Twitter Thread by Abayorr Mi



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20 Facts you may not know about the Legendary Fela Anikulapo-Kuti.

A THREAD.

1. Fela was influenced by the teaching of American human rights activist Malcom X.

2. His political consciousness inspired him to change what he called his “slave name” Ransome and adopted the middle name “Anikulapo,” meaning “to have control over death,” in the late 1960s .

3. Once he had recorded a song, he never played it live again. He had reportedly been offered several thousands to perform his old hits, which he refused.

4. His mother, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti was an activist in the anti-colonial movt. She influenced her son’s political activism

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5. In 1977, Fela and the Afrika ’70 released the album Zombie, a scathing attack on Nigerian soldiers using the zombie metaphor to describe the methods of the Nigerian military. The album was a smash hit and infuriated the government,

setting off a vicious attack against the Kalakuta Republic, during which one thousand soldiers attacked the commune. Fela was severely beaten, and his elderly mother (whose house was located opposite the commune) was thrown from a window, causing fatal injuries.

6. Fela’s response to the attack was to deliver his mother’s coffin to the Dodan Barracks in Lagos, General Olusegun Obasanjo’s residence, and to write two songs, “Coffin for Head of State” and “Unknown Soldier”.

7. Fela started with only one female dancer, Dele who danced solo for the band for many years.

8. In 1979, he formed his own political party – MOP (Movement of the People). He also ran for president of Nigeria twice.

9. In 2008, an off-Broadway production of Kuti's life titled "Fela!" was produced. It was inspired by Carlos Moore's 1982 book "Fela, Fela! This B*tch of a Life".

10. On Nov. 22, 2009, Fela! began a run on Broadway at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre in New York City. Jim Lewis helped

co-write the play (along with director/choreographer Bill T. Jones), and obtained producer backing from rapper JAY-Z and actor, rapper Will Smith, among others.

11. The Broadway production received 11 2010 Tony Award nominations and won Best Choreography, Best Costume Design

of a Musical and Best Sound Design of a Musical.

12. He was arrested 200 times and endured numerous beatings, but continued to write political lyrics, producing albums before he died on August 2, 1997, in Lagos.

13. In 1978, Fela married 27 women in a single wedding ceremony. He would eventually divorce them all. He was briefly listed in the Guinness book of records for the most number of women married at one ceremony- 27, in 1978

14. Kuti fell in love with the growing Black Power movement happening in the United States in the 1960s. He was introduced to the Black Panthers while on tour in America in 1969.

15. In June 1984, a documentary film entitled "Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense" based on Fela's

political life was broadcast to a British audience by the BBC.

16. In March 1980, Fela accepted a police invitation to serve as a member of the Police Public Relations Committee.

17. A million people marched with Fela's Coffin on its final journey to burial in his house.

18.He was given a brand new Mercedes Benz 280 Limo by his Record company, which he reputedly used regularly in loading up filthy firewood/charcoal used in cooking to feed the masses

in his self-styled Republic.

19. In 1984, Muhammadu Buhari's government, of which Kuti was a vocal opponent, jailed him on a charge of currency smuggling which Amnesty International and others denounced as politically motivated.

20. In 1989, Fela and Egypt '80 released the anti-apartheid "Beasts of No Nation" that depicts on its cover U.S. President Ronald Reagan, UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and South African State President Pieter Willem Botha.

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