

## Performing social advocacy: A critical sociolinguistic analysis of selected songs of Beautiful Nubia

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores social advocacies in the songs of Segun Akinlolu (aka Beautiful Nubia). The data for the study comprises ten purposively selected songs by the artist. These songs are Seven Lives, Owuro Lojo (How do you do?), Ma Ba Won So, Baba Mimo, Jangbalajugbu, Ohun Oju Nri, Table Turns, E K'omo L'ede, Small People's Anthem, and Mind of Your Own. The study blends critical sociolinguistics and discourse historical approach (DHA) of critical discourse studies in data analysis. The analysis shows that through symbolism, imagery, juxtaposition, rhetorical question and irony, Beautiful Nubia prioritizes social advocacies in his songs by enlightening and raising people's consciousness about patriotism, justice and equity, national courage and resilience, cultural preservation, and linguistic identity. The study concludes that Beautiful Nubia sees music and its performance as public enlightenment undertakings for sociopolitical advancement and societal repositioning.

**Keywords:** *Performance, social advocacy, critical sociolinguistics, Songs, Beautiful Nubia*

### INTRODUCTION

Across cultures of the world and times, music has remained a tool for entertainment and a crucial instrument for social reengineering of human society. The significance of music in changing the plight of humans in diverse areas of human affairs can be seen in the deployment of music for different purposes in the society. Apart from its unique entertaining

role, music in its several forms and genres has the ability to influence people's attitudes and behavior, making it a potent weapon for fostering social change. Through careful linguistic and rhetorical choices, music imparts people and their environment in many ways. It carries the culture and reflects their shared experiences, joys and pains. For this reason, music is deeply intertwined with cultural identity and often seen as a marker of the socioeconomic realities of the people in the context of its production. Music reflects a society's struggles, beliefs, and traditions, thereby serving as a means of preserving and transmitting people's cultural heritage. Societies can stimulate social change by interrogating the socio-economic challenges and experiences of a people in diverse musical expressions and arts. This is because music has the power to evoke reflection, allowing people to connect with the daily shared experiences of their environment.

Scholars have stressed the capacity of music as a carrier of diverse messages and a potent tool in human socialization (Galindo, 2003; Osuagwu, 2019; Adegoju, 2014; Labinjoh, 1982). Through sociocultural reenactment and direct connection with these shared-experiences, music helps to trigger social discourses that promote better understanding of societal problems and how to resolve some of them. Music has a long history as a weapon for activism and for eliciting social change. From the soothing melodies of some, to the reawakening tone of protest songs, or anthems that ignite loyalty and collective identity among citizens, music has the ability to mobilize people and catalyze social transformation. For over two decades, Beautiful Nubia has been consistent in his music with a commitment to social advocacy through his lyrics, imagery, and symbolism to raise people's consciousness about sociopolitical ills in the country. In many of his songs, Beautiful Nubia displays unrivaled knowledge and deep understanding of some of the pertinent challenges bedeviling Nigeria. His approach differs from some Nigerian protest music artistes' direct attacks and combative nature.

For instance, while late Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Eedris AbdulKareem, Bukola Elemide (aka Aşa), Folarin Falana (aka Falz), and Chinagorum Onuaha (aka African China) have had their

songs banned and described as “unfit for radio” and public consumption by the regulatory agency for public broadcasting, the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC), Beautiful Nubia delivers songs with similar messages in civil, subtle and less-offensive style. For instance, Daily Post (a national daily newspaper) reported on August 9th, 2018, the prohibition of Falz’s music on air by radio stations in the country in their entertainment section, with the caption (NBC bans “This is Nigeria” by Falz). Hence, while some of these artistes have been detained, declared wanted and had their songs banned from being played on radio, the subtle admonishing style of Beautiful Nubia’s songs raises consciousness and calls attention to social vices without being combative in the delivery. Generally, music promotes healing and resilience in individuals and communities for overcoming adversities. Whether through different traditional communal cultural or ritual songs and dances, or the secular songs in various cultures, music provides solace, encouragement and hope in the society. For this reason, Beautiful Nubia has adopted music for his social advocacy to drive mass enlightenment and galvanize social development in the society.

### **Beautiful Nubia and his art**

Segun Akinlolu (aka Beautiful Nubia) is the founder and bandleader of the *Roots Renaissance* music group and one of Nigeria’s leading contemporary folklorists. He is an accomplished poet, songwriter and brilliant stage performer. One important selling point of Beautiful Nubia as a folk musician is his deep understanding of African culture and the promotion of their histories. Another unique feature of his arts is the accommodating and inclusive nature of the lyrics of his songs, which are written in a perfect blend of three languages (Yoruba, English and Nigerian Pidgin). This acknowledgement and reflection of diversity of the various ethnolinguistic groups in the Nigerian sociolinguistic space in the adoption of languages for his performances appears to be one of the reasons for his preeminence in contemporary folk music in Nigeria. While retaining his native language in order to express the rich folkloric traditions, indigenous values, and ethos deeply rooted in the Yoruba culture, he touches on and incorporates messages that are universal across

cultures in Nigeria and the African continent. His music has come to be known as a compass for leadership and authorities and a voice for the oppressed and repressed people of postcolonial Nigeria. His songs counsel and admonish citizens on resilience, patriotism, equity, unity and tolerance. Sometimes, in a very civil manner, his songs urge people to stand up against oppression and defend the violation of their fundamental human rights. Through his music, Beautiful Nubia communicates messages that resonate with Nigeria's and Africa's nagging challenges and proffers suggestions to resolve them to reposition the country.

### **Previous studies**

Music has a profound influence in human society and cultures across ages. Its significance spans cultural, emotional and cognitive realms, serving as a universal language that transcends social boundaries. Studies have established the interrelatedness of music and language (Jentschenke 2016, Gonsior 2011, Ademilokun & Bamigbade 2021, Tsoulas, 2014). One common thing to these works is the argument that language and music are inseparable. This relationship is so because language constitutes the building blocks for the production of any genre of music. Commenting on the relationship between language and music, Ademilokun & Bamigbade (2021:45) opine that:

*Music is a great corollary to language, it also functions in social campaigns as agencies, governments, among others, use the appeal of music to garner support for their cause. Music in particular is often effective in public enlightenment campaigns because the listeners do not only enjoy the message but also the lyrics and rhythm of the music being played.*

They argue that the appealing feature of music has a unique way of inviting people to take interest in the messages presented through it. Justifying the significance of music in society and its place in social reengineering, these scholars contend that music's influence in almost all aspects of human engagements makes it a regular force to reckon with in social campaigns and advocacies. Given that language is the tool with which music is communicated, both appear to be two sides of a coin, thus, examining music at any point in time is like exploring language use in actual performance.

There is a rich literature on different genres of music in Nigeria and across the globe. While some scholars have focused on the way artistes deploy resources from multiple languages in an increasingly multilingual world, others have explored how local and foreign linguistic resources are fused by artistes in order to achieve global relevance while still retaining local appeals in their music (see Androutsopoulos, 2010; Low, 2007; Akingbe & Onanuga, 2018; Akande, 2014; Akande & Mosobalaje, 2014; Pennycook, 2007; Stylianou, 2010). Some scholars' interest is deploying music for social protest by the people (Ademilokun & Bamigbade, 2021; Akande, 2012; Smitherman, 1997; Alim, 2015; Lee, 2011). For instance, Adegaju (2014) examines how music is used to make a strong case for and draw attention to the rights of children and the leadership challenge in Nigeria. By interrogating these themes, the study explores the neglect and suffering of children in Nigeria and the failure of the Nigerian state after decades of political independence. Also, focusing on one of the popular genres with huge followership in the country, scholars have also studied Nigerian hip-hop (NHH) from diverse angles (see Omoniyi, 2009; Akande, 2013; Akande & Mosobalaje, 2014; Shonekan, 2011; Liadi, 2012; Gbogi, 2016).

While some of these works have explored hip-hop music production and consumption, others have argued that although NHH shares a lot of features with the American hip-hop, it is a distinct variety on its own with several distinguishing characteristics that are unique to it. Specifically, Akande (2014) investigates how Nigerian hip-hop (NHH) artistes perform authenticity and establish legitimacy of their brand of hip-hop. He contends that the hybridization and fusion of AAVE with Nigerian linguistic resources like Nigerian Pidgin (NP) and other indigenous languages all come together to put a label of "originality" and "legitimacy" on Nigerian hip-hop. Similarly, Onanuga (2021) examines Nigerian hip-hop artistes and their conceptualization of "hustling". The study explicates the portrayal of *hustling* by Nigerian hip-hop artistes as leaving no stone unturned in order to achieve fame. It underscores the fighting spirit of the average Nigerian hip-hop artiste, who against all odds, struggles to pursue his dreams.

Furthermore, Akingbe & Onanuga (2018) explore the ingenuity of Nigerian hip-hop artistes in order to maintain acceptability and global relevance. Like Akande (2014), their study corroborates the creative blend of elements of the culture of hip-hop from America and the indigenous linguistic resources, leading to a hybridized and globalized form of the music. Ikibe (2020) investigates music's role in the people's enlightenment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study shows the significance of music in the society by arguing that in spite of the lockdowns of institutions, the creativity and production of music in various forms did not stop its social role of shaping and reshaping the minds of the people. In all, as numerous as these works on different genres of music are, with the exception of Adegoju (2014) on child's rights and the leadership challenge in Nigeria, the thematic focus and engagements of social advocacy in the songs of Beautiful Nubia has not yet been given enough scholarly attention and it is this gap that the presents study intends to fill.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The data for this study are the lyrics of ten selected songs of Beautiful Nubia. The songs are purposively selected and are songs with different forms of social advocacies relating to some of the challenges confronting Nigeria. These selected songs are *Seven Lifes*, *Owuro Lojo (How do you do?)*, *Ma Ba Won So*, *Baba Mimo*, *Jangbalajugbu*, *Ohun Oju Nri*, *Table Turns*, *E K'omo L'ede*, *Small People's Anthem*, and *Mind of Your Own*. The selected songs were downloaded from <http://www.songlyrics.com/beautiful-nubia-lyrics>. The songs were carefully listened to and their contents analyzed to identify their main thematic preoccupation. Using critical sociolinguistics and discourse historical approaches as analytical tools, these lyrics were carefully analyzed and contextualized in relation to the socio-economic dynamics and realities of the Nigerian state and people.

The study is rooted in two related theoretical orientations – critical sociolinguistics and critical discourse analysis but with specific insights from discourse historical approach (henceforth DHA). Research focusing on language in relation to its interconnectedness with

the social situation of the environment are usually broadly classified as sociolinguistic studies. Given that this study examines how language is deployed to interrogate people's social conditions including socioeconomic inequalities, social structures and class conflict, systemic exploitation, and their culture and shared experiences, it has adopted critical sociolinguistic orientation. Critical sociolinguistics pays attention to not just the relationship between language and the society where it is used, it also examines how language is used to create, entrench and sometimes, used to challenge inequalities among the people in a society.

The approach touches on and explores social issues such as identity negotiation, gender, class struggle, power relations, ideology, domination, exploitation and other dynamics which are products of intergroup interactions and how these variables underlie discourses human society. Similarly, DHA helps researchers to interrogate the complex interconnectedness of language, power, and the society, with particular emphasis on the socio-historical dimensions of discourses. Explaining the approach, Reisigl & Wodak opine that when analysts employ DHA, they are investigating multifaceted phenomena in human society (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). DHA gives wholistic fusion of textual analysis of discourses through an exploration of not just linguistic practices and features but also the contextual analysis of the sociopolitical environments in which the text is produced. Thus, in the understanding of discourses, the approach stresses the crucial place of social, political, and historical circumstances of discourses as a powerful variable that indexes language use.

In the context of the present study, the adoption of DHA implies that the songs are seen as text and a web of interconnected sociopolitical events linked to broader society issues involving multiple social actors and variables (Reisigl & Wodak, 2015). Sometimes described as a sociolinguistic approach to critical discourse analysis, DHA in the analysis of texts allows for a comprehensive interrogation of not just linguistic practices but also how they reflect, and are shaped by social and political factors. The justification for the adoption of these approaches for the resent study is that they allow researchers to unearth and situate social nuances in the explication of meanings. Thus, the approaches are appropriate as they touch

on issues relating to emancipation, power relations, class conflict, and exploitations in their different forms in human society. In the analysis, not only is attention given to how these contextual realities and experiences shape the lyrics of Beautiful Nubia and his responses in the form of social advocacy on various issues of national concern, we also situate the advocacy within the broader social fabric of the postcolonial Nigerian state.

## **DISCUSSION**

This section presents the analysis and the discussion of the findings. The lyrics of the selected songs are analyzed, and the social issues raised are discussed using the artist's main thematic engagement. This is done by putting the various social advocacies in each of the songs in context, relating them to Nigeria's lived experiences and shared sociocultural milieu.

### **National values, ethos and identity advocacy**

One issue that has accentuated fears of the possibility of achieving sustainable growth in Nigeria is the absence of what can be described as the country's national character and the ethos guiding people's everyday living. In some of his songs, Beautiful Nubia continued to enjoin Nigerians to imbibe the unrelenting spirit of resilience needed to accomplish noble tasks. Let us consider the excerpt below from his song titled *Seven lifes*;

In my journey through the world  
overland and oversea  
I see different cultures  
and different people's way  
I was born where the sun  
never set and never rises  
I was born where the heat is like a second skin [Seven lifes, Line 1-7]

.....  
Seven lifes that's what have got  
I'm an African boy  
Oversea overland overmoutains in the world  
I'll be brave and I'll be strong  
I'm an African boy [Seven lifes, Line 47-51]



In the above excerpt from his song with a metaphoric title *Seven Lifes*, Beautiful Nubia calls on the citizens to be brave and courageous in their undertakings. Admonishing them on the need for bravery in their private lives and collectively as one single entity united in the task of nation building, he counsels that bravery and courage are two important attributes needed to achieve personal dreams and national aspiration. In the excerpt, his advocacy focuses on the need for perseverance and determination as values to be inculcated by the people. He presented these important values as features of “an African boy”. Through this use of metaphor, as demonstrated in the excerpt, the attributes are painted as necessary conditions for the development of a better society the people desire to live and see. The uniqueness of having “seven lifes” as “an African boy” symbolizes resilience. It is a deliberate reminder to the people to constantly reignite doggedness in their pursuit of personal goals and collective aspirations. Irrespective of wherever they found themselves as creatively crafted in “*overland*”, “*overseas*”, “*overmountains*” and in “*wirld*”, people are admonished to be strong, courageous, and brave at all times. Through the lyrics, Beautiful Nubia urges the people to take pride in their geographical uniqueness, the heroic feats and accomplishments of their founding fathers and never give up on their dreams.

This message about resilience, bravery, courage and perseverance cannot be more appropriate, especially among Nigerian youths in various parts of the country. Today, some of these youths see education as a “scam”. In demonstrating their frustration about their perceived atmosphere of hopelessness that has enveloped their thinking, many of them often declare in a popular street parlance “school na scam” (education/school is a scam). This expression of unwillingness to apply themselves diligently to become successful and responsible citizens is what Beautiful Nubia’s advocacy tries to correct among the general public. This social advocacy effort is timeless in the reorientation of Nigerian youths, some of whom have ventured into various forms of cybercrimes and drugs. It is for this reason that

the song is a regular feature on the song list of youth enlightenment programs on radio and television.

In another song titled “*Owuro Lojo*”, Beautiful Nubia, stressing the significance of some values and ethos, enjoins the people to be diligent, honest and see hopes, possibilities and opportunities in the country. Let us consider the following excerpt from the song;

Good morning I greet you  
It will be a beautiful day  
If you do your work  
With honesty and pride  
You will find your dreams coming true very soon  
Said if we could be patient  
And live within the law  
There will be much progress, everyone will be happy  
*[How do you do? (Owuro Lojo), Line 26-33]*

In the above excerpt, through imagery, Beautiful Nubia presents the morning as crucial in attaining set goals. The “morning” was presented as a new beginning, and he argues that no nation has ever developed beyond her people's dream, conviction, patriotism and resilience. Through these images of renewed hopes signaled by a new morning, the song attempts to inspire and motivate the people to pursue their dreams with vigor. In the excerpt, Beautiful Nubia advocates honesty and courage among the people. Using “morning” as a powerful symbol of time and renewal, he pushed for the socialization of youths in a way that teaches them to value time in handling their affairs. The values of industry, honesty, and dignity of labor were all foregrounded as necessary for realizing people’s dreams. In “And live within the law” and “There will be much progress, everyone will be happy”, he rebukes lawlessness in the pursuit of money, power, fame or any other material thing. While urging people to be determined in pursuing their ambitions, he cautions restrain in “And live within the law” asking them to eschew the temptation to move against the laws of the land,

submitting that every modern society is governed by laws not to be violated by responsible citizens.

### **Youth Empowerment Advocacy**

Another central social advocacy in the songs of Beautiful Nubia is the call to empower young people across and redirect their energy to positive undertakings. His advocacy has remained one of the most consistent in the call for youth capacity strengthening for nation building. For a nation with a lot of youths in drug trafficking and consumption, banditry, internet scam and other financial crimes, Beautiful Nubia identified the strategic position of youths in development and echoed the need to invest in their empowerment. This is the focus of his song titled *Ma Ba Won So*. Below is an excerpt from the song;

I see them everywhere on the street wasting their lives away  
Youth can't find no direction to put their energies  
I see them in Europe and America looking for hope  
Everywhere they go they are lonely, can't find a warm bed  
.....  
You like to see them die before their time in poverty?  
Seems you like to see the people cry in frustration and desperation  
Do you like to see them flee and leave this land so full of promise?  
*[Ma ba won so, Line 13-16, 19-21]*

In the above excerpt, using rhetorical questions to foreground the narrative, the political class is charged to restore hopes to young people in order to stop the frustration pushing them away from the country. This is against the backdrop of the massive relocation of some of Nigeria's best hands in many disciplines in search of a life and opportunities. Seen in national discourse as "brain drain", this mass movement has increased tremendously in recent years and it is today described as "japa" (elude). The expression "japa," used by the people and popularized by the media, connotes the notion of fleeing unfavorable conditions. In relation to the socioeconomic hardship in the country, it suggests the act of "fleeing" by

citizens, who considered themselves lucky enough to have been able to dodge the dangerous bullets of poverty in the land. In the excerpt, the leadership of the country and the political class were asked to look into the massive movement of young people away from their place of birth to foreign countries, where they are enveloped by loneliness. Painting an ironical situation of fleeing a place with abundance, in “...see them flee and leave this land so full of promise?”, Beautiful Nubia asked the political class a rhetorical question that calls their attention to the enormous potentials as well as the human and material resources available in the country. To him, what is required is just the efficient management of these natural and human resources for national development. He advocates better welfare and empowerment by registering his disappointment in the inability of the leadership to reverse youths’ hopelessness through the creation of initiatives that are capable of helping them actualize their ambitions. Dwelling on the same issue in other segments of the song, he decried how Nigerians are made to litter various parts of the world and the attendant psychological torture that they are faced with in these places in the excerpt below;

I see them everywhere in factories and plantations  
A new wave of slavery and servitude in foreign lands  
I see them in Asia, Australia, wherever you may think  
Everywhere they go they are lonely, there is no place like home

.....

You like to see them die before their time in poverty?  
Seems you like to see the people cry in frustration and desperation  
Do you like to see them flee and leave this land so full of promise?

[*Ma ba won so*, Line 13-16, 19-21]

In the excerpt, commenting on the increased desperation and helplessness in the choice of destinations by Nigerian migrants, Beautiful Nubia vividly depicts images of forced migration and modern slavery. He demonstrates how Nigerians willingly enlist in odd vocations to survive in foreign lands, where they are sometimes greeted with hostility and looked down upon. Linguistic choices such as “factories”, “plantations”, “new wave of slavery”, “servitude” are all deliberately deployed to reflect the intertextuality in the

experiences of Nigerian migrants in various places of the world due to economic hardship in the country. These images also accentuate the power imbalance and exploitation between the West and Nigeria. The use of “flee” also shows that these relocations are not voluntary but caused by the harsh socio-economic conditions in the country. The presence of Nigerians not only in Europe or America but also in “Asia” and “Australia” foregrounds global inequalities between Africa and the rest of world. As evidenced in the pattern of migration, this lack of choice in terms of location and people’s readiness to opt for anywhere and anything that promises better economic fortunes are all indices of an unhealthy system.

### **Advocacy for the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups**

Irrespective of their socio-economic background, people should be treated fairly under the laws of a society. Equity in human affairs involves the protection of all against any form of discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, or other social considerations. The well-being of women and children, who are considered to be the future of the society, ought to be given premium by any nation. This is another important area of Beautiful Nubia’s social advocacy. In this regard, let us consider the excerpt below from his song *Baba Mimo*;

Why do we lie to the children about their future?  
When we are not building good schools  
Why do we make our women cry so much?  
Why is there no peace in this land?  
Why do we have so much darkness in the midst of light?  
Why do we have so many leaders who cannot speak the truth?  
Why do we have so many evil fill this land? [Baba Mimo, Line 25-31]

In the above excerpt, Beautiful Nubia concentrates on two populations of vulnerable people (women and children) in the Nigerian society. Relying on rhetorical question as a strategy, the lack of adequate attention to the education of children, which is considered their fundamental right was the focus of his advocacy in the song. Pushing for a better deal for

these two groups, he advocates the provision of good schools as one of the ways to give children unhindered access to quality education and prepare them for the future. This, he argues, is one of the steps to guaranteeing better future for the children thereby helping to empower them to contribute to the development of a greater country. He argues that to ensure the fulfilment of people's ambitions and increase the opportunities available to them in life, the education of children and investment in their wellbeing should be prioritized.

Furthermore, while making reference to inequality, gender-based violence and abuses in "Why do we make our women cry so much?", he also touches on the plight of Nigerian women, who due to cultural and some other reasons, there are still massively abused. This is a timeless advocacy against the violation of women's and children's rights in different parts of Nigeria. For instance, between March 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> 2024, some Nigerian newspapers *Punch*, *The Daily Times*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *Vanguard*, *The Abuja Inquirer* and *Blueprint* reported and have various forms of captions on their front pages about the kidnap of schoolchildren in different parts of the country. Responding to these abductions, Director of Amnesty International on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2024, said "In the last ten days, nearly 700 people have been abducted in Borno, Kaduna and Sokoto". He lamented that these attacks on innocent school children are forcing parents to keep their wards out of schools. This advocacy aims to call attention to the plight of these vulnerable groups by questioning why only little is done to protect and cater for their needs. He draws the attention of all stakeholders to the need to provide for, and protect the rights of children and women. Revisiting this social advocacy and emphasizing his call for improved welfare and better protection of children in his song titled *Jangbalajugbu* below, Beautiful Nubia says;

Who made the earth shed tears of sorrow  
Who makes the children cry so much  
Who's gonna bring back the smiles on their faces  
Who's gonna make us laugh? Haahaha [Jangbalajugbu, Line 1-4]

In the above excerpt, Beautiful Nubia starts with personification in “Who made the earth shed tears of sorrow” in describing what happens when children are made to suffer due to the absence of adequate protection and provisions. Making children laugh and bringing back smiles to their faces can only be achieved through initiating and developing social interventions targeting their education and proper nurturing in many places in Nigeria. To make them the change agents that they are meant to be in the future, the society must train them into responsible adults who are capable of building a better society. This social advocacy is reinforced by the artiste in another song *Ohun Iju Nri* below;

Treat every child like your own  
For every child, no matter the circumstances of his birth,  
Is a beacon to this glorious future  
Teach them to be strong in love  
And never look down on themselves [*Ohun Oju Nri*, Line 44-48]

Beautiful Nubia’s campaign for the protection of the rights of children in Nigeria is reflected in his conviction that a lot has been left undone in that regard. In spite of the efforts of United States Agency for International Development ([USAID](https://www.usaid.gov/)), the [National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters](https://www.naptip.gov.ng/) (NAPTIP), Shelters for Human Trafficking Victims, Safe Schools Initiative, and the National Social Behavioural Change Communication Strategy for Elimination of Child Labour in Nigeria, there is still a lot to be done with regard to the protection of children. In recognition of the fact that children and women are often at greater risk of discrimination, marginalization and exploitation, there are several civil society organisations championing the protection of their rights. This is why some of these rights are enshrined in various national legislations and international human rights documents.

Some of these efforts also include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of Children and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Given the staggering figures of out-of-school children, cases of abduction of school girls (e.g., Chibok girls’ abduction and Dapchi *Schoolgirls’ kidnapping*),

high volume of domestic abuse and gender-based violence in different parts of the country, this form of advocacy has continued to remain relevant. Although slow, this advocacy is yielding fruits, with some states enacting specific laws and policies aimed at protecting children's rights. Instances of such can be seen in the pronouncements of mandatory enrolment of all children of school-going ages and the criminalization of child labor through Child's Right Act (CRA) by Lagos, Sokoto and Jigawa States, while the legislature in Kebbi, Yobe, and other states are also pushing for the ratification of similar legislations. Hence, Beautiful Nubia's social advocacy for the protection of children is commendable and deserves institutional and policy framework supports.

### **Just and equitable society advocacy**

One of the ingredients for sustainable peace in any human society is the promotion of justice and equity. A just and egalitarian society is one in which there is fairness and justice for all individuals, regardless of their background, identity or circumstance. Beautiful Nubia's advocacy for the promotion of justice and fairness, especially for most vulnerable and underserved Nigerian populations is seen in many of his songs. One of his notable songs manifesting advocacy for justice and equity in the society is titled "*Tables Turn*". Below is an excerpt from the song;

The little children on the streets  
Working hard so they can eat  
Dem no fit do anything but cry  
One day the tables will turn  
My sister with the sexy eyes  
Selling her body so she can live  
She no fit do anything but worry  
One day the tables will turn  
So my brothers, don't you see?  
We must bring some sanity over here  
How can one person have so much  
While so many have none?  
The average man doesn't ask for too much



He only wants what you and I want  
A safe place to lay his head at night  
Is that too much to ask?  
He wants his kids to go to good schools  
So they can become somebody  
He wants them to grow up healthy and strong  
Is that too much to ask?  
So when you build your mansions  
And drive around in your fancy cars  
Remember to think of the little man  
'Cause one day the tables will turn                    [Tables Turn, Line 5-28]

In the above excerpt, Beautiful Nubia presents graphic images of the socioeconomic inequality that permeates the Nigerian society. He bemoans the lack of equity in the utilization of the resources in the country for the benefits of all. His creative juxtaposition of the “haves” and the “have-nots” helps to underscore the obvious greed and massive corruption by the political class at the expense of the ordinary people. For example, Punch's editorial piece titled “Out-of-school children threat persists” on 27th December 2023, a Nigerian daily newspaper revealed that one in three children in Nigeria is out of school. Out-of-school children were put at 10.2 million at the primary school level. Through vivid images of “the little children on the street” who have to work hard to eat or survive and young girls depicted as “My sister with the sexy eyes” resulting to “selling their bodies so she can live”, the survival realities of many Nigerians are captured. This daily lived experiences of citizens in a nation blessed with abundant resources points to lack of empathy on the part of the political class in the country. According to the excerpt, achieving a just society involves equitable distribution of resources. It requires intentional planning by communities, institutions and governments in order to address systemic injustices and dismantle barriers to equity. It is about prioritizing the welfare of the ordinary and vulnerable citizens, who are disadvantaged in various ways for no fault of theirs.

To Beautiful Nubia, the ordinary people of Nigeria are not making unreasonable demands but are making a fair share for a decent living. In his words, “The average man

doesn't ask for too much", "He only wants what you and I want", "A safe place to lay his head at night", "He wants his kids to go to good schools". It is on record that Nigeria has a huge housing deficit across the various regions of the country and government's interventions to address this challenge of homelessness are inadequate. Beautiful Nubia's advocacy for justice and equity did not just stop by pointing out the problem of inequality and lopsidedness in the allocation of resources, he listed out what the basic needs of the people are, and contends that they are not out of the reach of the leadership of the country if the will is there to see to them. Deploying juxtaposition in foregrounding his advocacy in this area in another song titled *The Small People Anthem*, Beautiful Nubia comes out clearly to query the obvious inhuman treatment and marginalization of the poor by the political class. Let us examine an excerpt from the song below;

Some people can't find a way  
Some people live by the day  
Some people have all the fun  
When will it be our turn?  
Few people take all the wealth  
Poor people bear all the pain  
Small people look to the skies  
When will it be our turn?      [*The Small People's Anthem*, Line 13-20]

In the above excerpt, the complete neglect of the masses in the Nigerian society is again revisited. In what appears like a class conflict, the daily hardship and frustration that millions of ordinary Nigerians encounter in order to feed is pictured in expressions like "Some people can't find a way" and "Some people live by the day" in the excerpt. The toils of these abandoned people, who have to fend for themselves and who experience the psychological torture of lack and misery in an environment surrounded with the careless and reckless display of opulence by a few politicians and the political class is contrasted in "Few people take all the wealth", "Poor people bear all the pain" and "Small people look to the skies". Contrasting this class struggle in Nigeria, the artist placed the hopelessness of the poor side by side with the exhibition of abundance by the political elites, who have cornered the

commonwealth of the nation as evidenced in the frequent arrest and prosecution of political appointees and public office holders in the country since the country's return to democratic rule in 1999.

Lack, abundance and waste are all images that were carefully crafted to show the extreme socioeconomic inequality accentuated by the insensitivity of a select few of the Nigerian society to the detriment of the majority. Today, it is not uncommon for social commentators to describe the country as the poverty capital of the world because of the number of people living in extreme poverty. Even though some have argued that this is an exaggerated claim, statistics from various indicators and parameters of socioeconomic wellbeing of the people have all continued to show that the plight of the poor in the country is worrisome. With the alarming rate of out-of-school children, millions of people in multidimensional poverty across the regions of the country, advocacy for a just and equitable society becomes apt and foregrounds the country's urgent need for social transformation, equitable distribution and optimum utilization of resources. Striving towards a just society requires treating people fairly and with dignity in all aspects of their lives. It involves restructuring and repositioning institutions like the judiciary and anti-graft agencies of government to be transparently ruthless in their fight against corruption in order to extend opportunities to all citizens. To restore hope to the people, douse ethnic tensions, youth restlessness and cybercrime, Nigerians must see that wealth and opportunities are distributed to reduce inequalities and guarantee their basic needs without frustration. This explains why any of Beautiful Nubia's advocacy songs resonating the shared experiences of citizens are always applauded by the people each time they are played at civic events.

### **Cultural and home-grown solutions for sustainable development advocacy**

Some observers across Nigeria are of the opinion that one of the reasons for the huge wastage in various sectors of the country is the blind adoption of imported programs and policies from foreign countries without reference to the particularities of the Nigerian people and sociocultural dynamics. It can be inferred from some of his songs that Beautiful Nubia

shares this view about the formulation and implementation of programs in the country. This has led to his advocacy in support of development approaches rooted in the people and local institutions in surmounting Nigeria's challenges. This, he has pushed consistently in many of his songs. The excerpt below is an example from *Mind of Your Own*;

When you're low you fold up just like burning paper  
You think that someone will come and help you out  
But everyone has his own big or little problem  
So you've got to stand up and face your life

.....

Everytime you feel down you look to the West  
You think that big brother will come and help out  
But all they do is betray and steal your wealth  
Nobody can liberate you except yourself  
In this life it's a race that everybody runs  
Some will run very fast, some will run it slow  
But everyone will get there and it's such a bloody shame  
If you give up before the finish line  
It's time you had a mind of your own

[*Mind of Your Own*, Line 1-4; 12-20]

As shown in the excerpt, Beautiful Nubia paints a picture of power relations, with Nigeria, and indeed Africa on the one hand and the West on the other hand. He contends that after decades of independence Nigeria has not been courageous enough to address some of her people's fundamental challenges in many vital areas due to overreliance on foreign aids and governments. Nigeria's stunted growth, as evidenced in low performance indicators in virtually all the critical areas of her national life, can only be changed, according to Beautiful Nubia, when Nigerians and the Nigerian state decide to look inwards and take their destinies in their hands as a people. Championing this advocacy for attitudinal change in "You think that someone will come and help you out" and "But everyone has his own big or little problem" in the excerpt, he admonishes the people to acknowledge the fact that ultimately, only the citizens can proffer solutions to the sociopolitical challenges in the country. This suggests that development initiatives only become sustainable and yield the desired results when owned by the people of a nation who are the ultimate beneficiaries.

The excerpt's reference to the power relations between postcolonial Nigeria and the West situates the picture of overdependent Nigeria naively waiting for and looking up to her colonizer or foreign countries for solutions to her challenges. Nigeria is portrayed as a nation with untapped potential to resolve most of the social challenges. The lack of trust in the people and institutions of government in addressing some of these issues is berated by the artiste as a national folly that has resulted in the exploitation of the people and their resources by the “big brother” (i.e., the West). As succinctly captured in “Nobody can liberate you except yourself”, the citizens are reminded that only sustained efforts by the people themselves can bring about the growth that they desire. For Nigeria to fix the economy, address extreme poverty, reduce unemployment, rechannel youth energy, stem banditry, kidnapping and terrorism, the country must rely on Nigerians as well as her institutions and agencies. As clearly canvassed in the excerpt, only people with an understanding of the root causes of the challenges can provide context-appropriate solutions capable of engendering sustainable socioeconomic development. Similarly, embarking on the same form of advocacy, focusing on young people as important players in the future of the country, Beautiful Nubia in *E K'omo L'ede* below has this to say:

You and I, we are wrong if we think everything is right  
There's a fire burning on the roof, our future is dying as we sleep  
We must awake from the lies we've been told about ourselves  
There's no reason to be ashamed of who we are and where we're from  
.....  
You're so proud today to hear them speak in a foreign tongue  
It's not fair to keep them away from who they are and live a lie  
All these children, they are strangers  
To their own roots and culture  
We must try to right the wrongs  
And show them the beauty in who they are [E K'omo L'ede, Line 1-4; 9-14]

In the above excerpt, Beautiful Nubia alludes to the dominant language ideology leading to the preference for foreign languages and the abandonment of indigenous ones among parents. He condemns this growing negative attitude towards local languages, stressing the significance of language in sociocultural preservation and integration of young

people in the society to make them part of the country's development. He raises the consciousness of everyone to the danger of not immersing young people into the languages of their immediate environment and knowledge about their cultures. He berated the inability of some young people to speak their mother tongue, which is a growing trend in many Nigerian homes. He argues that one of the tools for driving sustainable development is the participation of all and sundry. For this to happen, people, including the youths, must know who they are and be familiar with their languages and histories to fit in and be agents of change meaningfully. In his words, achieving this requires that "We must try to right the wrongs", which involves admitting that the present attitudes of the people to cultural preservation through deliberate integration of children as inheritors of the future into the ideals and worldview of the society ought to be revisited. This language and cultural awareness consciousness advocacy is a crucial element capable of stimulating unprecedented turnaround in the nation's quest for development in the country's various sectors for the benefit of the people.

## **CONCLUSION**

This article has demonstrated Beautiful Nubia's commitment to social advocacy by his interrogation of some of the social issues plaguing postcolonial Nigeria. Beyond the soothing melodies of his folk music, the study identifies social advocacies such as national values and identity advocacy, youth empowerment advocacy, advocacy for the protection of vulnerable groups, advocacy for a just and equitable society, and advocacy for home-grown solutions for sustainable development in his songs. Through the deployment of juxtaposition, imagery, metaphor and rhetorical question, these songs were used as avenues for various forms of social advocacy messages constantly reminding people of the actions expected of them in the pursuit of sustainable development of the country. As evidenced in some of the lyrics analyzed, the artiste contends that to improve the overall socio-economic conditions of the citizens, there is the need to involve the people and their languages in developmental initiatives. By addressing these systemic barriers to equity and promoting inclusiveness in

development programs and processes, individuals, communities and groups can be better mobilized to drive sustainable development and create a more just and equitable society for all. The study concludes that the mobilization of the people toward the actualization of the country's aspirations in different sectors of the society is an essential condition for igniting their passion, patriotism and motivation, thereby energizing them to become critical stakeholders in driving growth.

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