



## Lyrical Uprising: How Oromo Youth Utilize Songs as Weapon of Political Resistance in Burayu Town, Oromia National Regional State, Ethiopia

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### ABSTRACT

This article highlights the crucial role of protest songs in the fight of Ethiopian youth against authoritarianism, using the example of youth protests in Oromia from 2014 to 2018. The research, conducted in Burayu Town in Ethiopia's Oromia Regional State, demonstrates that songs are essential resources for young people's political mobilization. By providing shared political aims and objectives, protest songs guide young people towards specific political goals, fostering shared identities and points of reference. The power of these songs lies in their ability to unite, reinforce, and disseminate a common identity and set of beliefs that inspire young people to engage in political action. Qualitative techniques such as focus groups, casual talks, and interviews were used to gather information, and both primary and secondary data sources were necessary to research young people's political mobilization. The results show that protest songs have the power to educate and prepare young people for political engagement. Through these songs, many members of the community learned about the injustice and suffering prevalent in Oromia, which raised public awareness of the political climate in the country. As a result, protest songs played a significant role in forming a unique young political organization that was established for political action. They also gave young people a sense of agency for political mobilization.

**Key words:** arts, identity, methodology of political resistance, protest songs, and weapon of resistance

### INTRODUCTION

James Scott (1985) offers a powerful insight into the strategies that marginalized communities use to resist the domination of ruling governments and their ingenuity to create systems of resistance and subvert the status quo. Music can play a vital role in empowering young individuals who are politically marginalized, giving them a voice and as one form of resources that help them to bring about change in their communities (Okeke, R. Chukwudi, 2019). Political song serves as a mobilizing factor in the development of political consciousness among youth activists (Clay, 2006). The Black American civil rights movement has made use of music as a powerful tool for social relief, and political expression (Makky, 2007). The most notable instances of specific musical

forms of youth resistance are the rise in popularity of reggae music and the start of a heated, hazy political discourse among young people (Jérémié, K. Dagnini, 2011). Music has also greatly benefited a younger generation of Basques who actively participated in the process of forging the Basques' collective identity during the cultural revival movement of the 1960s (Jauregiondo, 2019). The apartheid freedom songs of South Africa serve as crucial mobilizing tools for young people waging political campaigns on the streets (Von Schnitzler, 2014). The democratization of Ghana's younger communities is positively impacted by music and songs (Collins, 2002).

Song has also been a key tool in elevating and respecting the national government to foster unity

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within Ethiopia (Ephrem Belete & Daniel Mengistie, 2019). Folk literature and resistance songs have historically been used to tell the story of the Oromo people's political struggle against the feudal Imperial regime (Assafa Dibaba, 2015). A different form of documentation of the struggle against the Ethiopian regime has been provided by the variety of Oromo protest music, which first appeared in the 1970s.

These types of protest music were first popularized by the early Arfan Qallo band. To promote Oromo music and culture, the Arfan Qallo was a cultural musical group founded in Harar in the early 1960s (Teferi Nigussie, 2019). Arfan Qallo's musical productions played a crucial role in the initial resistance movement against the feudal system. Songs by this group have always served as forums for political agitation, cultural self-affirmation, and spiritual renewal, uniting listeners who have a steadfast dedication to the Oromo cause. The musical lyrics of young Oromo artists have influenced and mobilized Oromo youth revolt and resistance since the post-1990s. Through their artistic expression, young people express their freedom and political resistance. From 2014 to 2018, the musical lyrics of young Oromo artists shaped and mobilized Oromo youth protest (also known as the Qeerro protest) and resistance.

Oromo artists' songs and lyrics have catalyzed Oromo youth mobilization (Tatek Abebe, 2020; 2021). The politically charged songs of these dynamic political singers are listened to by Oromo youth through widely accessible broadcast technology. A music-driven youth protest has been sparked and spread throughout Oromia. Young people in Oromia have used the song as a creative form of protest against unjust conditions and treatment, such as communication oppression, and as a way to decompress from mental or physical strain (Asebe Regassa, 2023). More significantly, resistance songs in Oromia have been used to positively mobilize the populace in support of political change by delivering a political message. The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of protest songs in young people's political engagement in Burayu town, Ethiopia. We seek to understand how political songs motivate and unite communities, as well as how they provide an avenue for expressing grievances and raising awareness. By examining the purpose behind the usage of protest songs, we aim to shed light on their influence in fortifying the sense of self and community among young people engaged in political action.

### **Theoretical Approach**

This essay delves into the crucial role of protest songs in the political struggle of Oromo youth. To analyze the data in this study, we use the resource mobilization

theory, which provides valuable insights into how young people in the study area organize themselves for political engagement and how youth political movements emerge and develop. Through a resource mobilization framework, we gain a better understanding of how songs contribute to the development of collective action among Oromo youth, enabling them to mobilize their political goals effectively.

We firmly believe that this theoretical method is an extremely useful analytical and explanatory tool for analyzing young people's political engagement (Dolan, 2022). As young people in the study region spend hours conversing with their friends, listening to political music, debating, exchanging, and understanding the political topics it carries, we recognize that music and songs have played a crucial part in these events as a means of political mobilization ((Street, Hague, & SAVINGY, 2007). Through this theory, we examine how Oromo youth groups mobilized their available resources, such as songs, to engage in the recent political movement. We further show how Oromo youth formulated an organized structure through the utilization of political songs that helped them develop their strategies and tactics for the successful accomplishment of their political movement. Therefore, the resource mobilization theoretical approach is an extremely useful tool in this study as it analyzes social movements from the vantage points of resources mobilized, the networks and linkage of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate social movements (McCarthy and Zald 1977:1213). With its ability to pinpoint youth political movements as a rational attempt to pursue collective interests, this theory examines the collective basis of social movement and how the aggrieved youth community makes use of protest songs to launch an organized demand for change (Jenkins & Perrow, 1977:250). In this paper, we employ resource mobilization theory with the new social movement theory to examine the place of songs in youth resistance political movements by taking the case of Burayu town in Ethiopia.

### **METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

This article is a result of an ethnographic study designed to contribute to our knowledge of youth political resistance. The study took place in Burayu town, located in Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia. This town is located in the Oromia Special Zone (renamed Sheger City) surrounding Addis Ababa. It is one of the fastest-growing cities owing to its strategic location along the edges of Addis Ababa, the nation's capital.

The town has been a pole of attraction, especially for youth from all over the country. The data was gathered through in-depth interviews with key informants, focus group discussions, and informal conversations, which were supplemented by reviews of literature and unpublished documents. Youth participants were selected to cover a broad variety of youth political movements.

With this diverse group of young informants, ages 18 to 35, four focus group discussions (FGD) have been scheduled (three with male groups and one with female groups) to investigate the role that young Oromo artists and their protest songs played in energizing Oromo youth in Burayu and supporting their political protest from 2014 to 2018. Youths of diverse origins were selected for in-depth interviews through snowball sampling. 16 key informants were selected, and in-depth interviews were conducted to locate the political participation and mobilization patterns affecting changes in the area.

We have selected songs of resistance that offer a powerful and passionate testimony to the suffering of the Oromo people while urging the masses to lend support and solidarity in response. The songs are mainly selected based on their relevance and use in stirring the youth to mobilize themselves in the protests from 2014 to 2018. Accordingly, four resistance songs of four young Oromo musicians were selected based on the preferences of our informants. These songs have been transcribed and translated into English with the support of a native speaker. The data was gathered between September 2020 and September 2021 with multiple field visits.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Trends & Antecedents of Resistance songs among the Oromo

The political struggle of the Oromo against the feudal Imperial regime has been traditionally told through folk literature and resistance songs (Assafa Dibaba, 2015). The array of Oromo protest music, which emerged as early as the 1970s has provided alternative documentation of the struggle against the Ethiopian regime. In the words of Megersa, a young political participant from Burayu:

*Traditional music plays and mirrors the unique cultural life of the people, their land, political life, nostalgic critique of the existing systems and accounts of the past, culture of the common people, and a conservative critique of modern life and aspiring the old ways of life. Foollee is a young men's traditional song among the Shewa Oromo that expresses the political condition, grievances, and injustices as well as*

*the cultural life of the community and thus has played a role in mobilizing the Oromo community. Recent modern political songs have become an additional ingredient for our cause and have a huge impact on young people in Oromia. Strategic uses of Foollee and modern political songs by Oromo youths have created a massive resistance against an oppressive regime in Ethiopia. (Interview conducted on July 23, 2020)*

The quote mentioned earlier by our informant clearly shows how songs have played a significant role in the recent political mobilization of Oromo youth. These songs have become a platform for them to express their thoughts, feelings, and political agitation. Consequently, the youth have mobilized themselves politically by using these songs, which have now become sources of social capital.

When an authoritarian government is in power, people who are unable to voice their opinions tend to create covert discourses that criticize the dominant government's power structure behind its back (Scott, 1990). People also use alternative artistic mediums as a way to build social capital.

The early Arfan Qallo music band set the ground for these forms of protest music. The Arfan Qallo was a cultural musical group established in Harar in the early 1960s to promote Oromo music and culture (Teferi Nigussie, 2019). Music produced by Arfan Qallo came to be instrumental in the early opposition against the feudal regime. This group's songs have always been sites of political agitation, cultural self-affirmation, and spiritual rejuvenation, drawing together audiences who share an unassailable commitment to the Oromo cause. Ali Birra and Ahmed Shabbo were the leading members of the group.

Ali in 1971 produced the first Album in the history of Oromo Music. Ali Birra was known for criticizing the incumbent government of Ethiopia in the 1970s and fighting against the feudal system of Ethiopia. In his 1975 musical Album, he strongly condemned the feudal system and its landlords. He eloquently expresses his anger and frustration by saying:

*Hamma hardhaa tofta soba uumtee  
Ummata saamuudhaan lafa waalit qabatee  
Qotee bula rorrodhaan dhamafttee*  
You have employed treacherous manipulation  
strategies, & exploited the people  
Grabbed their land,

Make the Oromo people being sad and aggrieved.  
In this song, Ali expressed his frustration, anger, and grievances towards the landlord of the feudal system. He further exposed the feudal system and its ruling

structure depravities that led to its downfall. This song clearly indicated the parasitic nature of landlords that time in Ethiopia that contribute nothing but the oppression and exploitation of farmers.

In addition to exposing the old feudal oppressive rule, Ali's songs have played a crucial role in articulating and creating the ideas of Oromumma–Oromo nationalism (Mohammed Ademo 2013; Hess, 2019). Furthermore, the lyrics and melodies of his songs have inspired numerous Oromo communities to rise against the feudal regime as well as the Ethiopian government that came later.

My informant Nebiyu Mulatu, a 55 years old Burayu resident Ali Birra admirer stated that:

*Ali Birra is a musical prodigy who inspires the Oromo people with his motivational lyrics and melodies. Ali Birra's songs received a significant boost as a result of being played more frequently on Ethiopian radio, making his name well-known among Oromo. He has grown to be the most well-known Oromo singer, bringing joy and optimism to the Oromo people (interview conducted on March 25, 2020).*

In the later period, the younger generation of Oromo singers—the Qubee generation—who are inspired by the political songs of Ali Birra played a key role. These group of artists include Haacaalu Hundessa, Galana Garomsa, Caalaa Dagafa, Ittiqa Teferi, Seena Solomon, Jafar Yusuf, Hawi Tezera, Falmata Kebede, and Kekiya Bedhadha (Asebe Regassa, 2023). The Oromo artist's powerful lyrics have given voice and significance to the group's insufferable indignation (Assafa Dibaba, 2015; Asebe Regassa, 2023).

### **Oromo Songs of Protest & Resistance (2014 to 2018)**

From 2014 to 2018 Oromo youth protest (also called the Qeerro protest) and resistance have been shaped and mobilized by young Oromo artists' musical lyrics. Oromo youth mobilization has been instrumented by the songs and lyrics of various Oromo artists (Asebe Regassa, 2023; Tatek Abebe, 2020, 2021). Galanaa Gaaromsaa, Hacaalu Hundessa, Caalaa Bultume and Ittiqa Tafari's resistance song lyrics played a crucial part in the protest and subsequent movements against Ethiopia's current administration. With the widely available broadcast technology, the youth listen to the resistance songs of these vibrant singers (Assafa Jalata, 2016; Awol Allo, 2020). Many of them downloaded the songs on their mobile phones and

showed them to one of these musicians' songs. In this regard, the analysis of the songs of these artists sheds light on the role that protest songs played. Let's examine each of these songs, which are well-liked by young Oromo people.

### **Song of Defiance**

The song "Maasteer plaanii jedhanii sanyii siduguugu" by Caalaa Bultume is a powerful declaration of opposition to the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan concept. The song boldly states that the government's development project will lead to the displacement of large number of the Oromo community. This song has played a significant role in the Oromo youth uprisings in Ethiopia, resonating with a wide audience and inspiring political cooperation and solidarity among the Oromo diaspora worldwide.

The music has become a strong tool for the Oromo community to express their discontent with the TPLF/EPRDF government's economic policies, which have come at the expense of the Oromo society. The Burayu youth's political engagement has increased significantly in response to the music, revealing widespread unhappiness that has shaken the government's foundation. The Oromo youth from every region of Oromia continue to use music to assert their opposition to the national government's expansionist policies.

The master plan song by Caalaa Bultume has been a crucial catalyst in the Oromia revolution, inspiring the youth to organize and express their opposition to the government's inhumane and self-sacrificing policies. The song has spread rapidly throughout Ethiopia's Oromia region and among the Oromo diaspora worldwide, becoming a rallying cry for youth movements.

### **Song of history of suffering and grievances**

Hacaalu Hundessa was an influential and fearless Oromo political singer, whose songs echoed the voices and hearts of young Oromo people in Ethiopia. He gained widespread recognition for his 2015 soundtrack "MAALAN JIRA" (what existence is mine!), which boldly exposed the discrimination and oppression faced by the Oromo people, as perceived by the overwhelming majority of the Oromo community (Asebe Regassa, 2023).

In this song, Hacaalu unapologetically revealed the memories of suffering, a history of grievances, and the political violence committed by the incumbent

government, which aimed to obliterate the cultural heritage of the Oromo people living on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. Hacaalu's song conveyed a powerful message to the audience that the past and present situation of the Oromo people clearly demonstrate political injustice, pervasive corruption, and widespread cultural malpractices that urgently require bold political actions (Tatek Abebe, 2020, 2021; Asebe Regassa, 2023).

### **Songs of Political courage and perseverance**

Galanaa Gaaromsaa's 2016 song "*Soda qawwee hin qabnu*" is an inspiring call to action for the Oromo people. It highlights the perseverance and bravery of the younger generation as they stand up against the Ethiopian government. This song is a protest against injustice and oppression, urging the youth to have the courage to fight for their political rights and freedom. He encourages the youth to reject the government's attempts to silence them and to stand up for what they believe in.

This protest song has become a rallying cry for young Oromos, inspiring them to mobilize for political goals. It has captured the attention of many and become a symbol of hope and resilience. The music has become an important social capital, giving the younger generation the political frameworks they need to effect change.

Galanaa's message is clear: the Oromo people must not be afraid to speak out against injustice and oppression. They must have the courage to fight for their rights and freedom. The younger generation must be the driving force for change, using music and other forms of activism to create a better future for themselves and their community.

### **Song of Political Resistance**

Ittiqa Tafari's song "*Saaqi saanqaa...*" has inspired the Oromo youth to rise up against injustice and oppression. Through his powerful lyrics, Ittiqa paints a vivid picture of the political climate in Oromia and the need for political mobilization against the corrupt government. Ittiqa has helped the listeners of this song to picture the 2014 to 2018 political climate in Oromia. In the past, Shewa people would only perform the old song "*Ragadaa*" at happy times. However, in more recent times, people have appeared to be pleased while playing "*Ragadaa*" and masking their interior pains. Ittiqa beautifully sings, declaring:

*Sobneeti sirbinaa keessi keenya madaa;*

*Ijji himimmaan mormaan ragadaa*

We are successful in keeping our wounds deep and  
singing joyfully.

We cry but continue to chant with our foreheads.

Based on this, Ittiqa's song effectively illustrated the political context of Oromia as well as political contestation. Ittiqa's lyrics urge the people to unite and fight together towards a common goal. He reminds the people that their strength lies in our unity and that the people must come together to combat the corrupted incumbent administration. The song demonstrates that through unity, we can overcome even the most significant challenges.

Ittiqa's lyrics also underscore the importance standing together in the face of adversity. He warns against fighting one another and instead stresses the need for cooperation and consensus. This way, the Oromo people can achieve their goals and bring about positive change in their communities.

Ittiqa's song is a reminder that we can rise up and fight for what is right. Through unity, cooperation, and shared understanding, we can overcome even the most significant challenges and create a better future for ourselves and our communities.

### **Songs of Grievance & Oppression: Their Function in Oromo Youth's Political Agency**

Young people have been embracing global influences to create cultural products that are celebrated as part of their heritage (Birgit Englert, 2008). Political songs have become a powerful tool for protesting against unjust systems and communicating important messages to the masses. These songs have been used as a means of empowering the marginalized and as a weapon of the weak against oppressive governments (James Scott, 1985). For instance, Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" album was a direct assault against racial lynching in the southern parts of the U.S.A (Margolick, David, 2001).

Young political artists and their songs have played a key role in mobilizing Oromo youth in political protests (Assafa Dibaba, 2015; Tatek Abebe, 2020; Assebe Regassa, 2023). Their music has helped to raise awareness and inspire action. Oromo political songs and concerts have always been a platform for political agitation, cultural self-affirmation, and spiritual rejuvenation. They have given voice and significance to the group's insufferable indignation (Assafa Dibaba, 2015; Tatek Abebe, 2020). Their songs have had a profound impact on the community, helping to transform mindsets and inspire political action. They have become a rallying point in the development of the political consciousness of young people.

Their songs have emerged as major instruments of political mobilization, helping to expose political injustices and past grievances, and encouraging people

to stand together for their rights. This is a symbol of political resistance and has facilitated the flourishing of the concept of Oromumma, i.e., the shared identity of all Oromo people (Asebe Regassa, 2023).

In this regard, the great Oromo singer Ali Birra with his associate “The Afran Qallo” band musical activities gave birth to Oromo cultural nationalism and laid the foundation for political mobilization through inculcating and cultivating the minds of young Oromo and the masses. He used his song as a political mobilizing instrument cultivating many young vibrant musicians and activists in Oromia and the rest of the country. His musical legacies have remained and are instilled in the works of young Oromo talents such as Hacaalu Hundessa, Gelanaa Garomssa, Ittiqa Tafari, and Caalaa Bultume.

Understanding youth’s political mobilization and protest from the musical lyrics viewpoint started to a distinctly greater extent after the TPLF-led Ethiopian government began the so-called “Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan” in 2014, which exploded widespread mass protest, especially by Oromo youth protest to dismantle TPLF-dominated EPRDF government. In this regard, Caalaa Bultume’s “*Maasteer plaanii jedhanii sanyii siduguuguu*”, used to express his deep displeasure and fierce opposition to this Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan project.

According to Belay Hundessa, a 32 years old

Political participant of Burayu:

” *This song conveyed a message to a wide audience and contributed significantly to the Oromo youth uprisings since the majority of young Oromo people have never agreed with the master plan's development project. We took a stand against the TPLF/EPRDF administrations*” (Interview conducted on September 13, 2020).

This song by Caalaa Bultume is a powerful expression of his unwavering opposition to the Addis Ababa Integrated Master Plan project. With his music, he has reached a vast audience and made a significant impact on the Oromo youth protests. Caalaa Bultume's inspirational music has rapidly spread throughout the Oromia region of Ethiopia and among Oromo diaspora communities worldwide. The Oromo diaspora has used his music as a primary tool for promoting youth political cooperation, solidarity, and a sense of unity across the globe.

Hacaalu Hundessa, another prominent young Oromo singer, has also boldly highlighted the current political environment, where the people have demonstrated remarkable resilience, self-affirmation, and confidence even in the face of governmental brutality

and dictatorship. Their music serves as a powerful reminder that the Oromo people will not be silenced and will continue to fight for their rights and freedom. In his lyrics, he echoed saying;

*Diigani gaara Sanaa, Gaara diigamuu hin-mallee,  
Nu baasaan addaan baanee, nuu addaan bayuu hin-  
mallee.*

They destroyed that Mountain, A mountain that  
should not be destroyed,

They took us out and we were separated who did not  
deserve to be separated.

Hacaalu's music served as a powerful tool to draw attention to the dire situation in the surrounding areas of Addis Ababa. The lyrics of this verse serve as a stark reminder that the Oromo people have been robbed of their land, leaving them with no means of survival. The loss of grazing lands for their cattle and the inability to cultivate crops for their daily needs has left them in a state of utter desperation. It is imperative that action be taken to address this injustice immediately. Our focus group discussant exclaimed the following;

*Malaan jiraa song of Hacaalu exposed the evils of the government and uninterrupted displacement of Tuulamaa Oromo initially from the center and at the moment from the coastal city of Addis Ababa by jara, as he vocalized in his song as diigani gaara sanaa (they demolished that hill). He urged togetherness, a collective mental map in his nationalist narrative song in the form of 'ani hinjiru'/I am not alive/. Following this song, youth who had been torn apart for so long were finally reunited against their common enemy. Hacaalu has revealed so much excruciating pain and unspeakable suffering of Oromo in the TPLF/EPRDF prison cell since 1991. (FGD conducted on September 13, 2020)*

Haacaalu boldly highlighted the government's heinous actions against the community, which had resulted in tremendous suffering and unacceptable conduct. The government had unlawfully seized the community's land, causing immense pain and hardship. Moreover, Haacaalu passionately expressed his disapproval of the Ethiopian government's actions, which had led to the Oromo people's economic collapse. He stated that the government had robbed the Oromo people of their land surrounding Addis Ababa, leading to the displacement of numerous families due to what is known as development-induced displacement. The lands were then taken over by large-scale investors, both national and international, leaving the Oromo people with nothing. According to MB;

*For Hacaalu, the multiple problems spring  
from the crafty acts of jaraa (stranger or alien*

*mainly referring to the authoritarian TPLF-dominated Ethiopian government), which he symbolically presented as illegal intruders in the Oromo land. He expressed the cruelty of the government that led to the crumbling and suffering of the Oromo community that lost much of their ancestral lands such as Sululta, Gullaallee, Galaan, and the land that the Abbichuu clan cultivated. Because of this, the Oromo community has no more rights to graze their cattle where their forefathers grazed their cattle happily for centuries. (Interview conducted on October 03, 2020)*

This statement by our informant explain the harsh reality of systemic violence against the Oromo community and the rampant land grabbing that took place following the expansion of Addis Ababa into the outskirts of the Towns of Oromia Regional State. Hacaalu's song questioned how much longer the Oromo people would have to wait for freedom and denounced the rigged EPRD government for creating a system of exploitation and injustice in the country. The youth in the surrounding areas of Addis Ababa were the first to respond to these lyrics since they were the ones most affected by the situation. They listened to Hacaalu's music and other political songs, drawing inspiration and strength to fight for their rights. Hacaalu's music became a powerful mobilizing tool for young activists in Oromia, galvanizing them to face the challenges head-on. Hacaalu himself was a symbol of hope and a voice for the Oromo people who spoke out against their political and economic marginalization under the Ethiopian regimes. Hacaalu's music has become the sound and the voice of the Oromo cause, inspiring millions of Oromo youth to stand up for their rights in the youth protest of 2014 to 2018.

### **The Mobilizing Role of Songs of Resiliency & Tenacity**

Music constructs our sense of identity through the direct experience it offers the body, time, and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives (Simon Frith, 1996: 124-125). Music is not simply a reflection of culture, but a harbinger of change, an anticipatory abstraction of the shape of things to come (Attali, Jacques, 1985). Youth's everyday appropriation of music style and associated objects, images, and texts are instrumental in Oromo's political mobilization

(Awol Allo, 2020). The political song serves as a mobilizing factor in the development of political consciousness among youth activists (Clay, 2006) and has an impact on politics and social mobilization of the community (Okeke, Remi Chukwudi, 2019).

The political mobilization of youth in Burayu was strengthened by the song of Ittiqa Tafari. In his song, Ittiqa strongly condemned the government that used different forms of political violence including imprisoning and killing political participants for the causes of the Oromo people. In his song, Ittiqa exclaimed that Oromo freedom fighters were jailed without undergoing trial. Ittiqa mentioned the jailing of political prisoners without the determination of a person's innocence or guilt by due process of law when says in his song "*si hidhan yaa falmattoota kiyyaa*" (They have arrested you, my defenders)" So, this becomes an emotional injury for him.

Ittiqa has helped the listeners of this song to picture the current political climate in Oromia. In the past, Shewa people would only perform the old song "Ragadaa" at happy times. However, in more recent times, people have appeared to be pleased while playing "Ragadaa" and masking their interior pains. He is expressing his emotions in these poems that the silent or perpetual wound that has existed in the hearts of the Oromo people for over (Scott, 1985). The right reader of this good poem can tell the moment it strikes him that he has taken an unforgettable wound that he will never recover. My informant, Solomon G, a 28 years old Burayu political participant elaborated his argument by saying:

*For Ittiqa, this is a figurative injury to the feelings or pride of the Oromo. The TPLF/EPRDF rule not only has caused outward wounds but also the deepest emotional pain or offense to the Oromo society. The emotional injury of Oromo society looks like a bloody record of a tremendous inner battle for him. He explains this in a figurative poem in his music. If he had told outwardly, he would have certainly been thrown into a prison cell like others. (Interview conducted on November 04, 2020)*

In this song, Ittiqa request the Oromo people to open their minds and fight for truth reason, justice, and Wisdom. He further urged the youthful community to maintain perseverance to the point where it was no longer appropriate to be in prison. His song unequivocally stresses the vital importance of unity. It powerfully illustrates how the combined forces of community cooperation

and shared understanding can effectively defeat any adversity. "Ittiqa" indisputably underlines the absolute need for the community to come together and reach a consensus in order to effectively combat a corrupt incumbent administration. This politically charged song serves as a stirring call to action, inspiring young, energetic political players to stand strong in the face of genuine opposition, and driving home the crucial necessity of having unwavering courage in such a conflict.

For the youth informant ,AL, a 32 years old Oromo political participants from Burayu, *"It's incredible to think about how the song he wrote brought people from all walks of life together, inspiring them to come out and engage in political activities. The message behind the song clearly resonated with people of all ages, and it's heartening to see that it has become such an important tool for young people today. This speaks to the power of music and its ability to motivate individuals to take action for change"* (interview conducted on May 21, 2020).

Galanaa Gaaromsa's "Dhallonni qubee kunii sodaa Qawwee hinqabu" has been instrumental in mobilizing young people of Oromia to fight against the EPRD government. Galanaa's protest music highlighted the condition where young political instigators live under the brutal system of the Ethiopian government by saying "Sone Robe biyon jagama ngaatee, Sone robe biyon kebede Bedasaa ngaatee, Sone robe gnuumaafoo sodaccissaa". This means that 'they eat the flesh of young Jagama, they eat the flesh of young Kebede Badassa, and thus they will continue doing this and we are also their political target! This powerful song urges young people to unite in resistance against a political system that poses challenges to their future.

In his lyrical song, he rather advised Oromo youth that, silence cannot be the best answer to strangers who don't respect them on their homestead, and he encouraged them to remain vigilant, stay strong, and walk away with courage no matter how the regime responded protesters with a heavy machine gun. He advised the youth to repay evil with evil, gunshot with gunshot contrary to what Oromo used to do because he was tired of viewing the overwhelming of Oromo in the TPLF/EPRDF prison cells.

For my young informant ,LG, from Burayu, *Galanaa expounded in his song that Oromo youth resistance behavior shared historical experiences of oppression, braveness, and confidentiality with previous Oromo nationalists, namely Waaqoo Guutuu, Taddese Biru,*

*and Sadam Saaddoo. First, he wondered at the display of courage that the Qubee generation demonstrated barehanded in the revolutionary protest because he observed that when government forces appeared with guns and tanks, the Qubee generation didn't display fear during an open protest in the demonstration. Second, Galaanaa also informed the regime that the youth were heroes like Brigadier General Tadesse Birru confidential like Sadam Saaddoo, and military brave men like Waaqoo Guutuu. (Interview conducted on November 3, 2020).*

This song has served as a mobilizing instrument for the young activists. Galanaa's protest music was influential, metaphorical, and philosophical. Galanaa mobilized the young generation to raise against the Ethiopian government which had badly treated the Oromo society and encouraged them to fight for their political rights and freedom.

The Oromo youth used protest songs to successfully mobilize themselves for political change, leading to the emergence of new Oromo elites who have taken up important positions and contributed to the revival and flourishing of Oromo culture. The Oromo songs had a highly effective mobilizing impact on the Oromo youth community, inspiring them to take bold and effective political action.

This argument powerfully aligns with the resource mobilization theory, which emphasizes the crucial importance of mobilizing resources such as social capital for political purposes. Over time, the youth protests evolved into a well-organized and highly successful Oromo movement that enjoyed overwhelming support from the public, including peasants, merchants, and some government employees. This movement brought much of Addis Ababa and most parts of Wellega, Ambo, Ginchi, and most importantly Oromia Towns to adjust to Addis Ababa. This protest culminated in 2018 with the sudden removal of Ethiopia's struggling Prime Minister, Haile Mariam Desalegn from power. Many young people of Burayu town joined the youth political mobilization of 2014 to 2018, employing various politically astute opposition tactics to achieve their goals. Music has remarkably helped to inspire the young generation of leaders, serving as major resources and effective political instrument .Thus, songs are served as a motivating influence for the younger generation in their political mobilization, as this article has shown.

## CONCLUSION

This article strongly argues that music has played a vital role in motivating the younger generation in



Oromia to engage in political activism. The study firmly establishes that traditional forms of Oromo music have transformed into modern protest songs that not only speak to the aspirations and struggles of the people but also serve as a critical tool for political activism and resistance in Oromia.

Protest songs have been instrumental in raising political awareness and mobilizing the youth of Oromia from 2014 to 2018. This research has powerfully noted the use of music by young people in Oromia as a major strategy of resistance to bring about change.

Oromo music has been empowering and uplifting, encouraging self-worth, resilience, and tenacity in the face of injustice. The article strongly highlights how young Oromo people have effectively used protest songs to express their cultural identity, stand up for their rights, and organize for social and political change.

Oromo musicians, such as Caalaa Bultume, Hacaalu Hundessa, Galanaa Gaaromsaa, and Ittiqa Tafari, have actively inspired and mobilized Oromo youth protests and resistance in Oromia, Ethiopia between 2014 and 2018. Their songs and lyrics have brought attention to issues like discrimination, oppression by the government, and the necessity of resistance and unity. These songs were essential for the protest movements and political mobilization of the Oromo youth, providing a platform for them to engage, share experiences, and mobilize for political change.

Overall, Ethiopian youth have become politically active by using various technology platforms to voice their opinions and effect change. This strongly illustrates the significant role that Ethiopian youth have played in using music as a tool to bring about political change in Oromia.

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