Decolonising and Africanising Curriculum Knowledge: The Utility of the Music of Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur in Teaching Decoloniality in African Universities

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is to examine the practical use of music in university teaching. Music has been seen as a useful tool in communicating certain messages in society. The main aim of this research is to examine and assess the utility of the music of Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur in teaching decoloniality in African universities. Using the ideas on decoloniality by Chinua Achebe (1983), we explore how the messages encapsulated in the song called *'Redemption Song'* by Bob Marley, '*Teacher don't teach me nonsense*' by Fela Kuti and '*Changes*' by Tupac Shakur may help in teaching decoloniality in African universities. Drawing on qualitative research, content analysis was used to get a systematic and objective approach to analysing texts, images and videos of the songs of the selected artists. An analysis of the selected songs reveals that the revolutionary and liberatory undertones in

the selected songs can inform teaching decoloniality in African universities and beyond.

Keywords: Decoloniality; Coloniality; Africanising; Curriculum; Bob Marley; Fela Kuti; Tupac Shakur

Introduction

In Africa and non-Western societies in general, the education systems and ways of knowing are mainly influenced and shaped by colonial tropes of knowing. Despite the official end of colonialism and the attainment of political independence in most African countries, colonial ways of knowing continue. Though efforts to ensure that Indigenous Knowledge Systems are taken into consideration, Western ways of knowing tend to supersede due to a multiplicity of reason which include *inter alia,* the fact that most academics in these universities have received Western education and trained in Western universities. Agenda setting by Western funders in some African universities influence and continue to shape the nature in which teaching is done in some African universities. In Southern Africa, as is the case in other parts of African countries that were at some point colonised, foreign colonial languages such as English and French are the medium of instruction (Wa Thiong'o, 2007).

Curricula in most of these countries are mainly characterised by the Western orientated methods of teaching and research. In the words of Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013, 2018), the modern school system, the Christianised religion and the Westernised university play a very active role in the colonial and post-colonial processes of the dismemberment of non-Westerners from the human family. For Wa Thiong'o (1997) this was the case, since cultural subjugation is seen as an essential condition for political and economic mastery sought by Westerners. The colonial education and Westernised curricula are seen by Wa Thiong'o (2012) as the most important force for the alienation of non-Westerners, since it invades and takes control of the mental or cognitive map of the other, and in the end produces what is known and seen as a distorted consciousness among people who are colonised (Wa Thiong'o 2012).

The need to decolonise has become a global movement in which the emphasis is to reconfigure and remodel everything in non-Western societies. While the decolonial initiatives have been seen as recycling the old and tired narratives, the reality is that the need to ensure that there should be changes in how teaching and learning is done is gaining ground. This in part could be influenced by the success in a homegrown curriculum in countries such as China, South Korea and in some cases, Japan. Although changes in Africa are insignificant and not as pronounced, some of the oldest universities in countries such

as Morocco and Egypt have managed to keep their Indigenous languages in teaching and continue to be influenced by their Indigenous ways of knowing.

Socrates was perplexed by the fact that what was preached by both politicians and the clergy was in contrast with what was happening in reality. The thingification of human beings happened right in Athens, a city that was celebrated as the citadel of freedom. The same can be said of most African universities, especially in Southern Africa today. The use of Eurocentric curricula and the use of foreign languages in teaching can be equated to what was happening in Athens during the time of Socrates, which is quite paradoxical. It was paradoxical in that what was preached and seen as ideal, was not what was done pragmatically.

In light of this, one can argue that in the same way that Achebe (1983) pondered about the beginnings of dehumanisation, the music by Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur agonise over the origins of human inequality, to the extent that they make suggestions of a new way of knowing among those driven to the periphery through a multiplicity of ways which could also be through a colonised education system. After an analysis of the lyrics of the chosen songs, one can go further in stating more songs from the chosen artists which carry a decolonial message. Given these realities, it becomes important to study the utility of music in decolonial teaching in African universities as what this article endeavours to do.

Thus, in the political present, shaped by the insurgent recognition of the consequences of coloniality of knowledge and flaring decolonial mantra which was incendiary of the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements, but whose execution is fraught with challenges, this paper examines the utility of the music of Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur in the decolonising and Africanising of curriculum knowledge in Southern Africa. Through thinking from a decolonial conjuncture, the study explores the practical and ethical limitations of what kind of success using the music of Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur can produce. Identifying that the harms against non-whites' modes of thinking and making sense of their world through their Indigenous Knowledge Systems are harmful against their ways of being, the paper engages with the possibility of the relational discipline of Black ecologies and other forms of alterity to offer a framework for conceptualising a full sense of a decolonised and Africanised curriculum.

Theoretical framework

We engage ourselves and gather material using a theoretical framework which builds on the ideas of Achebe (1983). Achebe's (1983) works offer profound insights into the complexities of culture, identity, colonialism and power. The main ideas by the author are that culture is a dynamic and contested terrain, shaped by historical and social forces, such as religion and the legal systems that influence how people live.

Colonialism disrupts cultural identity, imposing dominant narratives and values. Identity formation is a continuous process, involving negotiation and resistance. The blending of different cultural traditions create new forms and meanings which must be confronted and disrupted. Achebe's (1983) ideas hold that culture is a site of struggle, where different forces negotiate meaning and identity. It is through colonialism in which dominant discourses, which disrupted Indigenous cultures and identities were imposed, especially through Afrikaans centred learning in South Africa.

From this standpoint, Achebe (1983) argues that cultural hybridity emerges as a response, blending different traditions and creating new forms. Moreover, considering this, Achebe suggested that counter-narratives that challenge dominant discourses, reclaiming Indigenous voices and perspectives, are needed. Based on this, the framework whose substratum lies in the ideas of Achebe (1983), provides a foundation for understanding the intricate relationships between culture, power and identity in the South African education system and other parts of Southern Africa. It is from this standpoint that we aim to explore the utility of the music of Fela Kuti, Bob Marley and Tupa Shakur.

Methodology

Meta-theoretically, this study is underpinned by the qualitative research design and informed by the pragmatist paradigm. For pragmatists, research always takes place in a political, social and historical context. Pragmatists believe in a world that is independent of one's mind in addition to what is lodged in one's mind. This study investigates how the music of Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur can be useful in decolonial teaching in South African universities and other universities in Southern Africa and beyond. Bob Marley is one of the most prominent reggae artists who inspired and continues to inspire, new generations of reggae artists in Jamaica and beyond.

Bob Marley's music gained fame during the late 1970s and 1980s when the African liberation movement was at its peak. In this context, Bob Marley's discography and lyrical

prowess appealed to a lot of people who yearned for freedom in Africa and beyond. Though his well thought songs such as *Buffalo Solider, Exodus, One Love, Get Up, Stand Up, War, Survival, Africa Unite, Zimbabwe* among others, his music provided a powerful message that inspired liberation movements in different parts of the world.

Fela Kuti was a product of a resistance movement against military dictatorships in Nigeria. Born Olufela Olusegun Oludotun Ransome-Kuti to a Nigerian middle-class family, Fela Kuti's mother was a fierce anti-colonial feminist activist and his father was an Anglican church priest before he became the first president of the Nigerian Union of Teachers.

As a product of seasoned activists, Fela Kuti formed a music band which played a music genre which mixed West African music with American funk and jazz and became known as Afrobeat music. Throughout his musical career, which was social and political commentary, Fela Kuti produced highly revolutionary songs under albums such as *Zombie, Shuffering and Shmiling, 'Teacher don't teach me nonsense', 'Expensive shit', 'Authority stealing', 'Sorrow tears and blood', 'Why black man dey suffer'*, among others.

Born Lusane Parish Crooks, Tupac Amaru Shakur also known by his stage names 2Pac and Makaveli, was an American rapper who is regarded as one of the greatest rappers of all time. Tupac Shakur was born to a radical Black feminist, Afeni Shakur, whose political consciousness led her to be a radical Black political party known as the Black Panther party. Growing up, Tupac was exposed to Black radical thought through his mother's political ideas and this later influenced his rap music which was sought to address issues of social justice, police brutality and the marginalisation of Black Americans in the United States of America. In trying to put across his message, Tupac Shakur produced songs such as '*Changes', 'Dear mama', 'Keep ya head up', 'Ghetto gospel', 'So many tears', 'Life goes on'* among others.

From these three artists, the following songs were selected for the purposes of the current study, namely '*Redemption Song'* by Bob Marley, '*Teacher don't teach me nonsense'* by Fela Kuti and '*Changes'* by Tupac. As fans of these three scholars we, the authors, listen to the music of these songs often. The three songs mentioned carry messages which resonate well with the decolonial movement.

Content analysis was used to get a systematic and objective approach to analysing texts, images and videos of the videos and songs of the selected artists. Content analysis facilitates the examination of media representation, enabling researchers to study how different

groups are portrayed and how messages are constructed and disseminated.

Content analysis supports historical research by analysing archival documents, speeches and texts to understand past events, ideologies and cultural contexts. Content analysis research design is a powerful tool for understanding complex social phenomena, cultural trends and communication strategies. Its applications span various fields, from media studies and market research, to historical analysis and programme evaluation. By employing content analysis, this study was able to uncover valuable insights from the songs of the chosen artists, hence, making it important and relevant in a study of this nature.

One song each from Fela Kuti, Bob Marley and Tupac Shakur were sampled using the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling relies on the researcher's judgement when selecting units to be studied (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The number of songs which carry a decolonial message from these artists is quite large, however, it may depend on the discretion of the researcher in categorising whether the music carries a decolonial message.

In this regard, a sample of one song per artist sufficed. Songs with a decolonial message were selected based on the accessibility of the songs to the researchers and their discretion of whether the message encapsulated therein may be categorised as decolonial. Thus, in this context, studying the decolonial message encapsulated in the music of these artists is insightful in establishing this decolonial message and how it is communicated in ways that can inform decolonial teaching in African universities.

The role of music in the decolonial discourse

Music has been increasingly recognised as a valuable tool in decolonial teaching, offering a unique means of challenging dominant narratives and promoting social justice. A key importance of music in the decolonial movement is to subvert the traditional pedagogical approaches, providing a platform for marginalised voices and perspectives (Giroux, 2003). Apart from this, music also encourages critical analysis of power dynamics, cultural norms and historical contexts (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The bridging of cultural chasms through the promotion of empathy and understanding among diverse populations is another importance of music (Delpit, 1995). This goes hand in glove with ensuring that the emotions of listeners and their bodies are engaged, hence, enhancing cognitive retention and affective connections with the decolonial message embodied in a certain song (Hooks, 1994). Additionally, music also fosters solidarity and a

sense of community among listeners and ultimately, promotes social change and collective action (Freire, 1970).

Though music does offer great potential in spreading the decolonial message, implementing it in decolonial teaching calls for a careful consideration of the power dynamics inherent in a community. It is also important to consider power dynamics and the agency of those listening to the music for one to be in a position to fully harness its potential in transforming lives and spread the decolonial message as well as create the needed empowerment, create inclusivity and enhance the needed decoloniality.

There is a surge of literature on the utility of music in addressing social ills and putting certain social phenomena in the limelight in Africa (Chasi and Tagwirei, 2020; Chitando, 2002; Hungwe et al., 2024; Kyker, 2012, 2016; Machingura, 2022; Maguraushe; 2020; Mangeya & Jakaza, 2022). The surge in literature of this nature is influenced by the diverse interpretation of how music of different genres is understood and interpreted, as discussed by Hungwe et al. (2024). Despite the surge of studies on music, its utility in decolonial teaching and learning remains limited. While decoloniality, as an area of study, has been well-documented and continues to be studied, not much has been done through understanding the utility of music in decolonial teaching in African universities.

Music has always been an integral part of human life. Music and different artists have become a medium through which certain messages are spread and communicated not only among those living, but also with the dead. Considering this, music has negative and positive impacts on both their emotional and physical well-being (Bennet & Taylor, 2012; Cohen, 2009; Creech et al., 2013; De Nora, 2000; Diaz Abrahan et al., 2019; Kelly et al., 2016). The utility of music in shaping and influencing people's ways of being, both on a personal and social level, is widely documented (Crozier, 1997; De Nora, 2000; Hargreaves & North, 1999). Music's power transcends cognitive understanding; it affects people in both emotional and psychological ways. As was the case with what has been dubbed the rebel music fronted by Bob Marley, music can evoke the emotional landscape of historical events in a way that textbooks cannot. This emotional engagement can lead to a deeper empathy and a more profound commitment to decolonial practices.

Music transcends geographic and cultural boundaries, making it an excellent tool for building solidarity across different oppressed communities worldwide. For instance, reggae music, rooted in the struggles of the Jamaican people, has found resonance in various parts of the world where people face oppression and injustice. This characteristic is particularly

useful in teaching decoloniality, which requires an empathetic understanding of the trauma and resilience of colonised peoples.

The same can be said of the afrobeat by Fela Kuti which was a rallying point for the people to fight against not only white oppression, but also Black oppression. By integrating such music into the curriculum, educators can teach students about global interconnections and the universal struggle for justice and equity, thus, fostering a sense of global citizenship and solidarity. Music not only preserves and communicates the suppressed histories and identities of colonised peoples, it also engages listeners emotionally and psychologically, fostering empathy and a deeper understanding of the complexities of colonial histories. Furthermore, by crossing cultural and national boundaries, music promotes solidarity.

Given the different and sometimes contradictory messages encapsulated in certain songs, researchers must be wary of the ways in which music conveys certain meanings and messages (Kelly et al., 2016; Ng, 2021; Hungwe et al., 2023). The selected artists were and continue to be the most celebrated artists in their countries of origin and beyond. These singers have been perceived as global icons and cultural ambassadors of their respective genres. Their selected songs provide an opportunity for one to examine how music can shape decoloniality and decolonial teaching in African universities.

Arguably, teaching and learning in most universities of Southern Africa follow the orthodox ways of imparting knowledge to learners. Although changes are gradually coming in some African universities, especially in South Africa where efforts are made to include new forms of learning in which technology and new tools of learning are adopted alongside the use of Indigenous languages in some parts of learning, the use of orthodox means of teaching to teach course content which still trace its roots in colonial curricula, still supersede (Oelofsen, 2015; Waghid & Hibbertimagemaqui, 2018; Zeleza, 2009).

For instance, Lopez and Rugano (2018); Luckett (2016); Mbembe, (2016); Oelofsen (2015); and Zeleza (2009) bemoan the detachment of most curricula in Africa to the African realities and the highly Eurocentric modes of teaching, hence, the need for reforms. On their part, Du Plessis (2021); Le Grange (2016) and Mahabeer (2018) and discuss the problems South Africa faces in decolonising the curriculum in line with the #RhodesMustFall movement and suggest ways in which the demands of what have become known as the 'fallists' can be met through decolonisation. The dissatisfaction with the way in which the curriculum is modelled in South Africa has led to the #RhodesMustFall and the #FeesMustFall movements (Naude, 2017; Soudien, 2010). In Zimbabwe, calls to

decolonise the curriculum has spurred the adoption of a home-grown curriculum and has led to what is known as the education 5.0 blueprint adopted in 2018.

The adoption of the education 5.0 blueprint and calls for the need to decolonise the curriculum come with new demands aimed at ensuring that students are taught in ways that they can easily relate with. The adoption of learner-based teaching and learning as well as the use of locally available tools and Indigenous Knowledge Systems, have been advised with the aim of ensuring that learners are taught and learn what is relevant to their context.

The context of Bob Marley's music on decoloniality

To get a better understanding of Bob Marley's decolonial message in his music, it is of critical importance to locate Bob Marley's music and the musician in the wider historical context in which the music was made and produced. Bob Marley sang in Jamaican English which though made up of some phrases that are not seen in conventional English, is understandable to most English speakers. Bob Marley produced his music at a time in which decolonial movements were at their peak in most colonised countries across the World. The message in most of his songs were seen as carrying decolonial messages and became the rallying point of most liberation movements in colonised countries at the time.

The idea of freedom which is key to the decolonial movement permeates some of the songs that were produced by Bob Marley (Freire, 1970). Through his songs, Bob Marley aimed to challenge the dominant narratives of Western ways of knowing through subverting the traditional pedagogical approaches (Giroux, 2003). His music contributed to the need of Africans in the diaspora and those in Africa to promote their cultural identity and pride through fostering a sense of belonging and self-worth among marginalised people (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The music of Bob Marley also facilitated critical pedagogy through the continuous encouragement of personal empowerment, social justice and encourage what is known as the critical analysis of power dynamics (Hooks, 1994). Bob Marley's music also reflects the intersectionality of race, class and social justice, providing a nuanced understanding of decolonial struggles.

Song 1: *Redemption song*: Bob Marley

Grounded within the decolonial and liberation mantra, the song '*Redemption Song*' can be regarded as a direct challenge to the subjugated to demand their emancipation from the subjugators. Liberation or emancipation is represented in the song as something that

those subjugated should strive to get through, not only free themselves physically, but also mentally. The song starts off by giving an account of how people were enslaved, bundled into ships and taken to faraway places as slaves:

Oh pirate, yes, they rob I,

Sold I to the merchant ships,

Minutes after they took I,

From the bottomless pit, …

Bob Marley then evokes the spirit of resilience and broadcasts the message of emancipation and decoloniality in the verses that followed:

But my hand was made strong,

By the hand of the Almighty,

We forward in this generation,

Triumphantly,

Won't you help to sing,

This song of freedom,

Cause all I ever had,

Redemption songs…

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery,

None but ourselves can free our minds,

I have no fear for atomic energy,

Cause none of them can stop the time

How long shall they kill our prophets,

While we stand aside and look?

Some say it's just a part of it; we've got to fulfil the book…

The '*Redemption song'* represents the experiences of the dismemberment of the Black bodies from the human family. In this song, Bob Marley gives an account of how Black bodies were stripped of their humanness and identity through slavery. In the context of this dismemberment, Bob Marley challenges those dismembered to wake up and fight for their freedom. He asks a rhetorical question in which he, in a way, challenges the dismembered to be confrontational and subversive.

Bob Marley's verse in which he challenges the dismembered to emancipate themselves from mental slavery, carries with it the message of decoloniality in a very direct way. This expression and other expressions embodied in this song challenges the enslaved people to change the way that they understand the world around them through changing how they teach and train their young.

From this, one can argue that the '*Redemption song'* is a song from which decolonising education can start. Bob Marley's talk of not fearing atomic energy can be interpreted to mean the established tropes of Western education and ways of knowing which keep on enslaving the other or those enslaved into perpetual consumers of Western knowledge. Thus, the verses on the need for the other to emancipate themselves from mental slavery and stop being slaves to Western ways of knowing, promotes a decolonial message.

Fela Kuti's music and the decolonial narratives

Considered as one of the pioneers of the afrobeat music genre, the musical legacy of Fela Kuti is in offering music as a powerful tool in challenging colonial dominance and its new form, neocolonialism. Apart from challenging colonialism through music, Fela Kuti also challenged corruption and inspires critical thinking and resistance (Achebe, 1983). Through his challenging of colonialism, neocolonialism and corruption, Fela Kuti's music aimed to promote African culture. The music by Fela Kuti is a celebration of African traditions, language, culture and fostering self-awareness among Africans (Wa Thiong'o, 1986).

The music by Fela Kuti can be regarded as an embodiment of critical pedagogy through the challenging of dominant narratives and oppression. His music also reflects the intersectionality of race, class and social justice and ultimately, giving a nuanced understanding of decolonial struggles, thus, facilitated critical thinking by challenging decolonial scholars to challenge systemic injustices.

Song 2: *Teacher don't teach me nonsense*: Fela Kuti

The song '*Teacher don't teach me nonsense'*, was composed by Fela Kuti during the peak of his career. '*Teacher don't teach me nonsense'* is a song loaded with meaning, but challenges the existing and Eurocentric tropes of knowing. The song is sung for more than twenty minutes and touches several which challenge the established order of things. Fela Kuti's voice and the song is accompanied by cultural acts and dances in which he fuses sounds from guitars, trumpets, traditional instruments and keyboards and pronounces his disappointments in which students are taught to be workers elsewhere and not the countries of their origin:

Teacher, teacher-o na the lecturer be your name

Teacher, teacher-o na the lecture be the same

Make-ee no teach-ee me again oh

As soon teaching finish yes, da thing-ee it gon die it dey-o

As soon teaching finish yes, da thing-ee it gon die it dey-o

Me and you no dey for the same-u category

Na the same category-o

All the wahala, all the problems

All the things, all the things they go do

For this world go start

When the teacher, schoolboy and schoolgirl jam together

Who be teacher?

I go let you know

When we be pikin

Fatha/ mama be teacher

When we dey for school

Teacher be teacher

Now dey university

Lecturer be teacher

When we start to work

Government be teacher

Now the problem side, of a teaching student-ee

I go sing about

I don pass pikin, I don pass school, university, se-fa pass

As I don start to work, na government I must se-fa pass

Da go for France

Yes sir/yes maam

Engi-land

Italy

Germany

Na dem culture

For der

Be teacher

For dem

Go China

Russia

Korea

Viet Nam

Na dem culture

For der

Be teacher

For dem

Go Syria

Jordan

Iran

Iraq

Na dem culture

For der

Be teacher

For dem

Let us face ourselves for Afrika

Na de matter of Afrika

This part-ee of my song

Na all the problems of this world

In we dey carry, for Afrika

Wey no go ask-ee me

Which one?

Problems of inflation

Problems of corruption

Of mismanagement

Stealing by government

Nothing we dey carry

All over Afrika

Na de latest one

Na him dey make me laugh

The failure of Western education and modes of doing things to provide the solutions to African problems is at the centre stage of the song. In the song and some of the live shows (especially the live show of the song done in Catalonia), Fela Kuti is interviewed about an array of things that are broadcasted by the song.

Key to the message he gave is the need for African ways of doing things to be respected and not driven to the periphery. Fela Kuti excoriates most of the things introduced to Africans through colonialism, especially democracy, which he sees as not helping solve African problems. He then indirectly advocates for a revision of most of the Eurocentric ways for doing things for a more Afrocentric way of knowing and doing things. One can argue that this message, was in a way, advocating decoloniality.

Tupac Shakur, his music and decoloniality

Like the music of Fela Kuti and Bob Marley, the music of Tupac Shakur also offers a powerful tool for the decolonial movement. The music Tupac made offered an adulterated representation of marginalised communities in a racist American society.

The lyrics of the songs by Tupac Shakur provide a genuine portrayal of systematic oppression which was experienced by the marginalised communities of America. Through his music, Tupac gave a critical examination of power dynamics through providing critiques of racism, police brutality and social injustice, encouraging critical thinking and analysis (Giroux, 2003).

The music of Tupac Shakur is also an embodiment of resistance given that his music exemplifies resistance against oppression. Considering this, the message embodied in the music of Tupac fosters critical consciousness in ways that empower students and critical thinkers to recognise and challenge systematic injustice (Hooks, 1994). Additionally, Tupac's songs reflect the intersectionality of class, race and social justice and ultimately, provide a nuanced understanding of decolonial struggles (Crenshaw, 1991).

Song 3: *Changes*: Tupac Shakur

Rooted within the rap music genre, the song '*Changes*' can be interpreted as a direct confrontation against segregation, police brutality and racism. Police brutality, segregation and racism is represented in the song as undesirable and something that must be eradicated. As etched in the name of the song itself, the need for change is central to the song. The song bemoans the lack of changes in how people of different shades treat each other in ways that lead to harm on those seen as inferior, who in this case are Black people as noted in the verses:

Come on, come on

I see no changes, wake up in the morning, and I ask myself

Is life worth living, should I blast myself?

I'm tired of bein' poor, and even worse I'm black

My stomach hurts, so I'm lookin' for a purse to snatch

Cops give a damn about a negro

Pull the trigger, kill a nigga, he's a hero

Give the crack to the kids who the hell cares

One less hungry mouth on the welfare

First, ship 'em dope and let 'em deal the brothers

Give 'em guns, step back, watch 'em kill each other

It's time to fight back, that's what Huey said

Two shots in the dark, now Huey's dead

I got love for my brother, but we can never go nowhere

Unless we share with each other

We gotta start makin' changes

Learn to see me as a brother instead of two distant strangers

And that's how it's supposed to be

How can the devil take a brother, if he's close to me?

I'd love to go back to when we played as kids

But things changed, and that's the way it is

Come on, come on

That's just the way it is

Things will never be the same

That's just the way it is

Ooh, yeah

Come on, come on

That's just the way it is

Things will never be the same

That's just the way it is

Aww, yeah

I see no changes, all I see is racist faces

Misplaced hate makes disgrace to races

We under, I wonder what it takes to make this

One better place, let's erase the wasted

Take the evil out the people, they'll be acting right

'Cause mo' black and white is smokin' crack tonight

And only time we chill is when we kill each other

It takes skill to be real, time to heal each other

And although it seems heaven sent

We ain't ready, to see a black President

It ain't a secret, don't conceal the fact

The penitentiary's packed, and it's filled with blacks

But some things will never change

Try to show another way but you stayin' in the dope game

Now tell me, what's a mother to do?

Bein' real don't appeal to the brother in you

You gotta operate the easy way

(I made a G today) But you made it in a sleazy way

Sellin' crack to the kid (I gotta get paid)

Well, hey, well, that's the way it is…

The song '*Changes*' presents the experiences of Black people as the most marginalised people, as clearly shown in the lyrics. The song seems to be a personal conversation of a frustrated Black body who is lamenting the social ills and how things are in the highly racialised American society. While the singer sees the social ills around him, the solutions to these problems seem to be difficult to achieve. The singer, however, makes suggestions that may help change things for the better. One can argue that the message of change encapsulated in this song seeks to advance the decolonial message in which the singer seeks a paradigm shift from the established order.

Discussion of findings: On decoloniality and education in Africa

We engage ourselves and the material gathered through the works of Achebe (1983). Since Achebe's (1983) ideas inform this study, calls to decolonise the curriculum through decolonial teaching starts with reflecting on Achebe's (1983: 43) question: "Where and when exactly did the rain begin to beat us?" In asking this question, Achebe (1983) was mediating on the African socio-political condition. Achebe is considered as one of the African thinkers who called for the need to ensure that Africans return to historical sources as well as political genealogies in the quest of time and place in which Africans found themselves losing their equality in the human family.

Like with Bob Marley's song: '*Redemption Song'*, Fela Kuti's song: '*Teacher don't teach me nonsense'* and Tupac Shakur song: '*Changes'*, Achebe (1982) pondered what is known as "hopes and impediments" which defined and continued to define attempts at understanding the unequal relationships between people from the Global South and the Global North, and how their differential positioning within intersecting power relations affects them.

One can argue that an analysis of the lyrical content of the songs selected reflect the same message of decoloniality. The '*Redemption song*' by Bob Marley traces the history of slavery and how this has led to the dismemberment of the black bodies from the human family, hence, the need to ensure it is remembered. The song '*Teacher don't teach me nonsense*' by Fela Kuti is also critical of the established order of things and suggests a change which would ensure that those driven to the fringes of society are moved back to the centre. On its part, '*Changes*' by Tupac Shakur also calls for the need to ensure that there are changes in how things are done for the betterment of society and people of all races.

Achebe (1983)'s need to know what happened to the common humanity of human beings is in sync with what Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur try say in their music. All these artists demand to know the unstable and unsustainable link between the *human* and the *humane* (Steyn & Mpofu, 2021). Decolonial teaching through music may give answers on the ways in which some humans use power in monopolising being human and exclude others from the human family. One can argue that through tapping into the ideas by Achebe (1983) which are somehow vindicated in the songs by Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur, Socrates' question of the fourth century BCE regarding why everyone on earth seems to believe in humanity 'but not in the existence of humans' can be answered.

Decoloniality involves recentring the perspectives and experiences that were marginalised by colonial narratives. Music, accessible and emotionally resonant, is an effective medium for amplifying these voices. Artists such as Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur have used their music to challenge colonial legacies or powers and advocate for social justice and equity. Their work provides a framework for examining how colonial histories have been contested and redefined through cultural expression. Educators can harness these narratives to engage students in critical thinking about history, power and identity using songs from particular artists to make students learn and be aware of how they, the Western tropes of knowing, can be limited in teaching the realities of their countries.

Conclusion

In the realm of education, music can serve as a dynamic pedagogical tool to explore decolonial themes. By integrating music into the curriculum, educators can create more engaging and immersive learning experiences. For example, analysing lyrics from Indigenous musicians can offer students insights into the historical and ongoing struggles of these communities. Such an approach not only educates, but also empowers students by connecting them with a broader decolonial movement.

The concept of decoloniality involves understanding and dismantling the legacies of colonialism that persist in today's societies and minds (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). It seeks to valorise the knowledge, culture and perspective of those marginalised or suppressed by colonial powers. Music, as a universal language, plays a pivotal role in this educational and transformative process. Music has historically served as a subtle form of resistance against colonial powers.

From the field songs of enslaved Africans in the Americas to the protest songs that defined the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, music has helped articulate the struggles and hopes of colonised peoples. These songs not only provided a means of covert communication; they also helped to preserve Indigenous languages and stories that colonial powers sought to suppress. By studying these musical expressions, learners can gain insights into the resilience and creativity of oppressed cultures, which is crucial for understanding the dynamics of colonialism and the necessity of decolonial practices.

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