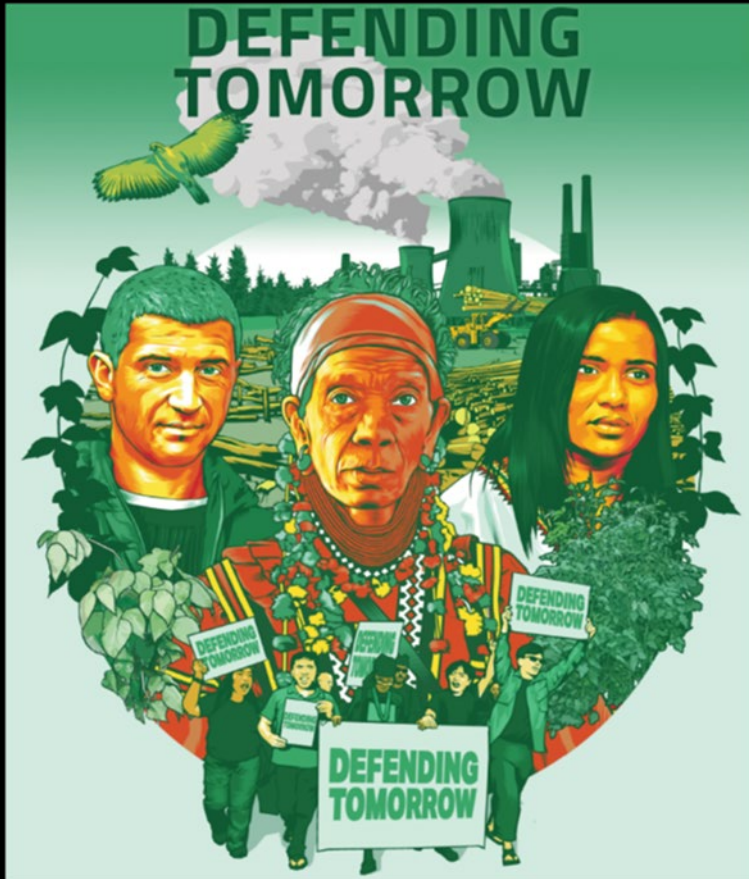




SOUNDS OF SACRIFICE

Popular Music & Environmental Martyrdom

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THE DEADLIEST YEAR ON RECORD

‘In 2019, Global Witness recorded 212 murdered environmental defenders, ... On average, four defenders have been killed every week since December 2015’ (Global Witness 2020).

‘... an epidemic of environmental martyrdom...’ (Nixon 2020)

The Meaning of Martyrdom ...

‘noble death’ or ‘involuntary violent death’ (Mitchell, 2012: 21)

‘contested death’ (Fordahl, 2020: 23).

‘... martyrdom is a socialising of one’s death ..., converting it into a mess of life for others’ (Eagleton 1998).

Martyrdom requires not just death but discourse (Castelli 2001)

‘Memories of martyrdoms ... repeated, presented, and expressed though a range of media’ (Mitchell, 2012)

Music as a medium of memory

Music: 'technology of memory'

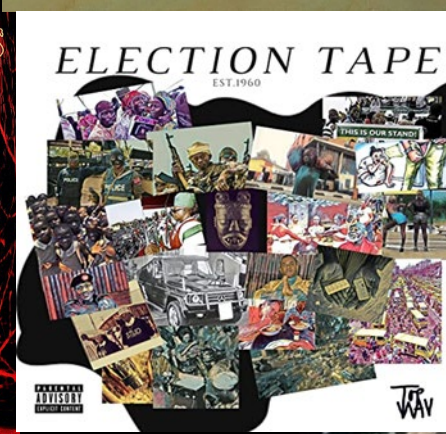
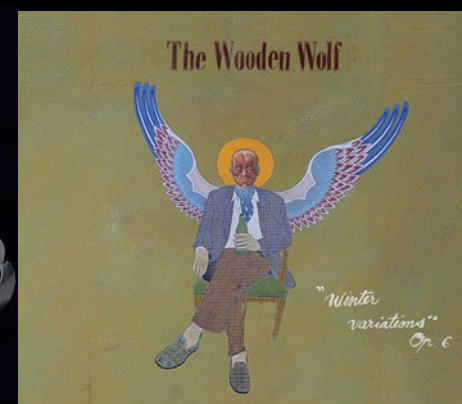
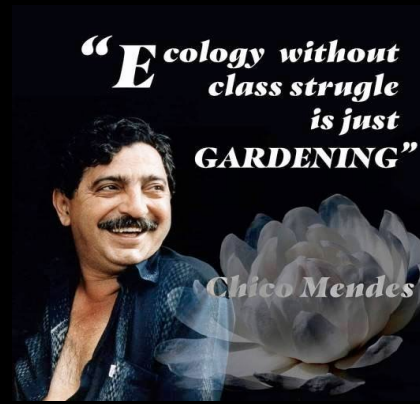
memorials/commemorations

'Memory objects' (Mark 1992)

Shape/focus the experience of listeners
(Street, 2001: 249).

Mediate memories/histories

Affordances/conventions are material to
mediation



<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/4HQFUhg3wYbGVBW5vGyHyy?si=vsX3AS8bShmh5nejYRA28g>





**REMEMBER
KEN SARO-WIWA
1941-1995**



THE BOYCOTT CONTINUES



BBC NEWS | PIDGIN

BBC NEWS | PIDGIN

‘The struggles of Ken Saro-Wiwa in defence of his Ogoni people are a beacon of light for people throughout the world. The determination to keep his memory alive is a struggle to envision and create a future that is free of the ravages of racism, genocide and utter disrespect for the environment’ (Angela Davis 2006).

<https://socialistworker.co.uk/features/angela-davis-on-ken-saro-wiwa/>



SONGS OF SARO-WIWA



Artist	Song/Album	Year	Genre
Kurt Ackerman	‘Ken Saro-Wiwa’ <i>That was then, this is Now</i>	1996	
Ultra Bra (Finnish)	‘Ken Saro-wiwa on kuollot’ [‘Ken Saro-wiwa is Dead’]	1996	Pop
Freek de Jong [Dutch]	‘De Stem (Ken Saro Wiwa)’ [‘The Voice’]	1996	?
Joe Jencks [US]	Ken Saro Wiwa <i>I Hear Your Voice</i>	1996/03	Folk
King Cobb Steelie [Canadian]	‘Rational’	1997	Indie rock
Free Radicals [?]	‘Elegy for Ken Saro-Wiwa’ <i>The Rising Tide Sinks</i>	1998	
Kim and Reggie Harris [US]	‘Sarowiwa’	1999	Folk-country
Ted Sirota’s Rebel Souls [US]	‘Saro-Wiwa’ <i>Breeding Resistance</i>	2004	Jazz
Justyn Tyme [German]	‘Ken Saro-wiwa’ <i>The Day Before Tomorrow</i>	2004	Groove jazz
Andy Middleton [US]	‘Ode to Ken Saro Wiwa’ <i>Reinventing the World</i>	2007	Jazz
Il Teatro degli Orrori [Italy]	‘A Sangue Freddo’ [‘In Cold Blood’]	2009	Alternative/Punk
Smoke [?]	‘Ken Saro-Wiwa’ <i>Routes</i>	2009	Reggae
Mira [Nigeria]	‘Ken Saro wiwa’	2009	Hip hop/afro-pop

Artist	Song/album	Year	Genre
Athanasopoulos-Pin Jazz Quintet [Greek/Dutch]	‘Ken Saro Wiwa’ <i>Modern Money Mechanics</i>	2010	Jazz
Al Quetz [French]	‘Ken Saro-Wiwa (Ogoni Spirit)’	2011	World/Dance
2softKamata [Nigeria]	‘BlackCotton’	2014	Hip hop
Blakk Rasta [Ghana]	‘Ogoni Rebellion (Saro Wiwa)’	2016	Reggae
Talias Van & the Bright & Morning Star Band [US]	‘The Freedom Song’ <i>Under the Same Moon: World Music Alliance, Vol. 7</i>	2018	Folk/Psychodelic?
TopWav [Nigeria/USA]	‘Ghost of Ken Saro Wiwa’ <i>Election Tape Est 1960</i>	2019	Hip hop
The Archangel [?]	‘Sacred (Remix for Ken Saro-Wiwa) <i>These Drums Kill Fascists</i>	2020	
DMATE [?]	‘Tribute to Ken Sarowiwa’	2020	Hip hop
The Rebel Souls [Ireland]	‘Saro-Wiwa’ <i>The Rebel Souls</i>	2020	Reggae
Dsplasy [Nigeria]	‘Ken Sarowiwa’	2021	Afro-pop



★ THE NAME OF THE MARTYR ★

Artist	Song/Album	Year	Genre
Kurt Ackerman	‘Ken Saro-Wiwa’ <i>That was then, this is Now</i>	1996	
Ultra Bra (Finnish)	‘Ken Saro-wiwa on kuollot’ [‘Ken Saro-wiwa is Dead’]	1996	Pop
Freek de Jong [Dutch]	‘De Stem (Ken Saro Wiwa)’ [‘The Voice’]	1996	?
Joe Jencks [US]	Ken Saro Wiwa <i>I Hear Your Voice</i>	1996/03	Folk
King Cobb Steelie [Canadian]	‘Rational’	1997	Indie rock
Free Radicals [?]	‘Elegy for Ken Saro-Wiwa’ <i>The Rising Tide Sinks</i>	1998	
Kim and Reggie Harris [US]	‘Sarowiwa’	1999	Folk-country
Ted Sirota’s Rebel Souls [US]	‘Saro-Wiwa’ <i>Breeding Resistance</i>	2004	Jazz
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Mira [Nigeria]	‘Ken Saro wiwa’	2009	Hip hop/afro-pop

Ken Saro-Wiwa, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Ken Saro-
Wiwa
Oh Wiwa, Oh Wiwa
Jumb Saro-Wiwa

TaliasVan and the Bright and Morning Star Band
'The Freedom Song' *Under the Same Moon: World Music
Alliance, Vol. 7*

Kurt Ackerman
'Ken Saro-Wiwa'
That was then, this is Now (1996)

Kim & Reggie Harris (and
Magpie)
'Sarowiwa' (1999)

- 'Repetition can draw listeners into a participatory relationship with sound, laying the foundation for various affective and affiliative responses to music' (Margulies 2020).



STORIES OF THE MARTYR



Saro-wiwa was an African, Nigerian,
Ogoni man, start a rebellion,
Abacha jail him, torture him,
hang him, bloody vampire

Born in oil-rich Ogoni Land in 1941 in
Nigeria

Ken Saro-Wiwa rebelled against the
vampire West and Sani Abacha from far
and near. They stole the oil in Ogoniland
degraded and polluted the land with their
evilous plan, the people died like rabbits
and fowls [...] with [toxic plasmosis ...]
our own bastard Sani Abacha sold the
Nigerian birthright to the wicked and
uncircumcised virtuelman ... Saro-wiwa
was [...] jailed, tortured and hung, in a
situation full of cold-heated political
gymnastics under the glaring African sun,
no wonder Sani Abacha himself is in the
hottest part of hell today [...] rest in
peace brother Kenole ...

- Spoken verse carries the 'narrative burden'. The chorus 'etches the tune to memory' (Hennion 1983, p.191)

There was a man from Nigeria
Lived his life to right the wrongs
Saro-wiwa was his name
With his words we sing his song

Sarawiwa fought and died that the earth and Ogoni could survive
It's up to us to spread his truth to keep his thoughts and hopes alive

At the end of the road they took his life
His sacrifice is not the first
Eight others died at his side to fill our tanks and Shell oils purse

Save our future and this earth
To which each one of us belongs
We must stop the rapid speed we seek
And sing his spirit song

Kim & Reggie Harris (and
Magpie)
'Sarowiwa' (1999)



Don't you remember Ken Saro Wiwa?
The Nigerian poet
A hero of our times
Don't you remember Ken Saro Wiwa?
Because he loved too much
They killed him in front of everyone
Liars inside, murderers outside
Cowards in uniform
Whole generations deceived forever
In cold blood
Ken Saro Wiwa is dead
Long live Ken Saro Wiwa

‘A Sangue Freddo’ (2009) [‘In Cold Blood’]
Il Teatro degli Orrori

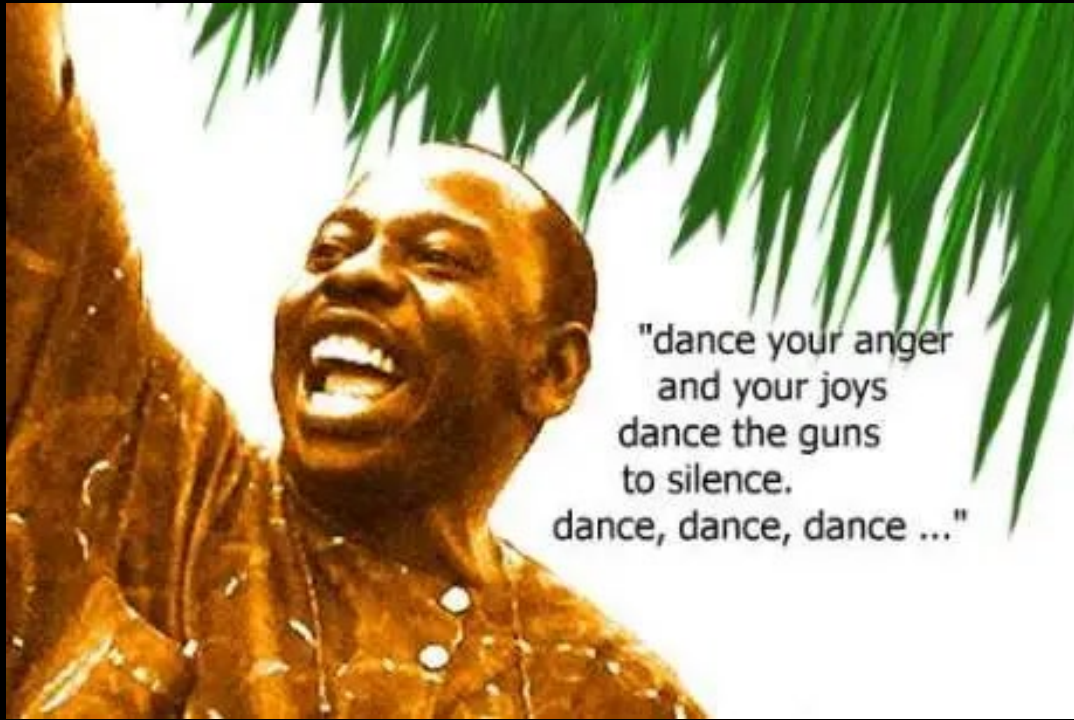
You killed Wiwa
Thieves in limousines, God damn you
You will pay for everything and you will pay dearly





THE VOICE OF THE MARTYR





Meme that features at the beginning of Blakk Rasta's 'Ogoni Rebellion' (Saro Wiwa) (2016) video

"My Brothers and sisters, my Beloved Children,
Dance this 4 January 1995,
Dance your anger and your joys,
Dance the military guns to silence,
Dance oppression and injustice to death,
Dance my people,
For we have seen tomorrow
And there is an Ogoni star in the sky."

Ken Saro Wiwa (1995)
[from a speech smuggled out of a prison hospital in 1995]

- Transmediation ... not only re-mediation – repeated mediation – but also trans-mediation: repeated mediation of equivalent sensory configurations by another technical medium' (Ellestrom 2019. p.5)

Saro-wiwa was his name
With his words we sing his song
Dance your anger, Dance your joys
Everybody make a joyful noise
Everybody make a joyful noise

Dance repression and injustice down
Dance for friendship all around the town

Dance to ridicule the military fools
To silence the guns and military duels

“My Brothers and sisters, my Beloved
Children,
Dance this 4 January 1995,
Dance your anger and your joys,
Dance the military guns to silence,
Dance oppression and injustice to death,
Dance my people,
For we have seen tomorrow
And there is an Ogoni star in the sky.”

Ken Saro Wiwa (1995)
[from a speech smuggled out of a prison hospital in
1995]

Kim & Reggie Harris (and Magpie)
‘Sarowiwa’ (1999)

I am a man of peace and beliefs

[...]

We are all gathered here to be judged by history

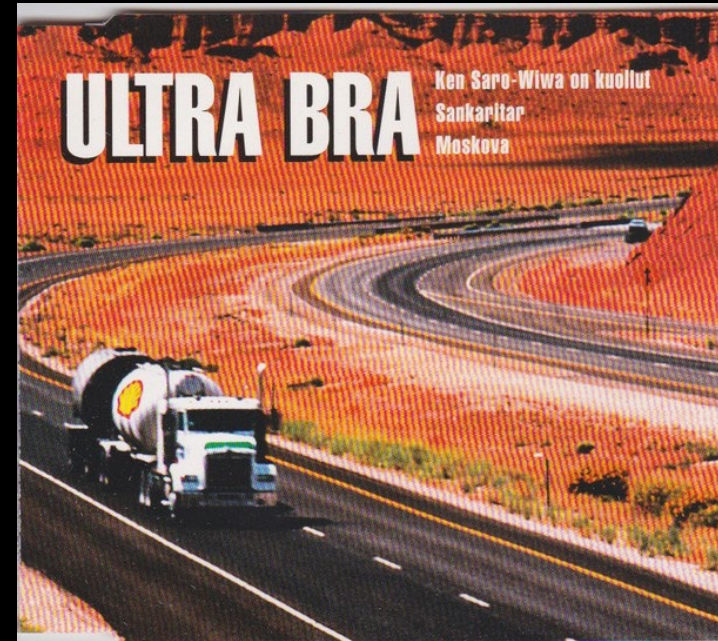
My colleagues and I are not the only ones accused

Shell is also here to be judged

And the crimes will be punished, as is deserved


The crimes that have been done, as is deserved

Quotation from Saro-Wiwa's last speech at his trial



Note: text in green is paraphrased

Ultrabra 'Ken Saro-wiwa is Dead' (1996)



‘To deny a people the right to self-determination for well than a hundred years is to subject them to slavery; To take away the resources of a people and refuse to give them anything in return is to subject them to slavery; To take away the land of a people who depend solely on land for their survival and refuse to pay them compensation is to subject them to genocide.’

Ken Saro-Wiwa (from his last interview)

The Rebel Souls ‘Sarowiwa’ (2020)

Topwav ‘Ghost of Ken Saro-wiwa’ (2019)

Al Quetz ‘Ken Saro Wiwa (Ogoni Spirit)’ (2011)

○ ‘testifying voice’ (Stone-Mediatore 2003:34)

Sample

Verse

Sample

Verse

Sample

Verse

Sample



RECONTEXTUALISING THE MARTYR



‘This project strives to highlight and stoke a fire in the hearts of Nigerian youths to have a burning desire and determination towards the political process in the country with songs like "Ghost of Ken Saro-Wiwa", "Abachas Mansion" and "Third Term" ...’ (from TopWav’s youtube channel).



Topwaw 'Ghost of Ken Saro-wiwa' (2019)

Yep, Okay

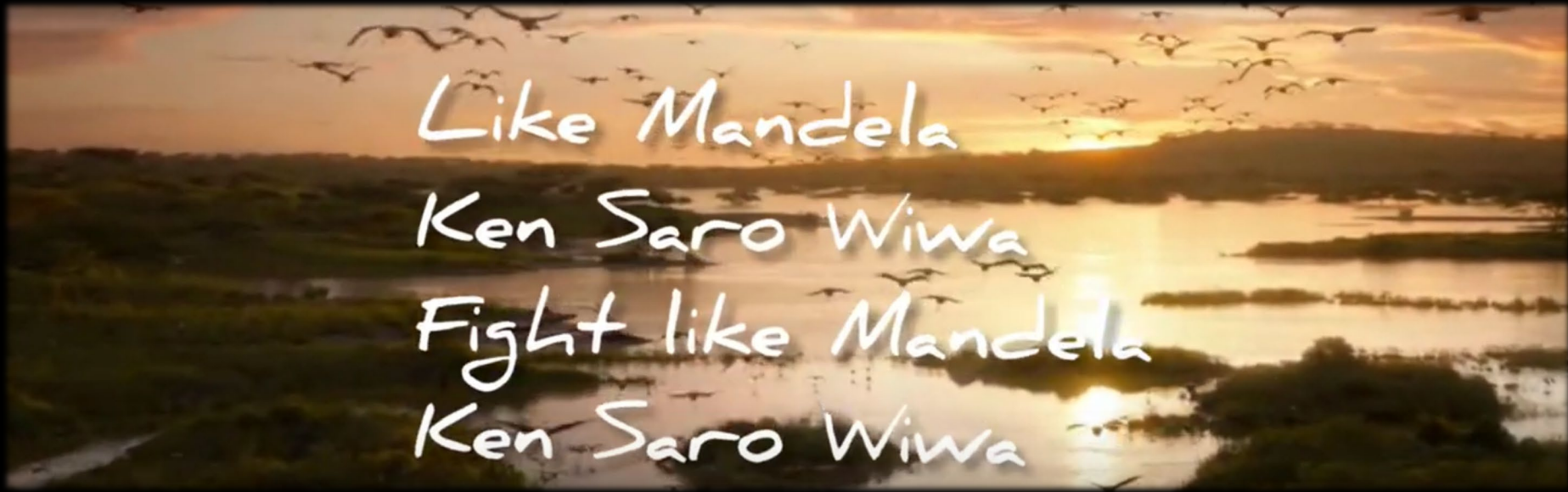
Tell them to give us back our land,
Don't deceive us, our god has a plan

Yes

Tell all those demons
they should leave us,
In the name of Jesus, [find] those demons, make them free us ...

IMF, give you cheque, no big cash,
check on the back, payback more than the max,
World Bank on your back, coz of interest, at this rate
not to frustrate [...]
Oil wells been Shelled, Mobil interest,
killing locals so the globals come and invest.

If the man skin white, my people pay tight,
Ten times the rate, they will still pay twice,
Sign no debate coz the package look right,
Or you wont get [no fruit] but your foremens move tighter,
Fruits look riper,
but then came China,
Can this big Niger protect what's behind her,
inside her, between her, as if you divide her,
to conquer resources [we] have to divide her,
To the crooks it looks simple and plane,
Using chaos, confusion, and pain to the brain,
Put lives in a twist, let it drip in a lane,
And take all your [cake] with the plague that remains ...



Dsplashy 'Ken Sarowiwa' (2021)



📷 A man collects polluted water in Nigeria's Niger delta. Photograph: Akintunde Akinleye/REUTERS

'After viewing the environment, the level of insecurity was much and he decided to say it to the Government and to our leaders that our people are dying and all our natural resources got dried of the spill of Crude and other petroleum chemicals on the land and both sea... Here a message through a tune titled 'Ken Sarowiwa' which is one of the Legend from the Ogoni Kingdom that has always been standing for peace, justice, unity love and good welfare of his people...'

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/nov/10/ken-saro-wiwa-father-nigeria-ogoniland-oil-pollution>

“We should think about the role of art in the creation of historical memory – how artists can enrich our understanding of the past and the present and push us towards a better future” (Angela Davis 2006).

remember
saro-wiwa

