in curtailing the widespread misconceptions about women in society.

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