

THE BLACK ATLANTIC AND ANTI-RACIST PHILOSOPHY IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN MUSIC VIDEOS: EXPLORING THE RECURRING THEMES

Sela Kodjo Adjei, PhD

Department of Multimedia and Design

University of Media, Arts and Communication, Film and Television Institute,
Cantonments

This paper advances a theoretically grounded analysis of contemporary African music videos as sites where Pan-African philosophy and Black Atlantic cultural formations converge to produce an anti-racist visual epistemology. Drawing on Paul Gilroy's conception of the Black Atlantic as a transnational, hybrid, and interconnected cultural formation, the study interprets selected music videos as dynamic media through which histories of slavery, colonialism, and racial violence are revisited and reactivated as living, circulating memory. These audiovisual texts mobilize what may be termed a sonic-visual Pan-Africanism, linking continental Africa with diasporic spaces across the Americas, the Caribbean, and Europe.

The presentation material demonstrates how musicians like Protoje, H.E.R., Jah Cure, Damien Marley and Tarrus Riley juxtapose historical figures (e.g., Malcolm X, Kwame Nkrumah, Marcus Garvey) and key events (e.g., police brutality, systemic racism and anti-colonial struggles) with contemporary imagery, thereby collapsing temporal boundaries and enacting a continuous Black historical consciousness. This aligns with Pan-African philosophical traditions—from Garvey's transnational racial solidarity to Nkrumah's United Africa political praxis—which conceptualize Black identity as collectively constituted across space and time. Music, in this context, functions as a mediating technology of diasporic connectivity: a performative archive that encodes resistance, grief, racial solidarity and futurity. By circulating through globally accessible digital platforms, music videos operate within what Gilroy identifies as transoceanic circuits of exchange, transforming localized struggles into globally legible critiques of neo-slavery, racial capitalism and coloniality.

Ultimately, the paper argues that contemporary African music videos instantiate a form of anti-racist philosophy in motion—one that refuses national containment and instead articulates Black identity as a fluid, relational, and insurgent force. In doing so, they extend the Black Atlantic paradigm into the digital age, foregrounding music videos as a critical medium of transnational racial consciousness and decolonial imagination.