

Using a socially conscious song from either the caribbean

Countries



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“ I am living while I'm living to the father I will pray, only he knows how we get through every day, with all the hike in the price, arm and leg we have to pay, while our leaders play...” Myrie et al (1995, track 5). This song “ Untold Stories” sung by Mark Anthony Myrie, 1973, popularly known as ‘ Buju Banton,’ a powerful Jamaican dancehall, ragga, and reggae musician. He has also recorded Pop and Dance songs, as well as songs dealing with political topics. Banton is politically outspoken and highly influenced by Marcus Garvey.

These lyrics stated above revealed substantial discontent with existing social conditions and a robust mistrust of those in high positions. However linking this with critical theory, which is described by Bleich (1977) as composing largely of criticisms of various aspects of social and intellectual life, but its ultimate goal, is to reveal more accurately the nature of society (Ritzer, 2010, p. 282). A critical theory is adequate only if it meets three criteria: it must be explanatory, practical, and normative, all at the same time.

That is, it must explain what is wrong with current social reality, identify the actors to change it, and provide both clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation. Critical theorists do not say that economic determinists were wrong in focusing on the economic realm but that they should have been concerned with other aspects of social life as well, the critical school sought to rectify this imbalance by focusing its attention on the cultural realm (Fuery and Mansfield, 2000; Schroyer, 1973: 33).

This is shown plainly in Banton’s lyrics in his song “ Untold Stories,” he speaks about these untold aspects of social life that has never been brought
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to the attention of others, conditions such as the inflation and rising of daily living expenses, the fact that at the end of the day your expenses will always outweigh your earnings, also that the labour he has to pay seems as if he has to sacrifice a body part just to meet the expenses of life. “ With all the hike in the price, arm and leg we have to pay...” (Banton, 1995).

Focusing on other aspects of social life according to the critical theorists is what Banton’s song is trying to bring to the forefront; he tries to enlighten the minds of others with relation to poverty in his lyrics where he sings about the clothes on his back containing countless eyeholes, and one of the major unyielding points he made as he continued to sing is that “ Opportunity is a scarce commodity...” Opportunities are allocated to those who can afford it, Banton continues in his plight saying that “ Those who can afford to run will run...” (1995).

Even though you sacrifice and give your last expenses to gain an education, the opportunities are still given to those who can afford it, being educated does not mean that you are guaranteed a space in the labour force, “ Filled up with education yet don't own a payroll...” (Banton, 1995) Critical theorists also focus on the philosophical underpinnings of scientific inquiry especially positivism (Bottomore, 1984; Fuller 1994). Positivists believe that knowledge is inherently neutral. They feel that they can keep human values out of their work.

This belief, in turn, leads to the view that science is not in the position of advocating any specific form of social action. Positivism is opposed by the critical school on various grounds (Sewart, 1978). For one thing, positivism tends to reify the social world and see it as a natural process. The critical

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theorists prefer to focus on human activity as well as on the ways in which such activity affects larger social structures. In short, positivism loses sight of the actors (Habermas, 1971), reducing them to passive entities determined by “ natural forces. Given their belief in the distinctiveness of the actor, the critical theorists would not accept the idea that the general laws of science can be applied without question to human action. (Ritzer, 2010, p 283.) A simple yet perfect example of this coming from Banton is his perseverance to continue aspiring despite these deplorable conditions. He pushes himself to continue this life because of bare survival, “ Though this life keep getting me down don't give up now got to survive some way somehow...” (1995).

He continues to sing about the trials he has to face in life and the injustice of it, that those who are suffering and in need of dyer help are the ones who never seem to get comfort and redemption, but even though his life entails all these tribulations above them all he sings, that as long as he is kept alive by the Father (God) he will continue to praise him and pray his name because it is only Him who knows why he is still alive and striving very day, “ I am living while I'm living to the father I will pray only he knows how we get through every day...” (Banton, 1995) Banton’s lyrics proves an apprehensive concern to those placed in high positions, he sings about while he has to struggle to earn and make a living those who are leaders can sit back and relax and recreate for they have their earning and they can afford to move out of these conditions that may come their way. Though ‘ they’ i. the leaders can ‘ run’ those who cannot afford to will have to stay, they will have to face struggle and dismay, the leaders are unconcerned for the less

fortunate, their positions mean nothing to anyone but themselves. He continues in song, singing that it is a competitive world for low class people because of their low budget, they have to manage their income carefully but somehow they always spend more than they make a day, “ It's a competitive world for low budget people spending a dime while earning a nickel...” (1995).

He speaks out that there is no one to care about those who are suffering terribly in society, where youths have to rob and steal to make a living even though they have an education and that the only person that can help them is God so they will continue to pray, “ No love for the people who are suffering real bad another toll to the poll may God help we soul...” (Banton, 1995) The critical school focuses primarily on one form of formal rationality; moderntechnology(Feenberg, 1996). Marcuse (1964) He saw technology in modern capitalist society as leading to totalitarianism.

In fact, he viewed it as leading to new, more effective, and even more “ pleasant” methods of external control over individuals. Marcuse rejected the idea that technology is neutral in the modern world and saw it instead as a means to dominate people. It is effective because it is made to seem neutral when it is in fact enslaving. It serves to suppress individuality. The actor's inner freedom has been “ invaded and whittled down” by modern technology. The result is what Marcuse called “ one-dimensional society,” in which individuals lose the ability to think critically and negatively about society.

Marcuse did not see technology per se as the enemy, but rather technology as it is employed in modern capitalist society: “ Technology, no matter how ‘
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pure,' sustains and streamlines the continuum of domination. (Ritzer, 2010, p. 286.) Emphasizing Macuse's point with the media, this can be used as an example of just that; dominating the society with song and lyrics. These songs yes they invoke a sense of solidarity and power but can they really change the world? They let persons express their true selves by capturing a range of emotions and a sense of opposition, but what are they really doing for the society?

This social order that they talk about, the one that seems so destructive, by broadcasting it; wouldn't it also act as an imitator to others? My thoughts are that it can go both ways; negatively in that others may learn to do the same to their society to gain better benefits for themselves for example violent songs against persons or the government, others may use this as a reason to conduct destructive and violent, rage-filled acts or counter attacks. Therefore not diminishing but rather encouraging thus said acts. However these protest songs can also have a positive effect and reaction to the broader society.

It helps for others to become aware of the things that are normally referred to as " unmentionables. " Persons are able to give a voice to unspoken cries and speak out against the true things that cause problems and raise havoc in a society. This Buju Banton song encompassed a range of hidden emotions about struggle and the fight that poor people make on a daily basis, it did not only speak of the hurts and trials but also about the fight to stay alive and the perseverance and the power of pray and will to continue along life's path disregarding the troubles of living.

Even though it expressed deep hurt and frustration it still comprehended a sense of power to become uplifted and to find good within the bad. The most <https://assignbuster.com/using-a-socially-conscious-song-from-either-the-caribbean/>

lasting methodological contribution of critical theory to social science is the way it attunes empirical social researchers to the assumptions underlying their own busy empiricism.

As Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) indicate in 'Dialectic of Enlightenment,' the seeming avoidance of values is the strongest value commitment of all, exempting one's empirical claims from rigorous self-reflection and self-criticism. It is in this sense that the Frankfurt School's analysis of mythology and ideology can be applied to a positivist social science that purports to transcend myth and value but, in its own methodological obsessions, is mythological to the very core. (Agger, 1991, p. 111.)

Therefore leading from this point, I used critical theory in this paper to show the criticism of the different schools that the theory disagreed with, also by choosing a socially conscious song I was able to demonstrate this from a societal stand point, illuminating the discontent and mistrust that persons in society feel towards certain social institutions and conditions that they face. I believe that these types of songs do have a positive and a negative effect on the wider society but I support their attempts to be heard.

Also, conclusively yes these protest songs may reinforce this said 'social order' but it is my belief that it will provide more help to eradicate the problem rather than encourage it. BIBLIOGRAPHY * Adorno et al. (2002) Dialectic of Enlightenment. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford University Press. * Agger, B. (1991). Annual Review of Sociology. JStor. Vol. 17. Pp. 105-131. * Frank, K. L. (1944). What is Social Order?. American Journal of Sociology. Vol 49 (5). Pp. 470-477. * Held, D (1980). Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas.
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Attached is a copy of the lyrics of Buju Banton's song " Untold Stories," which was used in this paper; " UNTOLD STORIES" - Buju Banton While I'm living Thanks I'll be giving To the most high, you know I am living while I'm living to the father I will pray Only he knows how we get through every day With all the hike in the price, arm and leg we have to pay While our leaders play All I see is people ripping and robbing and grabbing Thief never love to see a thief with a long bag No love for the people who are suffering real bad Another toll to the poll may God help we soul

What is to stop the youths from getting out of control Filled up with education yet don't own a payroll The clothes on my back has countless eye holes Could go on and on and full has never been told I am living while I'm living to the father I will pray Only he knows how we get through every day With all the hike in the price, arm and leg we have to pay While our leaders play I say who can afford to run will run But what about those who can't, they will have to stay Opportunity is a scarce commodity In these times I say, when mama spend her last to send you to class Never you ever play

It's a competitive world for low budget people Spending a dime while earning a nickel With no regards for who it may tickle My cup is full to the brim I could go on and on and full has never been told Through this life keep getting me down Don't give up now Got to survive some way some how I could go on and on and full has never been told I am living while I'm living to the father I will pray Only he knows how we get through every day With all the hike in the price, arm and leg we have to pay While our leaders play All I see is people ripping and robbing and grabbing

Thief never love to see a thief with a long bag No love for the people who are suffering real bad Another toll to the poll may God help we soul What is to stop the youths from getting out of control Filled up with education yet don't own a payroll The clothes on my back has countless eye holes Could go on and on and full has never been told I am living while I'm living to the father I will pray Only he knows how we get through every day With all the hike in the price, arm and leg we have to pay While our leaders play I say who can afford to run will run

But what about those who can't, they will have to stay Opportunity is a scarce commodity In these times I say, when mama spend her last to send you to class Never you ever play It's a competitive world for low budget people Spending a dime while earning a nickel With no regards for who it may tickle My cup is full to the brim I could go on and on and full has never been told Could go on and on and full has never been told Could go on and on and full has never been told Could go on and on and full has never been told