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March 28, 2025

From Fanon to Y'en a Marre:
Non-Violent Resistance and Political Transformation in Senegal

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Abstract
From Fanon to *Y'en a Marre*:

Non-Violent Resistance and Political Transformation in Senegal
By Marieme Fall

This essay analyzes the difference between Frantz Fanon's theory on violence in the context of anticolonial resistance and the *Y'en a Marre* movement in Senegal that stood for non-violent activism. *Y'en a Marre* was founded in 2011 amidst the wave of global social movements and inspired by the Arab Spring Protests. While Fanon argued that violence was necessary for decolonization, *Y'en a Marre* mobilized non-violent resistance to challenge political corruption and authoritarianism in Senegal. By using the social movement theory, newspaper articles, primary sources, and interviews by Professor Ndiaye, this paper explores how *Y'en a Marre* adapted Fanon's ideas into a postcolonial context by using music, civic engagement, and grassroots mobilization to empower citizens. It then highlights the role of women, particularly Denise Safiatou Sow and Maimouna Ndiaye, in reshaping gender norms within the movement. By putting *Y'en a Marre* within Senegal's political history from the pre-colonial era to the present, this analysis illustrates how the group's methods influenced other Francophone African movements such as *Balai Citoyen* in Burkina Faso and *Filimbi* in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Finally, the essay argues that *Y'en a Marre*'s rejection of violence represents a strategic evolution of Fanonian theory and demonstrates how anticolonial legacies continue to shape contemporary African politics.

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	6
Chapter 1: Genesis of the Political System in Senegal.....	11
Chapter 2: Fanonian Theory and the <i>Y'en a Marre</i> Movement.....	29
Chapter 3: Gender and Social Activism.....	43
Conclusion.....	54
Bibliography.....	56

Introduction

This thesis focuses on the Senegalese social movement *Y'en a Marre* meaning “we’re fed up” or “enough is enough”. I analyze *Y'en a Marre* as a contemporary example of non-violent activism that has fundamentally impacted civic engagement and resistance politics in both Senegal and throughout much of Africa since January 2011. The thesis also puts *Y'en a Marre* in conversation with Frantz Fanon, a French psychiatrist and political philosopher who theorized that violence is a necessary tool for freedom and anti-colonial resistance. This will allow for an evaluation of Fanon’s legacy in contemporary movements in Africa, as well as highlighting the success of *Y'en a Marre* in leading democratic activism and justice-seeking to foster political change in post-colonial Africa.

Frantz Fanon’s work became a foundation of post-colonial theory by providing insight into the psychological and violent nature of colonialism. His two most influential works, *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks* discuss the use of violence as the primary way to dismantle colonial systems and oppression ¹. Fanon viewed violence as a tool for resistance by the colonized to be able to reclaim the power that colonialism stripped (or limited) from their communities ². Though his theories were more specific to the Algerian Revolution in the 1950s, his ideas became prominent in liberation movements across Africa and throughout the developing world this will be explored further in Chapter 2 ³. Many African countries are plagued with political instability, corruption, neocolonialism, and weak governance. I see these as deeply rooted in the lasting effects of colonialism. For instance, in the Democratic Republic of

¹ James Watson, “The Wretched of the Earth and Black Skin, White Masks: A Sociological Analysis Social Control, Social Order and Social Change in the Colonial Context,” *Sociological Imagination: Western’s Undergraduate Sociology Student Journal* 2, no. 2 (May 4, 2013),

<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/si/vol2/iss2/3>, <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/si/vol2/iss2/3>, pg. 2

² Franz Fanon, *Wretched of The Earth* (Grove Press, 1961), pg .99

³ Haakon Chevalier, trans., “This Is the Voice of Algeria,” 1965. pg. 15

Congo, there was an emergence of exploitation in the economic structures during colonialism. This along with the assassination of Patrice Lumumba led to decades of authoritarianism and resource-driven conflict ⁴. Similarly, in Nigeria, there were divisive conflicts specifically between muslim and christian ethnic groups during the colonial era during the British colonial policy of indirect rule. This contributed to persistent regional tensions and corruption within the political elite ⁵. There is a presence of foreign corporations in extractive industries across the continent. China's role in the DRC has grown significantly, with Chinese companies dominating mineral extraction and supply chains ⁶. This along with France's continuing economic influence in its former West African colonies, shows how neocolonialism continues to shape governance and economic policies. Neocolonialism is defined as a nation indirectly controlling another independent nation through political, economical, or cultural pressures. These challenges are not just residual effects of colonialism but define the struggles of the post-colonial era, where newly independent states have had to navigate external pressures while attempting to build stable political systems. *Y'en a Marre* offers an alternative approach to resistance and liberation that differs from Fanon's theory on violence by incorporating many non-violent approaches such as spreading messages through artistic mediums like music, poetry, and art as well as incorporating different digital media to mobilize citizens.

The movement also reflects Senegalese cultural value of *Teranga*, which roughly means hospitality but it is so much more by accompanying community, sharing, respect, and solidarity

⁴ Sara Lowes and Eduardo Montero, "Lasting Effects of Colonial-Era Resource Exploitation in Congo: Concessions, Violence, and Indirect Rule," VoxDev, November 1, 2021, <https://voxdev.org/lasting-effects-colonial-era-resource-exploitation-congo>.

⁵ Moses Ochonu, "The Roots of Nigeria's Religious and Ethnic Conflict," The World from PRX, July 30, 2016, <https://theworld.org/stories/2016/07/30/roots-nigerias-religious-and-ethnic-conflict>

⁶ Patrick Anderson, "Cobalt and Corruption: The Influence of Multinational Firms and Foreign States on the Democratic Republic of the Congo," *Journal for Global Business and Community* 14, no. 1 (March 1, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.56020/001c.72664>. pg.1

⁷. These principles are evident in the movement's emphasis on inclusivity and collaboration. This will be further explored in Chapter 2, when going over the “10 commandments” of *Y'en A Marre*.

Senegal's rich history helps contextualize the political and social conditions that aided in the emergence of *Y'en a Marre*. Before French colonial rule, Senegal was ruled by powerful kingdoms like the most commonly known Jolof Empire, which was an important political and trade power in West Africa from the 12th century until 1549 ⁸. The French had been active in West Africa and engaged early in the slave trade; which will further be explained in chapter one. Colonial rule did not begin until 1659 when Saint-Louis was established on the coast of modern Senegal. The colony ended up being a major trading hub for the transatlantic slave trade with Gorée Island being the principal post. Saint-Louis, Gorée Island, and now the capital, Dakar, ended up being the symbols of resistance ⁹.

After obtaining independence in 1960, Senegal was a stellar model of political stability with successors following the footsteps of the first president, Léopold Senghor who was a founder of the négritude movement. However, there were hidden and underlying issues with corruption, inequality, and voter suppression, as we will discuss in chapter one. During Abdoulaye Wade's presidency from 2002-2012, public discontent began when promising new ideas and developmental projects inspired hope but quickly became false when issues of economic mismanagement and nepotism occurred in the government. The political and economic

⁷ Beetle Holloway, “Senegalese Spirit: Discovering The Meaning Of Teranga,” Culture Trip, August 26, 2019, <https://theculturetrip.com/africa/senegal/articles/why-senegal-is-the-country-of-teranga>.

⁸ Ikehukwu, “Exploring the History of the Jolof/Wolof Empire: A Fascinating Historical Overview - Pan African Central Core,” March 15, 2024, <https://panafrocore.com/2024/03/15/exploring-the-history-of-the-jolof-wolof-empire-a-fascinating-historical-overview/>

⁹ Andrew Clark and Camille Camara, “Senegal - Colonialism, Independence, Culture | Britannica,” March 25, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Senegal/History#ref516939>.

crises at the time inspired the *Y'en a Marre* movement and motivated citizens to stand up for change.

Y'en a Marre was founded in 2011 by a group of Senegalese rappers and journalists and emerged from the collective frustration with President Abdoulaye Wade's government. The movement aimed to educate the Senegalese youth on their power and agency. It tried to show them how they have the ability to make serious impact and changes to their lives by standing up to this government. The movement wanted to channel frustration into activism and promoted voter education and civic engagement. Inspired by Pan-Africanism and the Arab Spring Movements, *Y'en a Marre* was able to gather a generation of Senegalese youth to reclaim their voices¹⁰.

By focusing attention on non-violence and grassroots organization, *Y'en a Marre* continues to be an example of democratic activism in contemporary Africa. *Y'en a Marre* was also able to maintain a longstanding legacy in regards to fostering and inspiring a larger community of social movements to arise across the continent. Specifically amongst other francophone movements such as *Balai Citoyen* in Burkina Faso and *Filimbi* in the Democratic Republic of Congo¹¹.

This thesis will include a total of three chapters. Chapter One examines the structure of the political system in Senegal by drawing on various interviews, news articles, and sources that explain how the movement mobilized citizens and was able to sustain its impact. It also explores how the movement was able to inspire other movements across Francophone Africa. The second chapter will explore the connection between *Y'en a Marre* and Fanon by comparing their differing approaches to resistance and theorizing how Fanon's ideas can be applied to

¹⁰ Bamba Ndiaye, 2023.

¹¹ Bamba Ndiaye, 2023

contemporary situations. This chapter displays how *Y'en a Marre's* success is a model of how non-violent protests can be effective and can dismantle the legacies of colonialism and democratic misgovernance.

Finally, chapter three focuses on the role of women in *Y'en a Marre* with a particular focus on two members, Denise Sow and Maimouna Ndiaye, who were able to challenge gender norms. By using interviews and their firsthand accounts, this chapter will explore how women's leadership impacted the movement and impacted it. This thesis will contribute to a better understanding of resistance, democracy, and the ongoing struggle for justice in post-colonial Africa. Examining *Y'en a Marre* through a historical and theoretical lens demonstrates the transformative power of grassroots movements and the importance of citizens in shaping the continent's future.

Literature Review

On Senegalese Political Systems

The literature on the topic reveals how the political history of Senegal from pre-colonial to post-colonial reveals the evolution of governance structures that were shaped by ancient indigenous traditions, colonial rule, and post-independence reforms. pre-colonial Senegal featured powerful kingdoms, and was known for elaborate and complex trade networks. In the book *Sengambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade* by Boubacar Barry, he provides a detailed and intricate analysis of the history of Senegal prior to colonialism (1998). This along with website article from Mark Cartwright on the *Wolof Empire* (2019) and multiple articles by different authors from Britannica on the history of provided explanation on the succession of these kingdoms which were later disrupted by French colonial policies that introduced direct rule and a centralized administrative system. The article by Hilary Jones titled *Rethinking Politics in the Colony: The Métis of Senegal and Urban Politics in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century* (2013) discusses the shift to colonial life in Senegal with arguments on how the Senegalese were able to matriculate with the French while being subject to colonial rule. She discusses the immersion of Senegalese figures like Blaise Diagne and Léopold Senghor gaining political positions within the French government to represent Senegal.

As for post-colonial life after gaining independence, Senegal navigated a political landscape marked by early one-party dominance. The article *Negritude and Its Contribution to the Civilization of the Universal: Leopold Senghor and the Question of Ultimate Reality and Meaning* by Olusegun Gbadegesin (1991) discusse Léopold Senghor's contributions to the literary world as well as to the Senegalese state as the first president of the nation. Again through using comprehensive histories from authors like Andrew Clark, Camille Camara, John D.

Hargreaves, and Nancy Ellen Lawler (1999) from Brittancia we are able to see the different presidential regimes gradual transition to a multiparty democratic system. These historical shifts, along with economic, social, and geopolitical factors have laid the foundation for the country's current political climate.

On *Y'en a Marre*

When discussing the *Y'en a Marre* movement, the website article *Keur Gi* from the Kennedy Center (2025) was the most comprehensive account of the hip-hop group and how they originated and eventually became activists through their music. They eventually joined on with other artists and journalists to form the movement *Y'en a Marre*. Interviews conducted by Dr. Bamba Ndiaye as well as his dissertation titled *Contemporary francophone west African social movements in the rise of neo pan-africanism: a case study of y en a marre in Senegal* (2020), provided a lot of firsthand accounts and information from the original founding members. The dissertation provided niche information such as the full written list of the “10 commandments” of the movement, The interview with Denise Safiatou Sow (2023) allowed for information on how the movement began and what the primary goals of the movement were. Sarah Nelson's interview article titled *The New Type of Senegalese under Construction: Fadel Barro and Aliou Sané on Yenamarrisme after Wade* (2014) featured two founding members Fadel Barro and Aliou Sané which again provided important context from a firsthand source.

One the primary pieces of literature that has been analyzed throughout this thesis is Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Other literature pieces such as *the Political Spontenity and Sengalese New Social Movements, Y'en A Marre and M23: A Re-Reading of Frantz Fanon “The Wretch of the Earth”* by Babacar Faye (2012) and *Frantz Fanon and the*

Ethical Justification of Anti-Colonial Violence by Oladipo Fashina (1989) provide an analysis of how African social movements intertwine with Fanon and showcase how some of their methodology incorporated his ideas.

In regards to the success of *Y'en a Marre*, the articles *Y'en a Marre – music and mobilization in Senegal* by Ethan Zuckerman (2013), *New Social Movement Theories* by Steven Buechler (1995), *The Time of Youth: Work, Social Change, and Politics in Africa* by Alcinda Honwana (2012) showcase the different methods that allowed the movement to successfully engage and appeal to the community and citizens, specifically the Senegalese youth. Also analyzing website articles from Al Jazeera (2020) that explained the Arab Spring protests allowed for context to better analyze how those protests inspired *Y'en a Marre* and showcased the similarities between the issues in those countries compared to the ones occurring in Senegal and catalysts to what made the movements begin.

On Youth Movements and Activism in Africa

The literature on this section is similar to the one on the last except here I was able to incorporate additional information from other people interviewed by Dr. Ndiaye. Interviews from Ali Thiam, creator of *Geum Sa Bopp* a social movement that was inspired and mentored by *Y'en a Marre*; Zachary Mampilly, scholar of political science and African studies who spoke about the impact of social movements on the continent; and Dongui Gidougou Kenyan activist who discussed the issues in Kenya and how social movements are impacting the continent. All three of these interviews featured them discussing the importance of the UPEC summit, a convention of african activists across multiple social movement, which will be explored further in Chapter 1. They discuss how impactful social movements are and how conventions and even digital platforms such as Afrikki, a database of resources from each movement, have better strengthened

pan-Africanism with the common goal of impact and change. Websites describing other social movements like Ras Le Bol helped to compare the similarity in movements across French West Africa, which can be attributed to *Y'en a Marre* as the pioneers of this idea.

On Women in Social Movements

The literature on this topic showcases the way women have continuously been involved in social activism however, they have been overshadowed by their male counterparts. In the article *Women in Movement: Transformations in African Political Landscapes* by Aili Tripp, it explores the difference in the way women's representation in politics, governmental systems, and social activism have increased and gradually has become more accessible through the implementation of multiple factors like increased education, social media, and the rise of multipartyism. In the article titled *Adolescent and adult reasoning about gender roles and fairness in Benin, West Africa* by Clair Conry-Murray (2009), it showcases how the gender roles and traditionalism still remain prevalent on continent and though there are progressions being made, it is happening at a slower pace than the rest of the world due to longstanding engrained ways of viewing gender expectations.

The interview conducted with Denise Safiatou Sow comes back prominently in this section as well. Being that Denise was the only woman as a founding member, her role, impact, and story is very prevalent in chapter 3 as it is analyzed as a first hand account of that experience. The "10 commandments" of *Y'en a Marre* are also again analyzed here except it is now in the context of women's representation and how they differ from traditional gender roles.

Other movements are also analyzed with the use of articles like *Women organising in fragility and conflict: lessons from the #BringBackOurGirls movement, Nigeria* by Martin Atela

(2021), *Investigating the Political Participation of Women in the Algerian and Iran Revolution* by Zahra Siyahsar et al. (2023), and *From Yewwu Yewwi to #FreeSenegal: Class, Gender and Generational Dynamics of Radical Feminist Activism in Senegal* by Rama Dieng (2023). These provide examples and other contexts in which women had prevalent but unrecognized roles in social movements.

Chapter 1: Genesis of the Political System in Senegal

Introduction

The *Y'en a Marre* (Fed up/ Enough is Enough) is a grassroots movement that originated in Dakar, Senegal in January 2011. A group of well known rappers and journalists came together to form an organization that would encourage Senegalese youth to vote against and speak out on governmental injustices and inequalities ¹². They were able to hold protests and demonstrations in the capital. What first began as a reaction to the ongoing issues of the nation quickly turned into an influential and structured movement. It demonstrated the power of civic engagement and youth activism in changing the Senegalese democratic landscape. The founding members were able to use their platforms as media personalities in order to reach communities, gain supporters, and spread the goals of the movement. This movement ended up being the catalyst for many other movements across Francophone Africa which will be further explained in this chapter.

The rise of this movement was a product of Senegal's political landscape and specifically was rooted in pre-colonial government structures as well as the post-colonial structures. The country began with centralized ruling with pre-colonial kingdoms, followed by French colonial rule and post-independence rule with both one-party and multi-party systems. This ultimately all contributed to the current state of the country today, which is why *Y'en a Marre* surfaced. Specifically, the economic and political state of the country under Abdoulaye Wade and his controversial attempts to lengthen his term created the climate for a social protest movement to emerge.

¹² “Y’en a Marre: Youth and Social Engagement in Senegal,” National Endowment For Democracy, January 30, 2014, <https://www.ned.org/events/yen-a-marre-youth-and-social-engagement-in-senegal/>.

This chapter will investigate the historical and political conditions that led to the emergence of *Y'en a Marre* and provide a foundation for understanding its role in contemporary activism in Senegal and throughout Africa. The first section will examine Senegal's political evolution from pre-colonial kingdoms, the impact of French colonialism, and the post-independence structure led by the Senegalese socialist party. Next, it will discuss the crises that occurred during Abdoulaye Wade's presidency and the influence that *Y'en a Marre* had on the continent.

II. The Political Evolution of Senegal: From Pre-Colonial Kingdoms to Post-Colonial Politics

A. Pre-Colonial Senegal

Senegal had a rich history of governance before European intervention. The powerful kingdoms such as the Jolof, which split into multiple Wolof states in the 16th century like the Cayor, Baol, Walou, and many more shaped the government and social structures¹³. The kingdoms were characterized by having a centralized political authority, they had complex social hierarchies, and strong trade networks. The trans-Saharan and Atlantic trade routes played an important role in the economic prosperity of these states and also fostered interactions and connections with North African and European merchants¹⁴. It was not until Portuguese navigators reached Cape Verde, a neighbor of Senegal, in 1444 that European influence emerged. This began with their being established trading factories in Rufisque and Gorée island in the coast which gradually disrupted the traditional governance structures in place¹⁵.

¹³ "History of Senegal from Prehistory to Independence," Bou El Mogdad, accessed March 25, 2025, <https://www.bouelmogdad.com/en/history/>

¹⁴ Hilary Jones, "Rethinking Politics In the Colony: The Metis of Senegal and Urban Politics In the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century," *The Journal of African History* 53, no. 3 (January 2013): 325–44, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853712000473> pg. 326

¹⁵ Andrew Clark and John D. Hargreaves, "Senegal - Colonialism, Independence, Culture | Britannica," March 25, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Senegal/History>

The Kingdom of Jolof has been the most well-known with the Wolof people being said to be the most powerful tribe south of the Senegal river. It was founded in the 13th century by Ndiadiane Ndiaye and is considered to be one of the earliest major kingdoms in West Africa. It prospered primarily through trade with major resources being cotton, indigo, salt, ivory, and most importantly gold. It was not until the introduction of merchants like the Portuguese and the French that enslaved people began to be traded. The Jolof Empire was a major contributor to the slave trade with one-third of Africans before 1600 coming from them. It was not until the 17th century that they became a bridge for enslaved Africans in Central Africa ¹⁶.

The Jolof empire also had a hierarchical governance system with one central ruler called Burba, meaning King. They had significant authority but also had to maintain alliances with lower-ranking rulers. They also had to communicate with kings of neighboring kingdoms like the Mali Empire and the Songhai Empire ¹⁷. Similarly, the Kingdom of Cayor was known for having strong resistance to external powers and maintaining a distinct governance structure, it conquered Baol and ruled until the 17th century, when the inhabitants of Cayor fled back to Baol and remained strong until the French took over their territory in the mid 19th century ¹⁸.

The kingdom of Waalo, on the other hand, was a matrilineal society where women played crucial roles in governance. The political system of Waalo allowed for female rulers known as

¹⁶ Mark Cartwright, "Wolof Empire," World History Encyclopedia, accessed March 25, 2025, https://www.worldhistory.org/Wolof_Empire/.

¹⁷ Rebecca Schnabel, "Three of the World's Most Influential Empires: Ghana, Mali, and Songhai," America's Black Holocaust Museum, August 17, 2020, <https://www.abhmuseum.org/three-of-the-worlds-most-influential-empires-wagadu-mali-and-songhai/>

¹⁸ "Baol | Empire, Senegal & Gambia | Britannica," accessed March 25, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Baol-historical-state-Africa>.

“Linger,” highlighting the diverse governance models present in pre-colonial Senegal ¹⁹ . These political structures facilitated organized leadership but also made the region susceptible to European manipulation, particularly in the context of the transatlantic slave trade and later colonial incursions.

B. French Colonial Rule (1650–1960)

The 1650s saw the beginning of French colonial rule in Senegal. A new French factory most known to be a high-traffic trading post was instituted in Saint-Louis in 1659 and marked the start of colonial expansion ²⁰. In 1677, Gorée Island was taken by the French from the Dutch. Saint Louis and Gorée became a hub for trade with items such as enslaved people, gold, and gum. In 1816, Senegal had by this point gone through two rounds of British occupation. The first was occupancy in 1693 and again during the Seven Years' War in 1758 with the British having Senegambia to themselves. However, it wasn't until the American Revolutionary War, the French took Senegal back and Gambia was restored to the British ²¹. During the third French Republic, the French began to recognize members of places like Dakar, Gorée Island, and Rufisque to be French citizens. The policies by the French essentially assimilated the Senegalese elite by granting representation. Blaise Diagne, known as a political leader and mayor of Dakar, was sent over to represent Senegal in the French parliament ²². He also was sent by African electors to be their deputy to the National Assembly in Paris ²³.

¹⁹ Hilary Jones, “Rethinking Politics In the Colony: The Metis of Senegal and Urban Politics In the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century,” *The Journal of African History* 53, no. 3 (January 2013): 325–44, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853712000473>. pg.343

²⁰ Andrew Clark and John D. Hargreaves, “Senegal - Colonialism, Independence, Culture | Britannica,” March 25, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Senegal/History>.

²¹ “Senegal Colony,” accessed March 25, 2025, <https://www.britishempire.co.uk/maproom/senegal.htm>

²² Hilary Jones, “Rethinking Politics In the Colony: The Metis of Senegal and Urban Politics In the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century,” *The Journal of African History* 53, no. 3 (January 2013): 325–44, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853712000473>. Pg. 342

²³ Andrew Clark and John D. Hargreaves, “Senegal - Colonialism, Independence, Culture | Britannica,” March 25, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Senegal/History>.

Léopold Senghor who would later become the first president of the nation was an important pillar in Senegalese political history. As one of the founders of the Négritude movement along with Aimé Césaire, he sought to speak out against colonialism and to promote African culture instead of assimilation. While critiquing the wrongdoings of France, he was also in cooperation with them and stated that though newly independent countries are not at the same success and scale as France, with their help and cooperation that will one day be attained. Therefore, he urged to have a tight partnership and insisted on the gradualist approach ²⁴.

In 1959, Léopold Senghor asked then-French president Charles De Gaulle for Senegal's independence. It was granted shortly and Senegal finally gained independence on August 20th, 1960 in which they broke away from the Mali federation ²⁵²⁶. After five presidents, Senegal is known to be a model of peaceful democratic transition and stability

C. Post-Independence Political Developments (1960–2000)

Léopold Senghor's presidency provided for an approach to African socialism. Here, he brought a stable economy and was favored by France for his leadership ²⁷. However, There were increasing political tensions with there being nationalist movements across the continent. Senegal became an epicenter at a certain point with demonstrations beginning in the later colonial era. In May 1969 Dakar University students went on strike and resisted the impending

²⁴ Olusegun Gbadegesin, "Negritude and Its Contribution to the Civilization of the Universal: Leopold Senghor and the Question of Ultimate Reality and Meaning," *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 14, no. 1 (March 1991): 30–45, <https://doi.org/10.3138/uram.14.1.30>. Pg. 43

²⁵ "Léopold Senghor | Senegal's 1st President & Poet Laureate | Britannica," accessed March 25, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Leopold-Senghor>.

²⁶ "History of Senegal from Prehistory to Independence," Bou El Mogdad, accessed March 25, 2025, <https://www.bouelmogdad.com/en/history/>.

²⁷ Anna Micklin, "Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906-2001)," BlackPast.org, June 14, 2008, <https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/senghor-leopold-sedar-1906-2001/>.

scholarship fees. This movement ended up reaching multiple different people including high school students and even workers' unions; ultimately becoming a defining moment in Senegal's political history. Though it had a primary objective the movement ended up being about more than that like the condemning of neocolonialism ²⁸. The protest led to satisfactory reforms and ended after a four month period. The colonial era saw increasing resistance which laid the groundwork for later social movements like *Y'en a Marre*.

After 20 years of rule, the presidency was handed to Abdou Diouf. He led the Socialist Party (PS) and upheld the alliances that Senghor had made during his time as president. During Diouf's presidency, he strived to ensure that there would be cooperation with other African countries and was very involved in organizations such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS), the Islamic Conference, and the G-15 nations ²⁹. The one-party system ensured that in the 1988 elections, Diouf won easily which sent chaos into the country. He declared a state of emergency due to ongoing protests and civil unrest from Senegalese citizens in support of the new Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS), led by Abdoulaye Wade. Thousands of students stormed the streets, threw stones, and committed arson which led to many arrests from citizens frustrated due to suspicions of voter fraud ³⁰. There was general dissatisfaction and it was difficult for Diouf to meet the expectations for economic adjustment while trying to maintain the social and ethnic pressures caused by falling export values, rising cost of living, and increasing unemployment rates. The country was also in economic decline alongside border tensions in Mauritania. There

²⁸ Omar Gueye, "May 1968 in Africa: Revolt in Dakar," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.1060>.

²⁹ "Abdou Diouf | Socialist Leader, African Union, Peaceful Transition | Britannica," February 27, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Abdou-Diouf>.

³⁰ Sidy Gaye, "State of Emergency Declared to Quell Senegal Election Protests - UPI Archives," March 1, 1988, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1988/03/01/State-of-emergency-declared-to-quell-Senegal-election-protests/5709573195600/>.

were periodic droughts and inflation³¹. It wasn't until March 2000 that Abdoulaye Wade finally won the election peacefully and fairly which marked the end of the 40-year rule of the Socialist Party.

III. The Rise of Abdoulaye Wade and the Political-Economic Crisis (2000–2011)

Wade's campaign had focused on democratic reform and he intended to bring wide change to the issues that persisted during the Diouf presidency. This allowed him to get a lot of public support³². His pro-democracy stance made him more connected to citizens and they felt he would make great changes, starting with changing the constitution to limit terms to go from 7 years to 5 years. He did this through the 2001 constitutional referendum and voters decided to put forth this change³³

However, as time went on in his presidency, citizens began to realize that there was a stark lack of progress which frustrated many. Things like improving the country's infrastructure were not prioritized like he promised and the cost of living continued to increase. It also seemed to be disrespectful when he commissioned the African Renaissance Monument. The purpose of the piece was to represent African unity and represented the African continent moving towards freedom, independence and pan-Africanism³⁴. It was done for Senegal's 50th independence anniversary, however, it was very out of touch being that it cost \$27 million to build, meanwhile, the majority of Senegalese were suffering. The debt is draining the cash-strapped Senegalese government because whatever revenue the government brings in, a large amount of it must go to

³¹ Andrew Clark and Camille Camara, "Senegal - Colonialism, Independence, Culture | Britannica," July 26, 1999, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Senegal/History#ref516939>.

³² Andrew Clark and John D. Hargreaves, "Senegal - Colonialism, Independence, Culture | Britannica," 1999, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Senegal/History>.

³³ Judy Scales-Trent, "Presidential Authority and the 2001 Constitution of Senegal" 34, no. 1 (2011) pg. 16

³⁴ Justin Wayne Ritter, "A National Symbol or a National Frustration: Academic, Artistic, and Political Perspectives of the African Renaissance Monument," 2011. pg. 8

paying off the country's debtors, leaving even less for the day to day operations of the government and further development of the country. To outsiders, it seemed like a giant waste of government funds, of which the government had very little of to waste ³⁵

Abdoulaye Wade began to lose support with the PDS around 2003 when even his prime minister Idrissa Seck challenged him. Wade began to enforce anti-opposition measures starting in 2004 and escalated for the next three years. Censorship became rampant in 2006 and 2007 when Wade's government shut down and persecuted independent media and NGOs that were attempting to hold the government accountable³⁶. Interestingly enough after he garnered support at the beginning of his presidency by lowering the term length to 5 years, he tried to reverse the decision back to 7 years in 2012. He also wanted to run for a third term which was not allowed in the constitution, which he instated, but justified it by saying his first term should not count. The country's constitutional council supported this statement which led to a plethora of protests.

Throughout his time in the presidency, Wade did a few things right by managing to increase the overall GDP by 5% and also increase foreign investments and energy demand. This led to a slight economic progress of the region³⁷. However, in 2007, there was a global economic crisis that caused oil prices to rise. Senegal had no crude oil production of their own so when global oil prices went up, it was unaffordable for ordinary civilians. In addition, there were widespread power outages due to economic mismanagement ³⁸. These power cuts were

³⁵ Justin Wayne Ritter, "A National Symbol or a National Frustration: Academic, Artistic, and Political Perspectives of the African Renaissance Monument," 2011. pg.5

³⁶ Horacio Larreguy and Shelley X. Liu, "When Does Education Increase Political Participation? Evidence from Senegal," *Political Science Research and Methods* 12, no. 2 (2023): 354–71, <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2023.37>. Pg. 355

³⁷ Cheikh Anta Babou, "Negotiating the Boundaries of Power: Abdoulaye Wade, the Muridiyya, and State Politics in Senegal, 2000–2012," *Journal of West African History* 2, no. 1 (2016): 165–88, <https://doi.org/10.14321/jwestafrihist.2.1.0165>. pg.165

³⁸ Awa Diouf and Bertrand Laporte, "Oil Contracts and Government Take: Issues for Senegal and Developing Countries," *The Journal of Energy and Development* 43, no. 1/2 (2017): 213–34. Pg. 215

detrimental to the population as local businesses were affected for long periods of time and unable to afford generators. There was a lack of accountability from the Wade administration. An energy sector executive said “There is only enough fuel to cover eight days of consumption in the country”³⁹. This made citizens incredibly frustrated and they spoke out against the lack of care and money mishandling that caused them to be in that situation. Ultimately, it seemed that Wade prioritized the things that would bring him wealth and revenue rather than investing back into things that would help the citizens and lower the poverty rate.

The late 2000s, thus became a politically charged time with the power outages being a key catalyst for public scrutiny and outrage. This became worse when in 2011 Wade decided to again amend the constitution and run for a third term⁴⁰. There was increasing media censorship, and the political repression seemed opposite to what Wade had initially stood for during his original candidacy. Nepotism and corruption seemed to dominate and citizens rejected this⁴¹.

However, at this time, there was no organized, grassroots movement that could unify the people and create the kind of clear structure and organization to overpower the oppressive government and invoke change. It was in this context that *Y'en a Marre* emerged.

IV. The Birth of Y'en a Marre and Its Influence on Social Movements

The movement was spearheaded by the hip-hop group “Keur-gi” meaning “the house” in Wolof. This hip-hop group consisted of three members named Kilifeu, Thiat, and Dj Gaff, all

³⁹ Diadie Ba, “Senegal Facing ‘Unprecedented’ Power Cuts- Sources,” *Reuters*, August 9, 2007, sec. Markets, <https://www.reuters.com/article/markets/senegal-facing-unprecedented-power-cuts-sources-idUSL17141538/>.

⁴⁰ Anja Osei, “Party-Voter Linkage in Senegal : The Rise and Fall of Abdoulaye Wade and the Parti Démocratique Sénégalais,” *Journal of African Elections* 12, no. 1 (June 2013): 84–108, <https://doi.org/10.10520/EJC140025>, pg.103

⁴¹ Nancy Ellen Lawler, “Abdoulaye Wade | Former President of Senegal & Political Leader | Britannica,” 2009, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Abdoulaye-Wade>.

from Kaolack, a region in Senegal. Kaolack is a distant rural area about 3 hours away from Dakar. The region is known to have prevalent issues such as malnutrition, vitamin deficiencies, and lack of disease control. These health issues, lack of resources, and lack of attention to the individuals living there inspired the desire to get government awareness ⁴². Their journey to activism began shortly after the start of their career. Their first song resulted in them being beaten due to them criticizing the mayor of their hometown, Kaolack, and their first album was censored immediately by the Senegalese socialist party. The group later became known all over Senegal for not being afraid to speak out against the government. Years later they began to win awards and gain recognition for their activism and even were nominated for the hip-hop awards in South Africa which garnered them recognition across the continent. In January 2011 they along with others became the founding members of *Y'en a Marre* ⁴³. The other members were journalists Fadel Barro, Aliou Sane, Amade Seck, and Denise Sow ⁴⁴.

Dr. Bamba Ndiaye had conducted a series of interviews with notable African scholars and founders of social movements which I worked to transcribe and translate. One of the first was one with Denise Safiatou Sow, also known as Sofia. She was a founding member of *Y'en a Marre*, and throughout her interview, she spoke about her experience and recounted the establishment of the group. She explains what it was like with all six of them in Fadel's apartment wanting to evoke real change after seeing how much the power outages affected the elders in more secluded villages. They brainstormed names for the movement and settled on *Y'en a Marre*. The movement emphasized the need for youth mobilization and called for civic

⁴² C Carlier et al., "Prevalence of Malnutrition and Vitamin A Deficiency in the Diourbel, Fatick, and Kaolack Regions of Senegal: Epidemiological Study," *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 53, no. 1 (January 1, 1991): 70–73, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcn/53.1.70>, pg.71

⁴³ "Keur-Gui | Kennedy Center," The Kennedy Center, accessed March 25, 2025, <https://www.kennedy-center.org/artists/k/ka-kn/-keur-gui/>.

⁴⁴ Bamba Ndiaye, 2023.

engagement. By utilizing music, art, and digital platforms they were able to advocate for real change ⁴⁵.

In an interview with Fadel Barro and Aliou Sane, Fadel explained that “many problems faced by the people of Senegal don’t just come from Abdoulaye Wade, they go beyond the politicians. It’s the whole system, and to change it, we have to take a look at ourselves. We have to examine our own behavior, and our habits with regard to the country and to public life. What is our share of the responsibility?...we said that change in Senegal will not come from a political leader... change will come from each Senegalese understanding that the problem of Senegal is his or her problem” ⁴⁶. The organizer hoped that *Y’en a Marre* would be a revolution of the Senegalese people to demonstrate their power and to be actively involved in decisions that affect them.

Y’en a Marre was able to mobilize at least 300,000 young voters which was very impressive being that the population was less than 13 million at the time ⁴⁷. The Social Movement Theory is a framework that seeks to understand how social movements develop with actions like collective action, civic engagement, and political engagement ⁴⁸. The Political Opportunity Theory states that political opportunities for change need to be present before a movement can successfully achieve its goals ⁴⁹. *Y’en a Marre* is an example of the applicability of this theory since they used the 2012 elections as their catalyst moment to begin the revolution.

⁴⁵ Damon Sajjani, “The African HipHop Movement: Y’en a Marre’s Political Model,” *Proceedings of the African Futures Conference* 1, no. 1 (2016): 2–3, <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2573-508X.2016.tb00005.x>, pg.2

⁴⁶ Sarah Nelson, “The New Type of Senegalese under Construction: Fadel Barro and Aliou Sané on Yenamarrisme after Wade” 14, no. 3 (2014). pg.14

⁴⁷ Ethan Zuckerman, “Y’en a Marre - Music and Mobilization in Senegal,” Ethan Zuckerman, April 15, 2013, <https://ethanzuckerman.com/2013/04/15/yen-a-marre-music-and-mobilization-in-senegal/>.

⁴⁸ Steven Buechler, “New Social Movement Theories - Buechler - 1995 - The Sociological Quarterly - Wiley Online Library,” June 1995, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1533-8525.1995.tb00447.x>, Pg.442

⁴⁹ Ashley Crossman, “What Makes a Social Movement Successful?,” ThoughtCo, February 13, 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/political-process-theory-3026451>.

They capitalized on the momentum they would gain from the public frustration, and they were able to push for democratic reform ⁵⁰.

The Resource Mobilization Theory was also one that was active throughout the agenda to spread the *Y'en a Marre* movement as well. This theory essentially states that the success of social movements relies on the resources available and how accessible it is to use them to spread a message that will invoke change ⁵¹. These theories help us analyze how *Y'en a Marre* was able to gain success and how *Y'en a Marre* was able to use artistic, digital, and social media resources to sustain their activism. Being that the members were artists, musicians, and journalists, their platforms were used in order to reach their own audiences and beyond. Denise also mentioned the use of graffiti art, posters, video clips, and rap music all done to advertise *Y'en a Marre*. Something else was also the fact that their objective was to reach more rural areas in order to provide political education for the unrepresented communities. Those areas were the ones that were most affected by the lack of resources, and power outages, and were ultimately neglected by the government. Also, due to their isolation, they were not taught or properly educated on their rights and the fact that there was something that they could do to express their frustrations. This led to them making campaigns there⁵²

In addition to artistic expression, *Y'en a Marre* was able to utilize social media platforms and mobile technology to amplify its message. It enabled the movement to foster nationwide engagement. These tools were also instrumental in spreading awareness beyond where the members physically were and even aided in the inclusion of those in the diaspora to be able to

⁵⁰ Alacinda M. Honwana, "The Time of Youth Work Social Change and Politics in Africa," 2012, https://www.rienner.com/title/The_Time_of_Youth_Work_Social_Change_and_Politics_in_Africa, pg.2

⁵¹ Ashley Crossman, "What Is the Resource Mobilization Theory?," ThoughtCo, February 28, 2020, <https://www.thoughtco.com/resource-mobilization-theory-3026523>.

⁵² Denise Safiatou Sow, 2023.

see and document what was going on. Social media campaigns allowed for real-time updates and mobile communications ensured accessibility. This was even more why it was important for there to be campaigns in remote regions so that those that did not have access to the real time updates were still able to keep up with the movement. To ensure no one was left behind, offline strategies were implemented, such as community gatherings and the distribution of printed materials, to reach those without consistent access to technology. These dual approaches reinforced *Y'en a Marre's* commitment to inclusivity and widespread participation

The rise of *Y'en a Marre* also coincided with the Arab Spring Protests that were occurring on the continent. They began in Tunisia when in December 2010, a man named Mohamed Bouazizi lit himself on fire as a form of protest. The act went viral and soon the entire country went into civil unrest and protests rose surrounding the high cost of living and the then president's corruptive and authoritarian role. After 10 days the president fled the country moving to Saudi Arabia⁵³. The world ended up seeing an example of a successful protest in which the citizens were able to mobilize and attain democratic justice against a corrupt leader. Due to this many other Arab countries followed. In Egypt, a new movement called "Mubarak Out!" began to remove President Hosni Mubarak from his 30-year rule. There were also other protests formed in Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. All of these movements gave a great example to how strong collective action can be and ultimately inspired *Y'en a Marre*⁵⁴. The year 2011 saw other movements around the world such as the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States and even the Anti-austerity movement in Spain. Overall, there were frustrations all around the world

⁵³ "What Is the Arab Spring, and How Did It Start? | Arab Spring: 10 Years on News | Al Jazeera," 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/17/what-is-the-arab-spring-and-how-did-it-start>.

⁵⁴ Alacinda M. Honwana, "The Time of Youth Work Social Change and Politics in Africa," 2012, https://www.riener.com/title/The_Time_of_Youth_Work_Social_Change_and_Politics_in_Africa. pg.2

about bad economic conditions and government failures which were themes that resonated with *Y'en a Marre* ⁵⁵

Y'en a Marre was the first major movement in Senegal to emerge in this period and with its success it was able to influence many other movements in Francophone West Africa. For instance, the Balai Citoyen, meaning the “citizens broom” in French was a social movement originating in Burkina Faso in 2013. The movement was called the citizens broom because to the international community most of the crimes and negative things occurring in Burkina Faso were swept away. The name is a metaphor to take back control of what is being swept away.

The movement started by rapper Serge Bambara and reggae artist Sams'K Le Jah, condemned the then president Blaise Compaore for a multitude of different things. In addition to having an almost 30-year presidential rule, the country had many other problems such as bad governance, poverty, lack of human rights, lack of freedom of speech, and economic crimes by politicians ⁵⁶.

Ras le Bol meaning “enough is enough” in French was another social movement that emerged in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2015. This movement was also started by a musician and activist named Martial Mbourangon and his partner another musician named Vhan Dombo worked together to start the movement. Similarly to all the other movements, this one aimed to provide awareness of the corrupt government and to make the voices of citizens heard

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⁵⁵ Alacinda M. Honwana, “The Time of Youth Work Social Change and Politics in Africa,” 2012, https://www.rienner.com/title/The_Time_of_Youth_Work_Social_Change_and_Politics_in_Africa. Pg. 10

⁵⁶ Marriane Saddier, “The Upright Citizens of Burkina Faso,” March 28, 2025, <https://africasacountry.com/2014/10/the-citizens-of-burkina-faso/>.

⁵⁷ “Ras-Le-Bol | One Young World,” 2025, <https://www.oneyoungworld.com/ambassador-projects/ras-le-bol>.

Another interview conducted focused on the story of Gambian rapper Ali Thiam, who goes by the stage name Killer Ace. He started a new movement called *Geum Sa Bopp* meaning believe in yourself in wolof. The movement began when he was forced into exile in 2016 for making a song against the regime of Yahya Jammeh who was the former president of the Gambia. The song expressed the issues with the governance as well as demanded changes for the the citizens. After releasing the song, he received threats and had to leave the country, however he realized the song received 30,000 plays in 24 hours which was very significant considering the countries population was only 1.8 million. This is when he realized his music could be used as a tool for social activism and to encourage young people. He says “I took a lot of guidance from *Y’en a Marre*...they guided me and showed me a lot of doors”⁵⁸

One thing most of these movements have in common is that the founders have background as musicians, particularly as rappers, like the members of *Y’en a Marre*. This seems to have been an important factor in their activism. Not only did their music give them a powerful way to connect with and mobilize young people, but usually artists in the rap genre are often associated with resistance and defiance. Therefore, it is not surprising that they had the boldness to speak out against the regime. Ali Thiam addresses this similarity by saying “n regards to using art as his platform, he says “one thing that activism and hip hop have in common is truth. Hip hop is uncompromisingly honest and unapologetic as well...So if that’s where it was born and it has been effective then basically we’re just continuing and giving due to the essence of the art which is using the music to speak and represent the people”⁵⁹.

⁵⁸ Ali Thiam, 2023.

⁵⁹ Ali Thiam, 2023.

Dongui Gidougou, a human rights activist from Kenya was also interviewed. Though he is not a rapper, he uses other art outlets like music, filmmaking, and poetry recitation. When asked why art is important in activism he says, “Africa is driven through art...I would say that art generally is a very important tool for our struggle because art is very easy to express, art is very easy for anybody to understand, art is entertaining at the same time. But in the meantime these messages in there that help to propel the message that we want to send to our people”⁶⁰. By utilizing these forms of expression, Gidougou believes that music is more personal and touches people in a different way than political discourse ever could by inspiring change through understanding.

V. The Role of Digital Activism and New Platforms

These organizations along with fifty other movements from thirty-three different countries were able to gather on July 23rd, 2018. On that day, the very first Université Populaire de L’Engagement Citoyen (Popular University for Civic Engagement) was hosted in Dakar, Senegal. This was a convention organized by *Y’en a Marre* that allowed for the union of all the different organizations that shared a common purpose which was to advocate for change. One of the leading members of the organization was Fadel Barro who was an original founder and member of the *Y’en a Marre* movement⁶¹.

A precursor gathering occurred two years before which was organized by *Y’en a Marre*. Activists were brought together from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte D’Ivoire, Congo

⁶⁰ Dongui Gidougou, 2023.

⁶¹ Bamba Ndiaye, 2023.

Brazzaville, Chad, DRC, the Gambia, Madagascar, and Senegal ⁶². At this gathering, activists were able to discuss and set up an online platform named “Afrikki” which allowed for a space for all social movements to provide information and encouraged Panafricanism. Panafricanism is defined as a movement to “create a sense of brotherhood and collaboration among all people of African descent whether they lived inside or outside of Africa” ⁶³. Conventions and gatherings such as the UPEC are very important for Panafricanism to prosper and for there to be developments in the issues that all of these movements are aiming to resolve.

Going back to the interview series, Dr. Ndiaye conducted an interview with Dr. Zachary Mampilly who is a scholar and professor of political science and Africana studies at Vassar College in New York. In his interview he discussed his thoughts on African social movements and pan-africanism. When asked about UPEC he says “ I think UPEC represents is a fundamental repudiation of such tribalistic and nationalistic...what I have seen and what I have explored in my research, are the ways in which these various social movements have rejected the logic of ethnicity as the basis for political mobilization...So we have Y’en a Marre in Senegal, which seems to unite Senegalese of all ethnicities into a common struggle. We see that with Lucha in Congo which seems to try and unite Congolese beyond the simple ethnic categories into a common movement. Across the continent we’ve seen very powerful movements emerging that have really done extraordinary work to reject the idea that the only basis for politics in Africa is the tribe...I fundamentally understand pan africanism as a humanist project and to me UPEC signifies an embrace of these types of earlier logics at the core of youth activism in Africa today.” ⁶⁴. His perspective shows how youth-led movements are shifting the political landscape

⁶² Bamba Ndiaye, 2023.

⁶³ “The Pan-African Movement – AHA,” <https://www.historians.org/>, May 1, 2004, <https://www.historians.org/resource/the-pan-african-movement/>.

⁶⁴ Zachariah Mampilly, 2023.

in Africa by embracing unity regardless of ethnicity. He frames pan-Africanism as a political ideology but also as a tool for fostering solidarity and collective action across nations. This challenges the narratives of ethnicity and nationalism that have long dominated African politics and opens new pathways for African youth to redefine political engagement in the 21st century.

VI. Conclusion

The formation of *Y'en a Marre* was driven by a combination of historical, political, and economic forces that resulted in the post-colonial state of Senegal. The decades of political stagnation, disenfranchisement, and economic stagnation under President Wade's administration created the conditions for a movement that demanded there to be systemic change. Even though the movement is more specific to the context of Senegal, *Y'en a Marre* aligns with the trends of contemporary African and global social movements. More specifically from a history of anti-colonial resistance and by adopting new forms of civic engagement and digital activism. By focusing on collective action, the movement allowed for there to be a space for nonviolent resistance that has reached an impact beyond Senegal's borders.

This foundation allows for a deeper exploration of *Y'en a Marre's* ideological influences and its engagement with the theories of Frantz Fanon. The next chapter will explore how the movement intersects with Fanon's perspective on the decolonial struggle his emphasis on political consciousness and the rejection of his solution of violence. Through an analysis of *Y'en a Marre's* principles, message, and impact, the chapter will explore how the movement interprets Fanon but in a post-independence context and how it positions itself as a model for nonviolent resistance in Francophone Africa.

Chapter 2: Fanonian Theory and the *Y'en a Marre* Movement

I. Introduction

This chapter will examine the *Y'en a Marre* movement in Senegal through the lens of Fanon's theory on resistance and violence. While *Y'en a Marre* seems to draw inspiration from and has ideological frameworks that support Fanon's ideas on the criticism of colonialism and political education/consciousness, the movement opposes the idea of inciting violence and instead calls for non-violent civic assembly. The difference in approach is not due to a rejection of Fanon's ideas but is rather a result of needing to adapt to the contemporary issues of post-colonial Africa. This seems to be clear when we look at the incursion of Fanon's ideas in the *Y'en a Marre* office which will be further explained during this chapter. The struggle is no longer about having to combat a foreign colonial power but is rather a dissent to the way an internal government is operating. It is a battle against corruption and political and economic mismanagement rather than a foreign empire.

It will begin by exploring Fanon's perspective on colonialism and violence from his novel *The Wretched of the Earth* and their impact on non-colonial movements. It will then analyze the non-violent strategies of *Y'en a Marre* and how the movement has adapted his ideas to fit their mission. The movement's guiding principles will be discussed, more specifically the "10 commandments" and how they are rooted in Fanon's theories. Finally, it will talk about the success of the movement in Africa and compare it to movements that followed the violent resistance path.

II. Frantz Fanon's Theory of Resistance and Violence

A. Colonial Violence and the Justification for Armed Struggle

Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* represents a more radical theory on decolonization by stating that violence is mandatory and inevitable for there to be colonial liberation; and that it is a necessary response to systemic brutality. He claims, "Decolonization is always a violent phenomenon"⁶⁵, implying that because colonial systems were built through violence, it means those same systems can only be dismantled through equal means. Fashina describes violence as the "use of force to harm or destroy human beings or non-human objects, for the purpose of preserving or altering political institutions, systems, governments, or policies."⁶⁶ By applying this definition to colonialism it was evident that colonial powers used both physical and structural in order to maintain power over the colonized. This violence occurred in many forms such as military force, economic restrictions, and even the erasure of indigenous society structures and culture⁶⁷. The colonial regimes essentially used this brute force to enact fear and authority which worked to suppress resistance and to prevent uprisings; in turn resulting in the colonized remaining subjugated. For example in 1944, 15,000 senegalese men known as "Tirailleurs sénégalais" meaning "Senegalese Riflemen", were recruited to fight with the French army in the Battle of France. The riflemen fought both in World War 1 and World War 2, along with Vietnam war. North African men were also recruited for this. It was under brutal conditions and they did not have the same rights or recognition as their French peers. This use of force ensured that there was continued oppression and control while exploiting colonial subjects for their imperial wars⁶⁸.

⁶⁵ Franz Fanon, *Wretched of The Earth* (Grove Press, 1961). pg.1

⁶⁶Oladipo Fashina, "Frantz Fanon and the Ethical Justification of Anti-Colonial Violence," *Social Theory and Practice* 15, no. 2 (1989): 179–212, <https://doi.org/10.5840/soctheorpract198915210>. pg.181

⁶⁷ Samuel Kalman, "Colonial Violence," June 1, 2010, <https://doi.org/10.3167/hrrh.2010.360201>. pg.1

⁶⁸ Claire Miot, "Le retrait des tirailleurs sénégalais de la Première Armée française en 1944:Hérésie stratégique, bricolage politique ou conservatisme colonial ?," *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 125, no. 1 (January 15, 2015): 77–89, <https://doi.org/10.3917/ving.125.0077>. pg.77

Fanon argues that because colonialism itself is built on violence, the colonized have no other way to respond except with violence in order to reclaim their humanity. This is not for the same immoral reason as the colonizers but rather as a way to be liberated from their oppression and to take back what had been stolen from them ⁶⁹. Fanon also speaks about the psychological implementations of violence and how the colonized begin to succumb to the dehumanization that is imposed by them from the oppressors. They essentially begin to believe that they are powerless and cannot do anything about their situation. Therefore, the act of using violence is the best way to get rid of that inferiority complex that has been instilled in them and are able to reach revolutionary consciousness⁷⁰. In Fanon's framework, colonial violence is more of a cycle since only violence can stop violence.

Fanon's argument and perspective come from his experiences being a psychiatrist in Algeria during the revolutionary war in which Algeria was fighting to be independent of France from 1954-1962 ⁷¹. Fanon's experience of the war and the legacy of colonial domination along with his study of philosophical works had a strong influence on his conception of decolonization. Having a first-hand look at the dehumanizing and excruciating circumstances in the colonial world, influenced Fanon's advocacy of revolution and decolonization in order to destroy the unjust colonial structures and to free individuals from the psychological effects of oppression ⁷².

B. Fanon's Psychological and Political Impact on Anti-Colonial Movements

Besides *Y'en a Marre* Fanon's justification of violence is still influential and relevant among national liberation movements in contemporary Africa as well. In Fanon's framework,

⁶⁹ Franz Fanon, *Wretched of The Earth* (Grove Press, 1961). pg.2

⁷⁰ Franz Fanon, *Wretched of The Earth* (Grove Press, 1961). pg.52

⁷¹ Haakon Chevalier, trans., "This Is the Voice of Algeria," 1965. pg.15

⁷² Fidelis Chuka Aghamelu and Emeka Cyril Ejike, "Understanding Fanon's Theory of Violence And Its Relevance to Contemporary Violence In Africa," . . ISSN 3, no. 4 (June 2017). pg.24

colonial violence is cyclic; and violence generates violence which makes decolonization a violent process. This perspective influenced numerous liberation movements across Africa like the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya which was a war against the British ⁷³.

Drawing on Fanon's theories, violence is a result of deeper structural inequalities and frustrations. However, because government authorities suppress direct opposition, marginalized groups put their anger toward more vulnerable targets, which may include innocent individuals, which continues cycles of violence that are rooted in historical and economic injustices⁷⁴.

For instance, in the Niger Delta, multinational oil companies, that align with the Nigerian government, exploit oil resources with no regard for the effects that it is having on local communities. It has resulted in poverty, pollution, and the rise of militant groups demanding resource control. However, instead of implementing solutions to help citizens, the Nigerian government responds with military force. Thus, organized militia have emerged to challenge the companies and the Nigerian state, which draw of course on the earlier secessionist movement of Biafra. Similarly, in northern Nigeria, many unemployed youths, frustrated by their economic conditions, have resorted to acts of terrorism and militancy, which shows the direct link between poverty and violence ⁷⁵.

Similar in South Africa, Black South Africans, are still suffering from the residual effects of apartheid, corruption, and have struggled with high unemployment and a lack of access to opportunities, despite the promises of the post-apartheid government. Some citizens direct their

⁷³ Christian Alvarado, "Mau Mau as Method | History in Africa | Cambridge Core," December 2022, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/history-in-africa/article/mau-mau-as-method/EE4D6C160ED24967F91D92EB10DAA640>. pg.9

⁷⁴ Fidelis Chuka Aghamelu and Emeka Cyril Ejike, "Understanding Fanon's Theory of Violence And Its Relevance to Contemporary Violence In Africa," . . *ISSN* 3, no. 4 (June 2017). pg.38

⁷⁵ Fidelis Chuka Aghamelu and Emeka Cyril Ejike, "Understanding Fanon's Theory of Violence And Its Relevance to Contemporary Violence In Africa," . . *ISSN* 3, no. 4 (June 2017). pg.36-37

anger toward foreigners, and who accuse them of taking economic opportunities meant for them. Debates have been sparked about the ethics and long-term consequences of violent resistance. This is particularly in post-independence governance, where some newly liberated nations replicated the authoritarian structures of their former colonizers like in Guinea with Sékou Touré's regime. Known as Guinée's Fidel Castro, he implemented a socialist government that did not allow citizens freedom of expression and emitted an authoritarian regime ⁷⁶. *Y'en a Marre*, by contrast, demonstrates that nonviolent resistance can be equally, if not more, effective in challenging and reforming political systems without perpetuating cycles of violence and instability.

III. Y'en a Marre: A Nonviolent Movement Inspired by Fanon

While Fanon's theories provided a framework for anti-colonial struggles, contemporary movements like *Y'en A Marre* can demonstrate that political activism has adapted to the new historical conditions that are no longer the same. The movement's rejection of violence being a mandatory tool for liberation goes against Fanon's theory that violence is the only path to decolonization. Instead, *Y'en A Marre* offers an example of nonviolent resistance that is both effective and sustainable in modern African democracies.

Contrasting with the colonial contexts that Fanon analyzed, since its independence from France in 1960, Senegal has experienced relatively stable governance. The country has never experienced a military coup; which is rare in West Africa considering the well-known authoritarian regimes that have come from Mali, Niger, Gabon, Burkina Faso, and Sierra

⁷⁶ Muhamed Kamil, "Ahmed Sékou Touré: The Tyrant Hero," in *Leadership in Postcolonial Africa: Trends Transformed by Independence*, ed. Baba G. Jallow (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2014), 45–59, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137478122_3. Pg. 46

Leone⁷⁷. It always has maintained a tradition of peaceful democratic transitions with presidential leaders handing over power to the next without resistance. Senegal has perpetuated this national identity based on cooperation and the sharing of power among groups⁷⁸. However, political discontent has remained a persistent issue, particularly among young people who were frustrated with corruption, unemployment, and democratic backsliding⁷⁹. Many Senegalese citizens have become distrusting of political leaders due to them being disconnected from the realities of their everyday struggles; this is the same sentiment Fanon discusses about the post-colonial bourgeoisie in *The Wretched of the Earth*⁸⁰.

Amid this political discontent, social movements emerged as a response to growing frustrations, with some taking an approach that was distinct from the violent revolutionary strategies Fanon described. Rather than advocating for armed resistance, *Y'en a Marre* encouraged young people to register to vote, engage in peaceful protests, and challenge the political elite through public platforms and artistic expression like music and art⁸¹. The movement's strategy was distinct because of the way it rejected both political violence and low political involvement from working-class citizens. This nonviolent approach reflected a fundamental departure from Fanon's call for violent revolution but remained deeply rooted in his broader theories of decolonization and political awakening. It is worth noting that violence was not completely out of consideration and was thought to be only warranted if necessary.

⁷⁷ Alex Vines, "Understanding Africa's Recent Coups | GJIA," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* (blog), April 13, 2024, <https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2024/04/13/understanding-africas-coups/>.

⁷⁸ Rachael Lambert, "Democracy in Senegal: A Case Study of Democratic Success in Africa," 2006. pg.29

⁷⁹ Marame Gueye, "Urban Guerrilla Poetry: The Movement Y' En a Marre and the Socio-Political Influences of Hip Hop in Senegal," 2013. pg.26

⁸⁰ Franz Fanon, *Wretched of The Earth* (Grove Press, 1961).

⁸¹ Marame Gueye, "Urban Guerrilla Poetry: The Movement Y' En a Marre and the Socio-Political Influences of Hip Hop in Senegal," 2013. pg.31

In January 2012, *Y'en a Marre* released a music video titled “Faux! Pas Forcé!” meaning, “False! Don’t Push!”, “Daas Fanaanal” means “Sharpening one’s weapon the night before”, and Doggali “Finishing up a killing”⁸². In “Faux pas Forcé!” one of the lyrics writes, “Laye [referring to Abdoulaye Wade], do not look for alibis/ Don’t be like Gaddafi/ If you do not want us to be like the people of Libya”⁸³. This alludes to the Libyan civil war in 2011 in which the civilians violently revolted against the government's repressive regime led by Muammar Gaddafi⁸⁴. *Y'en a Marre*'s non-violent agenda pertained only to physical activism, however, their songs used a violent narrative to overrule Wade and to outline the movement's requests for change.

While *Y'en a Marre* does not advocate for violence, its leaders frequently cite Fanon's calls for political awakening and the importance of civilians being educated on the political system so they can be involved⁸⁵. Fanon's influence on the movement is evident in its emphasis on empowering the oppressed to reclaim their power and shape their own political destiny. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon describes decolonization as not just a transfer of power but an obtainment of political consciousness or a decision to reject the oppressor⁸⁶. *Y'en a Marre* embodies this idea by focusing on the psychological and cultural dimensions of political change and encourages the youth to see themselves as active participants in governance and not just subjects of the state. The Fanonian principal has been represented in the way the movement has launched several civic education campaigns by using music, poetry, social media, and public forums to raise awareness about voter rights, government accountability, and other social justice

⁸² Marame Gueye, “Urban Guerrilla Poetry: The Movement Y’ En a Marre and the Socio-Political Influences of Hip Hop in Senegal,” 2013. pg.23

⁸³ “Faux! Pas Forcé (Y’en a Marre) - YouTube,” January 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tCuKAn-T0pk>.

⁸⁴ Emin Poljarevic, “Libya’s Violent Revolution,” *COSMOS-Centre on Social Movement Studies Mobilizing for Democracy – ERC Project*, May 2012. pg.7

⁸⁵ Bamba Ndiaye, 2023.

⁸⁶ Franz Fanon, *Wretched of The Earth* (Grove Press, 1961). pg.237

issues. Their songs and slogans challenge the idea that young people are powerless, reinforcing Fanon's argument that liberation begins with a shift in consciousness.

Despite these similarities, *Y'en a Marre* reinterprets Fanon's vision to exist in a democratic setting, where systemic change can be pursued through civic engagement rather than armed struggle. Fanon wrote his ideas during a time when colonial violence was a direct, oppressive force that required an equally forceful response. Today, *Y'en a Marre* operates in a post-independence context where democratic institutions are smaller and more localized which provides easier paths for reform. Rather than tearing down and disturbing the state through revolution, the movement seeks to make changes from within by pressuring leaders to adhere to democratic principles and respond to public demands⁸⁷. By mobilizing youth and fostering a culture of civic responsibility and education, *Y'en a Marre* proves that Fanon's ideas are still relevant, even though they have to be reinterpreted to fit contemporary situations. The movement's success in influencing political discourse and electoral participation in Senegal suggests that nonviolent resistance can be just as transformative as the armed struggles Fanon alluded to. In this way, *Y'en a Marre* demonstrates a practical adaptation of Fanon's theory. They also show that while violent revolution may have been necessary in the colonial era, peaceful civic engagement can be a powerful force for change in the post-colonial world.

IV. The "10 Commandments" of Y'en A Marre and Their Fanonian Roots

The official project office of *Y'en A Marre* is located in Sacré Couer which is an upper-middle-class neighborhood in Dakar. In the conference room of this building lies a large poster titled "Les Dix commandments de l'esprit *Y'en a marre*" meaning, The Ten

⁸⁷ Babacar Faye, "Political Spontaneity and Senegalese New Social Movements, *Y'en a Marre* and M23: A Rereading of Frantz Fanon's 'The Wretched of the Earth'," 2012. pg.63

Commandments of the Y en a marre Spirit. Here they describe *Y'en A Marre* to be more of a state of mind rather than only a movement⁸⁸. *Y'en a Marre*'s "10 Commandments" outline the ethical and civic responsibilities of its members and also emphasize active participation and resistance to political corruption⁸⁹. These principles are central to the movement's philosophy and ensure that the message and activism remain free of political influences and financial compromise. The commandments emphasize the framework for grassroots engagement by reinforcing the idea that civic responsibility is beyond electoral participation.

The commandments are listed as:

- 1- The branch of the Y en a marre movement in any area is called "Esprit". The Esprit is an inclusive, secular, and nonviolent organization.
- 2- The Y en a marre Esprit is apolitical and remains equidistant from political parties. The coordinator, the spokesperson, and the members of the bureau must not belong to any political party.
- 3- Members of the Y en a marre Esprit are volunteers and pledge to respond to the call of the main branch as long as the latter aims at safeguarding our democratic gains, the Republic, or to promoting the values of the NTS (New Type of Senegalese).
- 4- The Y en a marre Esprit can be established based on the geography, themes, or socio-professional categories of people.
- 5- The Y en a marre Esprit must have at least 25 members with a minimum of 10 women.
- 6- The Y en a marre Esprit must have a coordinator, a claims manager, an art director, an administrative secretary, a spokesperson and any other commission to be determined in accordance with the needs of the community.

⁸⁸ Cheikh Ndiaye, "Contemporary Francophone West African Social Movements in the Rise of Neo Pan-Africanism: A Case Study of y En a Marre in Senegal." (University of Louisville, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.18297/etd/3414>. Pg.25-26

⁸⁹ MameSémou Ndiaye, "Discursive Strategies in Senegalese Rap: The Case of Y En a Marre," *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation* 1, no. 3 (September 30, 2018): 51–57. pg.51-52

- 7- The Y'en a marre Esprit is to diagnose the problems of its community, propose solutions, and set itself as an example of the purest form of the NTS (New type of Senegalese) advocated by the movement.
- 8- The Y'en a marre Esprit is to execute its plan of action after having consulted the main organization which ensures the coordination of all actions.
- 9- The Y'en a marre Esprit marre must not accept funding from political parties. It cannot under any circumstance monetize its support to any organization.
- 10- The Y'en a marre Esprit must get its findings from its socio-educational activities and the sale of T-shirts and other paraphernalia.⁹⁰

Each of the commandments reflects a commitment to a collaborative organization, ethical leadership, and the promotion of what the movement calls the "New Type of Senegalese" (NTS). This concept requests for a new generation of Senegalese citizens who prioritize patriotism and desire national progress over personal gain and interest. For instance, the first and second commandments highlight *Y'en a Marre's* stance as a secular, nonviolent, and nonpartisan organization. By prohibiting members from affiliating with political parties, the movement ensures that it remains credible as an independent observer of democracy rather than an extension of partisan-driven agendas.

The requirement on Commandment 5 that each local branch needs to include at least 25 members with a minimum of 10 women showcases *Y'en a Marre's* commitment to inclusivity and gender equity, this will further be explored in Chapter 3. This commandment aligns with Fanon's advocacy that decolonization must involve all sectors of society and should not be a struggle led by a singular demographic. Fanon recognized that true liberation requires the participation of marginalized groups, including women. He even mentions women shall be given equal importance to men, not in the articles of the constitution, but in daily life⁹¹. By analyzing

⁹⁰ There is a difference in spelling of *Y'en a Marre* in these commandments

⁹¹ Franz Fanon, *Wretched of The Earth* (Grove Press, 1961).pg.154

this, the theme of *Teranga* is showcased once again. It aims to create a welcoming space for all Senegalese citizens regardless of their gender or background. This approach has strengthened its ability to mobilize diverse communities and further reinforces the NTS concept through the lack of discrimination.

In addition to emphasizing democratic principles, *Y'en a Marre's* commandments emphasize financial independence. Commandments 9 and 10 prohibit the acceptance of funds from political parties and stress that the movement must sustain itself through socio-educational activities and merchandise sales. This principle echoes Fanon's warnings about neocolonial influences and the co-opting of revolutionary movements through financial dependence on the very systems that they are speaking out against. By ensuring financial independence, *Y'en a Marre* protects its activism from external control and allows no way for greed and corruption to infiltrate the organization.

In July of 2018 Felwine Sarr (Senegalese scholar), Fadel Barro (One of the founders of *Y'en A Marre*), and Jean Mobert (activist of the Lucha movement in DRC) drafted the *Azimiyo La Dakar* which displays the proclamation of Neo-PanAfricanism ⁹². On the last point, there is a quote from *The Wretched of the Earth* which reads, "Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it" ⁹³. This phrase showcases *Y'en a Marre's* belief that young people must take responsibility for shaping Senegal's future; this adds to the point of the intersectionality of Fanon's ideas with nonviolent activism.

⁹² Cheikh Ndiaye, "Contemporary Francophone West African Social Movements in the Rise of Neo Pan-Africanism: A Case Study of y En a Marre in Senegal." (University of Louisville, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.18297/etd/3414>. pg.162

⁹³ Franz Fanon, *Wretched of The Earth* (Grove Press, 1961). pg.218

Furthermore, *Y'en a Marre* repurposes Fanon's ideas on decolonizing the mind by encouraging young people to abolish passive citizenship. Fanon argued that colonial subjects internalized their oppression which led to civic disengagement and a lack of agency⁹⁴. *Y'en a Marre* adapts this idea in modern-day Senegal by urging youth to unlearn complacency and actively participate in governance. Their emphasis on the "New Type of Senegalese" mirrors Fanon's call for a postcolonial consciousness and is rooted in self-autonomy and communal responsibility. Beyond speech and discourse, *Y'en a Marre* implements Fanon's theories through direct action. By structuring its movement around the local branches, the group develops a decentralized network of politically conscious citizens. These branches can provide community-specific issues, propose solutions, and exemplify the ethical values of the movement. This grassroots approach aligns with Fanon's belief that true liberation emerges from the masses rather than elite-driven political processes⁹⁵.

To the question of how *Y'en a Marre* was so successful, unlike movements that used violent resistance, *Y'en a Marre* was able to last without facing severe state resistance and control. By utilizing music, poetry, and grassroots mobilization, the movement was able to engage a large audience and fortify its message. Through their artistic activism, they have been able to bridge the gap between political discourse and everyday citizens this made it easier for citizens to be informed and educated on political processes that citizens can take. Music, in particular, has served as the strongest tool for political education. It was also an outlet to critique government failures and to organize events for mobilization. This ensured that their messages

⁹⁴ Franz Fanon, *Wretched of The Earth* (Grove Press, 1961). pg.141

⁹⁵ Halford H. Fairchild, "Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* in Contemporary Perspective on JSTOR," December 1994, <https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.emory.edu/stable/2784461>. pg.198

would reach young people or individuals living in rural areas who might be disengaged from political activism.

Y'en a Marre's success also comes from the fact that it was able to stay independent of political parties which allowed there no way for the message to be corrupted with partisan agendas. As we saw in the interview with Denise, she explained that they only get funding from their personal sales and do not allow political bribes. It is also prohibited in commandment 2 to be affiliated with political parties. The movement continues to be an organization that holds the government accountable regardless of its political affiliation. This approach has allowed *Y'en a Marre* to sustain its credibility and maintain public support. By framing their activism as a national, rather than partisan, they have been able to avoid bias and build alliances with other civil society organizations and movements, which amplifies their impact. Another factor is its focus on grassroots engagement and leadership development. Unlike conventional structures of movements that often rely on a set of central leaders, *Y'en a Marre* was able to decentralize its operations and allow for collective leadership. By instilling local branches, it ensured that the movement was not overly dependent on a few individuals. This made it more resilient to state repression or leadership changes. Their commitment to community-based organizing allows them to remain relevant to the needs and concerns of ordinary citizens.

Y'en a Marre has inspired similar groups across Francophone Africa, like Balai Citoyen in Burkina Faso and Filimbi in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Balai Citoyen, for example, played a large role in the 2014 uprising by the Burkinabé people that led to the end of President Blaise Compaoré's 27 years in power⁹⁶. By drawing inspiration from *Y'en a Marre* and speaking

⁹⁶ Bettina Engels, "(PDF) Political Transition in Burkina Faso: The Fall of Blaise Compaoré," *ResearchGate*, October 22, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.5334/gia.ai> pg.6

with the founders, they used similar strategies, like grassroots mobilization, using music and art for activism, and social media to gather citizens to fight for better governance. Similarly, Filimbi in the Democratic Republic of Congo has used social media, youth engagement, and community organizing to challenge authoritarian rule and advocate for democratic reforms. These movements prove that civic engagement and nonviolent resistance can be powerful tools for political transformation.

VI. Conclusion

Y'en a Marre represents a modern and contemporary interpretation of Fanon's theories and shows that political awakening and resistance can be achieved through nonviolent civic engagement rather than armed struggle. While Fanon viewed violence as a necessary tool for decolonization, *Y'en a Marre* adapted his ideas to a post-colonial context, where the struggle is against internal governance failures rather than foreign colonial rule. The movement takes Fanon's point on political consciousness by mobilizing youth, promoting civic education, and holding leaders accountable through grassroots activism. Their success in influencing political discourse in Senegal shows that Fanon's ideas are still relevant. *Y'en a Marre* provides a powerful example of how nonviolent resistance can be a force for democratic transformation in Africa today.

Chapter 3: Gender and Social Activism

I. Introduction

Women have historically been involved in social and political movements across Africa especially during independence movements⁹⁷. Women have been more prominent in using the media in order to speak out and demand changes. This marks a large shift compared to earlier eras where there was less access to internet, higher education, and influence from international women's movements⁹⁸. However, their contributions oftentimes remain more marginalized and belittled due to the overshadowing from male dominated leadership structures. From my personal experience, I have seen firsthand the ways in which African societies remain deeply patriarchal. As an African studies major, I have studied and read upon the family and gender dynamics of the region. Though with time things have gotten more modern, it seems that compared to the rest of the world, Africa still remains more traditional. Men generally obtain high leadership positions, have greater access to education, and have more influence in decision-making spaces. The traditional gender norms essentially dictate that men should be breadwinners and leaders, while women are instructed and encouraged to take on more domestic roles⁹⁹. This reinforces systemic inequalities, despite their significant contributions to society.

However, the *Y'en a Marre* movement defies these expectations by creating a space where women's contributions are valued and integrated into the movement's structure. Unlike traditional male-dominated political and social movements, *Y'en a Marre* does not downgrade

⁹⁷ Jaimee A. Swift, "African Women and Social Movements in Africa - AAIHS," July 18, 2017, <https://www.aaihs.org/african-women-and-social-movements-in-africa/>,

⁹⁸ Aili Mari Tripp, "Women in Movement: Transformations in African Political Landscapes," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 5, no. 2 (August 1, 2003): 233–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461674032000080585>, pg.233

⁹⁹ Clare Conry-Murray, "Adolescent and Adult Reasoning about Gender Roles and Fairness in Benin, West Africa," *Cognitive Development* 24, no. 2 (April 1, 2009): 207–19, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogdev.2008.12.004>, pg.210

women to the background or dismiss their roles as secondary. Women have still contributed to political and social change in Senegal and Francophone Africa by being apart of and shaping the movements that have impacted their societies ¹⁰⁰. They have made efforts to organize, mobilize, and strategize within movements and have thus impacted the political landscapes regardless of how the media and societies overshadow their work. While male leaders were the public face of the movement, women played a large role in its creation and continued by sustaining their organizational structure, coordinating outreach, and developing strategies that led to its success.

This dynamic of women's significant but underrecognized roles in social movements is not unique to *Y'en a Marre*. Similar patterns are also visible in other resistance movements, where women contribute significantly but are often excluded from official leadership roles ¹⁰¹. For example, in Algeria during the revolutionary war, women had roles as organizers, caregivers, spies, and political activists, but their contributions were often downplayed or overshadowed by male leadership. In these movements, women's efforts were necessary in mobilizing communities, upholding resistance, and maintaining the spirit of fighters, however, their recognition was only limited to their familial and supportive roles¹⁰².

This reflects the way that women put forth both intellectual and organizational contributions that streignhhtn politcal activism remains under recognized. Despite systemic barriers, women continue to resist and reshape these patriarchal structures by pushing for gender equality and representaiton in governance, activism, and economic life. Before *Y'en a Marre*,

¹⁰⁰ Denise Safiatou Sow, 2023.

¹⁰¹ Martin Atela et al., "Women Organising in Fragility and Conflict: Lessons from the #BringBackOurGirls Movement, Nigeria," *Gender & Development* 29, no. 2–3 (September 2, 2021): 313–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2021.1979323>. Pg.318

¹⁰² Zahra Siyahsar, Ali Akbar Amini, and Abdolrasol Hasanifar, "Investigating the Political Participation of Women in the Algerian and Iran Revolutions," *Geography (Regional Planning)* 13, no. 52 (December 22, 2023): 114–28, <https://doi.org/10.22034/jgeoq.2024.236213.2570>. pg.114

there was another movement called *Yewwu Yewwi* which emerged in the 1980s. The movement was created by left-winged activists and was created as a response to the limitations placed on women in Senegalese society. It aimed to challenge patriarchal norms, advocate for gender equality, denounce gender-based violence and expand women's rights in both political and social spheres¹⁰³. The movement was significant because that it combined both feminist activism with broader struggles for democracy and social justice in Senegal. Women involved in *Yewwu Yewwi* fought for greater representation in politics, access to education, and legal reforms that regarded issues these issues. Their activism helped shape later feminist movements in Senegal and influenced organizations and figures that are advocating for women's rights today¹⁰⁴.

Today figures like Denise Safiatou Sow, a co-founder of *Y'en a Marre*, and other women activists across Africa highlight the resilience and leadership that drive change, even when their contributions are overlooked and minimized. By examining their roles, challenges, and impact, we can better understand the gendered dynamics of resistance movements and the ongoing fight for recognition and equality.

II. The Place of Women in Y'en a Marre

Even though they were very involved in *Y'en a Marre*, women often operated behind the scenes and received less public recognition than their male colleagues. Their roles in organizing protests, organizing logistics, and overseeing the movement's day-to-day activities remained underappreciated in public discourse; even though these contributions are crucial to the group's

¹⁰³ Rama Salla Dieng, "From Yewwu Yewwi to #FreeSenegal: Class, Gender and Generational Dynamics of Radical Feminist Activism in Senegal," *Politics & Gender* 20, no. 2 (June 2024): 478–84, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X2200071X>, pg.479

¹⁰⁴ Rama Salla Dieng, "From Yewwu Yewwi to #FreeSenegal: Class, Gender and Generational Dynamics of Radical Feminist Activism in Senegal," *Politics & Gender* 20, no. 2 (June 2024): 478–84, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X2200071X>, pg.482

success and longevity. In an interview conducted by Dr. Bamba Ndiaye, he spoke with Denise Safiatou Sow about her role in *Y'en a Marre* and the inner workings of the organization. She first discussed the origins of it and the night she, Aliou Sané, Thiat, Kilifeu, Amade Séck, Fadel Barro, and his brother Maladji came up with the idea after being frustrated by the lack of electricity for days. Though she was the only woman at the table, the men listened to her ideas and took them into account which demonstrated that her insights were valued equally. Her role was in information technology and computer science science which are areas that operate more behind the scenes rather than in the public eye. In contrast, the others in the movement engaged in more visible forms of activism, using creative expression such as music, art, and journalism to spread their message. This further explains why she was not commonly recognized as one of the public faces of *Y'en a Marre*. It was not because she was a woman or undervalued, but because her contributions were in logistical and administrative roles rather than in artistic or performative activism that required public visibility.

The fifth commandment of the 10 commandments of *Y'en a Marre* discussed in chapter 2 states, “The Y en a marre Esprit must have at least 25 members with a minimum of 10 women”¹⁰⁵. This displays the movement’s commitment to gender inclusivity and guarantees representation for women within its structure. By making women’s participation mandatory and institutionalizing their presence, *Y'en a Marre* actively challenged the patriarchal norms that excluded women from leadership roles and decision-making processes in political activism. This requirement ensured that women had a voice within the movement and also set a precedent for gender equity in grassroots organizing. This reinforced the idea that sustainable social change

¹⁰⁵ Cheikh Ndiaye, “Contemporary Francophone West African Social Movements in the Rise of Neo Pan-Africanism: A Case Study of y En a Marre in Senegal.” (University of Louisville, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.18297/etd/3414>. pg.51

must be inclusive of all members of society. The exact number of women in *Y'en a Marre* is hard to measure being that the movement has expanded to local branches, however, being that the commandment states the obligatory inclusion of women it is safe to assume that they make up a significant proportion.

Denise discusses the things she has done within *Y'en a Marre* which has been instrumental in the success of it. Firstly, organizing voter education campaigns and civic engagement programs. Here, she and other members of the team would travel to more rural areas in order to educate the population about their voting rights and the importance of democratic participation. She found this to be extremely important in these areas because they are most likely to not have any information on how to better their situations. Especially when because they live in marginalized areas, they are most affected by the carelessness of the government. This not only empowered individuals to take an active role in the political process but also helped counteract voter apathy ¹⁰⁶. This can be reduced to a gender issue being that a lot of women living in rural areas are not aware that they are able to speak outwardly about their own issues and concerns. Having other women out on the field coming to them can bring a sense of comfort, familiarity, and trust. This makes it easier for them to open up and feel genuinely heard and understood. Also, seeing women in leadership positions like that is something they may not be used to so it provides them inspiration to branch out into roles they otherwise may not have known of.

She also mentioned managing the logistics on support for protests and community outreach. By making and having T-shirts for sale, created a sustainable source of revenue. This enabled them to afford essential resources such as transportation, protest materials, and

¹⁰⁶ Denise Safiatou Sow, 2023.

communication tools needed to continue organizing demonstrations to advocating for the movement. With this it was necessary to coordinate transportation, securing venues, and making sure that materials for public demonstrations were prepared and distributed. Finally, it was very important for them to have created a system of engaging with local and international networks to further secure those resources and build alliances. Women in *Y'en a Marre* often acted as bridges to foster relationships with international human rights organizations, NGOs, and other social movements¹⁰⁷. For example, they obtained funding through the European Union and NGO's when they proposed a project to titled *Sunu Gox* (my community) which aimed to support the goals of *Y'en a Marre* like mobilizing the youth and improved living conditions. Through these networks, they were able to amplify the movement's reach, secure funding for activities¹⁰⁸.

III. Women's Influence on Y'en a Marre's Success

Unlike in most movements, where women have only played supportive roles, in *Y'en a Marre*, women have not only participated in activism and logistical support but have also been key figures in shaping the group's ideology. For instance, women activists in the movement have been instrumental in developing the group's stance on governance, democracy, and social justice, which ensures that gender equity remains at the forefront of their advocacy. One of the core commandments explicitly requests for the representation women. This reflects a progressive stance within the movement where gender equality is not only a goal but it is a core principle that informs their activism. As we will see below, their perspectives have influenced the movement's overall approach to issues like corruption, social inequality, and political exclusion which contributes to a more inclusive and diverse vision for Senegal's future. While these contributions

¹⁰⁷ Denise Safiatou Sow, 2023.

¹⁰⁸ Mamadou Dimé, "Y'en a Marre Catalyst for an Indocility Grammar in Senegal.," in *Popular Protest, Political Opportunities, and Change in Africa*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003177371>. pg.66

often go undocumented in mainstream discourse, they form the foundation of the movement's sustainability and highlight the movement's commitment to creating a more inclusive society. From organizing protests to shaping the movement's ideology, their roles are foundational to the movement's achievements.

Something that I noticed when analyzing Denise and Maimouna is the way these women again embody community outreach throughout their work. They played a pivotal role in reshaping *Y'en a Marre's* focus on rural and underrepresented communities and ensuring advocacy for those who may be marginalized or overlooked. The impact of having women on the team, especially Denise there since the founding, brought forth another perspective. It can be seen in how the men were more impact-focused and made sure to deliver the messages with more assertive and emphatic ways through the rap music and attention-grabbing articles. However, the ideas that the women brought forth, though more in the background, were more focused on fostering dialogue and community-centered solutions. They prioritized inclusivity and addressed the nuanced needs of various groups. Their involvement helped bridge urban-rural divides and fostered activism that resonated deeply with rural populations. This emphasis on community ties reflects broader Senegalese values of *Teranga*, which women leaders actively promoted through their organizing efforts

III. Women as Project Leaders and Strategists

Women like Maimouna Ndiaye have played important roles in the leadership and success of the organization. As a project leader and strategist at the private office of *Y'en a Marre*, Ndiaye has been in command of important projects, and her leadership has been instrumental in ensuring the movement's coordination and effectiveness. Beyond simply managing logistics, her

role extends into shaping the movement's strategic direction, fostering partnerships, and influencing decision-making processes. As the head of the private office at the headquarters, Ndiaye is responsible for overseeing project management, coordinating internal communications, and ensuring the execution of various plans and projects that the movement implements. Her position is not only administrative but is useful to the movement's political and organizational strategy. It demonstrates how women within *Y'en a Marre* actively shape its vision and impact

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Recently she now has been promoted to the role of administrative manager of the organization¹¹⁰. She has played a pivotal part in the development of the “Karibu” project, which is an initiative by *Y'en a Marre* that aims to provide a safe space for African activists who have been forced into exile due to oppressive political regimes. According to Ndiaye, “Karibu” which means "welcome" in Swahili, is a secure city designed to protect and support activists, journalists, artists, and human rights defenders that may be facing persecution for their work. It is located in Guédiawaye, Senegal, and the project is currently in its pilot phase; it has plans for further expansion in the near future. This initiative showcases Ndiaye's commitment to addressing the needs of African activists and creating a space where they can receive protection, opportunities to strengthen their skills, exchange ideas with one another and to collaborate with others in the same position.

By offering activists a space where they can continue their work in safety, “Karibu” is contributing to the broader movement for African democracy and human rights. This project

¹⁰⁹ Bamba Ndiaye, 2023.

¹¹⁰ Lequotidien, “Ouverture d’une Maison d’accueil d’exilés, de Réfugiés Politiques... : Y'en a Marre Met En Place La Structure «Karibu»,” *Lequotidien - Journal d'information Générale* (blog), July 27, 2024, <https://lequotidien.sn/ouverture-dune-maison-daccueil-dexiles-de-refugies-politiques-yen-a-marre-met-en-place-la-structure-karibu/>.

directly aligns with Y'en a Marre's broader vision of creating a new type of Senegalese citizen who is politically engaged, socially conscious, and empowered to fight for democratic values. Through this initiative, Ndiaye has provided a tangible way to support the voices of African protestors who find themselves to be isolated, scared, and vulnerable when speaking out against authoritarian regimes.

Ndiaye's leadership of the "Karibu" project also highlights her ability to address the issue of displacement for African activists. She says, "Many of them are forced to leave their countries in extremely difficult conditions, often outside the continent, far from their loved ones."¹¹¹ The Karibu initiative offers a unique solution by providing a safe haven and a space where these individuals can reconnect with their roots and continue advocating for fundamental rights that have been stripped from them. Through this project, Ndiaye is transforming the concept of exile from one of abandonment and isolation to one of solidarity, learning, and empowerment¹¹².

One of the key elements of Maimouna Ndiaye's leadership is her ability to ensure the sustainability of the movement. Sustainability in activism doesn't just mean financial resources; it also refers to human resources such as activists, organizers, and allies. By keeping the movement's projects aligned with its goals, and ensuring the maintenance of a dedicated and motivated team, Ndiaye has played a crucial role in maintaining Y'en a Marre's relevance and stability. The leadership role that Ndiaye assumes within the private office emphasizes the importance of organizational management in successful activist movements. It also serves as an example of how women can be at the forefront of structural leadership within their movements.

¹¹¹ Lequotidien, "Ouverture d'une Maison d'accueil d'exilés, de Réfugiés Politiques... : Y'en a Marre Met En Place La Structure «Karibu»," *Lequotidien - Journal d'information Générale* (blog), July 27, 2024, <https://lequotidien.sn/ouverture-dune-maison-daccueil-dexiles-de-refugies-politiques-yen-a-marre-met-en-place-la-structure-karibu/>.

¹¹² Bamba Ndiaye, 2023.

IV. Conclusion

This chapter reveals the significant but often overlooked roles that women play in the *Y'en a Marre* movement. It showcases how their contributions challenge traditional gender dynamics within African activism. While the contributions of women have frequently been marginalized in broader social and political movements, *Y'en a Marre* provides a space where women's leadership and strategic input are integral to the movement's success. Women like Denise Safiatou Sow and Maimouna Ndiaye have not only participated in activism but have also shaped the movement's direction from grassroots organizing to shaping key projects and ideologies. Their involvement goes beyond typical administrative roles and showcases their critical roles in strategy, logistics, and the ideological framework of the movement.

By mandating the inclusion of women, in the *Y'en a Marre* commandments, the movement has created a framework where gender equality is not just an ideal but a practice built into its structure. The institutionalized commitment to gender inclusion challenges the patriarchal norms that have historically excluded women from leadership positions and decision-making spaces. The comparison with past movements, such as *Yewwu Yewwi*, further showcases the evolution of feminist activism in Senegal. It demonstrates how women's roles in political movements have grown more prominent, even when their efforts have been underappreciated in the mainstream discourse. Despite the historical challenges of patriarchy, women in *Y'en a Marre* exemplify the resilience, and leadership needed to resist gender inequality and push for broader societal change.

Through their actions, these women have not only fought for gender equality within the movement but have also contributed to shaping a vision of Senegal's future that is more inclusive and socially just. The story of women in Y'en a Marre challenges conventional narratives about activism and leadership in African political movements and underscores the importance of recognizing and amplifying their voices. Their work is a testament to the potential of gender-inclusive activism to reshape societal structures and create lasting change.

Conclusion

This thesis demonstrated and discussed the transformative role of *Y'en a Marre* in Senegalese politics as well as its broader implications for non-violent resistance in Africa. While the movement successfully mobilized citizens to challenge President Abdoulaye Wade's administration, its long-term impact on voter behavior, political engagement, and the rise of alternative political voices remains an important area for future research. Understanding how *Y'en a Marre* has influenced Senegal's political landscape can provide valuable insights into the sustainability of grassroots activism in fostering democratic governance.

For future research, comparative studies with other non-violent movements, such as Balai Citoyen in Burkina Faso and Filimbi in the Democratic Republic of Congo, would be good to investigate. These analyses can showcase how differing cultural contexts and approaches shape the effectiveness of movements across Africa. By examining these parallels, we can deepen our understanding of non-violence as a tool for political transformation on the continent. Additionally, the role of social media and technology in modern African activism warrants further investigation. For *Y'en a Marre*, digital platforms were instrumental in organizing protests and engaging youth. Future research could explore how technological advancements continue to influence political movements, particularly in terms of youth participation, political awareness, and strategies to counter government suppression.

Finally, this thesis displays the significance of gender dynamics within African social movements. The leadership roles of women like Denise Safiatou Sow and Maimouna Ndiaye within *Y'en a Marre* challenge traditional gender norms and highlight the evolving role of

women in activism. Further studying the intersection of gender, power, and activism could show how movements like *Y'en a Marre* inspire future generations of women leaders.

In conclusion, *Y'en a Marre* exemplifies the power of grassroots mobilization and non-violent resistance in reshaping African politics. By addressing these critical areas for future research, scholars can better understand how these movements can contribute to democratic progress and social justice across the continent.

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