Article

Storytelling through Popular Music: Social Memory, Reconciliation, and Intergenerational Healing in Oromia/Ethiopia

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Abstract: Drawing on a popular music video titled 'Beelbaa' by a young Oromo artist, Jambo Jote, this article discusses the moments and contexts that compel young people to speak up in subtle and poetic ways. By interpreting the content of the lyrics, doing a visual analysis of the music video, and connecting both to contemporary discourses, it explores how researching social memory through music can be used as a lens to understand Ethiopian society, politics, and history. The article draws attention to alternative spaces of resistance as well as sites of intergenerational connections such as lyrics, music videos, songs, and online discussions. I argue that storytelling through music not only bridges differences on problematic and sometimes highly polarized discourses engendered by selective remembering and forgetting of national history, but that it is also indispensable for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. Tuning into young people's music can touch us in ways that are real, immediate, and therapeutic, making it possible for our collective wounds to heal. I further demonstrate that as musical storytelling appeals to multiple generations, it can facilitate mediation, truce, and intergenerational understanding.

Keywords: social memory; reconciliation; peace; popular music; music as resistance; intergenerational healing; Jambo Jote; Oromia/Ethiopia

1. Introduction

Young people are musical actors. There have been recent calls to research how music intersects with questions of social justice to transform harmful contexts (intrapersonal, interpersonal, community, institutional, state, and global) and contribute to radical love and care (Silver 2020, p. 177). While young people use music to voice, connect, and shape their experiences, this expressive space has often been overlooked in the dominant literature, which diminishes their capacity as creators and propagators of musical traditions (Emberly and Davhula 2016). Popular music is studied for its escapism, meaning how people appropriate it for psychological and emotional wellbeing (McFerran and Saarikallio 2014; Schäfer 2016) or as a way to transgress, mobilize, foster activism, recruit, as well as to propagate and indoctrinate (Kong 1995; Rosenthal 2001; Kahn-Harris 2004). The literature further shows how popular music offers a sociological lens to address or understand historical and contemporary social realities (Potter et al. 2020; Rastas and Seye 2019). Scholars, for example, document how popular music fosters community formation in contexts where ethnic minorities are subject to xenophobia, racism, discrimination, and hate speech (Rastas and Seye 2019). Rastas and Seye (2019, p. 605) discuss that music is a racialized field of human agency and that people's reactions to the increase in hate speech and racism have inspired some musicians to take a stand against racism and engage in antiracist causes. Popular music—especially 'political songs'—has enhanced liberation and insurgence movements. They are used to share messages in contexts where national media is saturated with official propaganda. Political songs 'serve the committed through expressing—and thus reinforcing—basic agreements that hold a group' (Rosenthal 2001,

pp. 12–13). The role of political songs in the recruitment of new members of a movement, organization, or otherwise crossing the line into a new identity (and self-identity) as a movement supporter is also documented (Rosenthal 2001). Despite this, there is a dearth of studies on how young people's music opens space for love, care, and reconciliation, facilitating transformative peace between communities that are caught up in cycles of conflicts, and political-historical injustices.

This article locates politics and the quest for intergenerational healing in young people's engagement with and production and consumption of popular music in Ethiopia. It explores how storytelling through music becomes a catalyst for dialogue that fosters intergenerational connections. The backdrop to the study is 'dhaloota qubee' or the 'qubee generation'—young people who came of age in post-socialist Ethiopia after having had access to formal education using 'qubee', the written language of Oromo people. The qubee generation is recognized not only for being in the driver seat of the youth resistance and revolution (2014–2018) but for the ongoing struggle for social, political and educational justice (Abebe 2020). Drawing on an example of a popular music video titled Beelbaa by a young Oromo artist, Jambo Jote, I discuss how researching social memory through music allows us to 'excavate' hidden socio-historical processes that perpetuate oppression and 'diverse unfreedoms' (see Balagopalan et al. 2020). I argue that storytelling through music can not only bridge problematic and sometimes highly polarized discourses engendered by selective remembering of national history, but that it is also indispensable for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. The analysis of Beelbaa's music video offers insights into (young) people's visions of a peaceful future, inviting us to be in tune with their musical storytelling and touch us in ways that are immediate, real, and therapeutic. I further argue that musical storytelling is a powerful tool that appeals to multiple generations, enabling processes of healing, truce, and intergenerational understanding. I achieve these objectives through ethnographic observation, interviews and visual analysis of the music video. I also draw on online forums on the music video's public reception and the debates it generated regarding identity, politics, and interethnic relations in Ethiopia.

The article is situated in ongoing debates about the need to decolonize knowledge production and the long history of Indigenous research practices (Smith 2012; Chilisa 2020; de Sousa Santos 2014, see Sections 2.1 and 2.2 for more on this). Decolonial knowledge production is about 'centering of the wisdom of those who are most affected by the issues that are being addressed' (Silver 2020, p. 187) and contributing an authentic representation of their social realities. It has been argued that social research valorizes 'voice' and 'perspective' at the expense of the diverse ways in which people express themselves. Spyrou (2018) critiques the privileging of 'voice' in speech-based research, arguing that favoring the 'voices' of research subjects downplays the meanings and reasons of their 'silences' as well as the many 'other' ways in which they speak up or 'become vocal'. Emberly and Davhula (2016, p. 438) further argue that the fixation to create space for voices overlooks how people employ tools, such as music, to express themselves in a dynamic, articulate, and meaningful manner. As academic research tends to be abstract and conducted in the context of power imbalances, engaging with such sites of knowledge as lyrics, songs, music, and music videos not only foreground local/emic knowledge but also revitalizes it.

In the following sections, I first explore methodological and conceptual aspects of researching social memory, discussing how and why music storytelling provides us with a unique lens to engage with history, politics, and questions of social justice. After presenting my positionality and background information regarding Oromo musical tradition, I discuss the music video Beelbaa. By contextualizing and interpreting the music video, I engage with young people's discursive visions of peace and the paradoxes of national reconciliation, as well as problematic interpretations of history and identity. Finally, I reflect on the transformative capacity of music to facilitate peaceful coexistence, bridging intergenerational and interethnic boundaries and healing social wounds.

2. Researching Social Memory and Politics through Music

2.1. Music and Political-Social Memory

Recent debates within social sciences and humanities contest what constitutes knowledge, using a decolonial lens to move beyond the western construction of scientific/academic knowledge to reveal complexly situated knowledge systems of unschooled societies (de Sousa Santos 2014; De Castro 2020; Cheney 2019; Abebe and Biswas 2021). Decolonizing knowledge has been recognized as a strategy of tackling what de Sousa Santos (2014) regards as global 'epistemic injustice' or 'cognitive injustice'. This involves reactivating knowledge systems that have been rendered useless by colonial and neoliberal conditions. Scholars have also called for recovering the 'global epistemological loss' (Abebe and Biswas 2021) engendered, in part, by powerful profit-driven systems of knowledge production and circulation, including university-based research. Practices of the revitalization project include multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary engagements to 'exemplify forms of humble, creative, speculative, generous but robust collaboration' (Kraftl 2020, p. 6), in which 'conventional' social-scientific and phenomenological commitments of research are brought into conversation with diverse forms of Indigenous knowledge. This implies engagements with multilingualism, musical performance, and ways of transmitting collective memories such as rituals, oral history, folklore, dance, art, handicrafts, proverbs, poetry, drama, as well as architectures and technology that reflect the histories, cultures, and identities of pre-colonial societies (Tedla 1995; Dibaba 2015).

Previous studies in ethnomusicology demonstrate the cultural capital assigned to music, showing its entertainment value (playfulness and relaxation) and 'decorative' and recreational values (Kasule 2013; Mapaya 2014; Musungu 2019). The communicative and informative capacity of music is also evident in 'educating the uneducated' campaigns (Rosenthal 2001, p. 12) that aim to create awareness on social concerns, including on questions of social and political justice (Digolo 2003). Yet, music also provides us a unique lens to explore inequality, oppression, and social injustice. It can serve as a methodological and theoretical means of researching what one may call memory narratives or literary memory (Dibaba 2015). Music reflects memory and imagination: 'people's shared cognitive forms and societal values, and their associated behaviors and underlying moral codes and concepts' (Ngugi 1999, p. 11). Tapping into musical archives of non-schooled societies—and especially 'studying the histories and the social forces embodied in their music genre' (Rastas and Seye 2019, p. 604)—enables us to understand the deeply rooted consciousness and popular practice that underpin personal stories (Jackson 2002). Researching music can also be a way of redressing 'elite bias' in knowledge production. It recognizes more explicitly the significance of popular culture—defined as the everyday practices, experiences, and beliefs of what has been called 'the common people' (Kong 1995, p. 448)—and explores how memory, history, and politics are intertwined. Music allows us to not only 'remember' knowledge that has been excluded, forgotten, left on the margin, or 'lost', but also challenge the mainstream and disrupt the status quo.

I conceptualize storytelling through music as the practice whereby musicians (e.g., singers, lyricists, performers, etc.) build on and seek to communicate narratives around intimate/personal, societal, and historical experiences. Storytelling through music is a process in which the public domain meshes into the private, and vice versa. This implies that it is an activity that hinges not only on experiences that are considered collective but also creates versions of social reality that are shared, contested, embraced, and/or even rejected. In Africa, it is difficult to conceptualize economic and political practice as distinct from aesthetic principles of music (Askew 2003). Furthermore, music offers a 'philosophy and epistemic engagement in reverse engineering, self-defense, and self-liberation' (Chikowero 2015). In her book, *African Music, Power and Being in Colonial Zimbabwe*, Chikowero (2015, p. 1) considers music to be 'the battle lines for the unfinished program of intellectual and cultural self-liberation'. African colonized societies deployed their music to fight for freedom from colonial domination and reassert their cultural dignity and sovereignty (Kasule 2013; Dibaba 2015, 2018). This history of self-rehumanization

through music informs the need to seriously conceptualize African modes of self-authorship as multifaceted, interconnected, and ongoing (Chikowero 2015).

Music has long been part of African societies; it is also a site of control and manipulation by the powerful, including colonial governments. This was evident long ago in the writing of Ray E. Phillips's *The Bantu in the City* (Phillips 1938), which documented that 'whoever captures the leisure time of the people, gets the people' (p. 112). Mhoze Chikowero further argues that 'where architectures of control' in colonial Africa were concerned, 'the spotlight is [. . .] re/creation.' (Chikowero 2015, p. 112). Yet, the crusade to stifle creativity and musical performance is not just confined to colonial governments but prevails in repressive postcolonial states as well (Kasule 2013).

In Ethiopia, the criminalization of musical communication spans the experiences of artists across generations and political regimes. It involves state practices such as institutionalized censorship and the underfunding of the development of culture, language, and music. Informants in this study said that, during the Imperial Haile Selassie regime, spies were sent to 'discover what is new in the music front' among the Selale Oromo who have a long-standing tradition of weaving political dissent in their songs of love and romance. They also shared with me a story of how Ethiopia's prime minister, the late Meles Zenawi (1955–2012)—who came to power in 1991 after having led a guerilla war for 17 years, overthrowing the socialist military regime—expressed frustration against the proliferation of resistance songs, stating the 'uphill battle of fighting a battalion of singers'.

During the socialist regime (1975–1991), music was considered a contradictory resource. On the one hand, it was a potentially dangerous weapon of dissent and resistance, so its production was regulated nationally. Musicians were required to submit their lyrics, music, and visual materials for approval at a government censorship board that made sure that their creative work (in cassette form at that time) could not be misconstrued or interpreted politically. Singers also had to include at least one patriotic song about the 'motherland' in their album for obtaining approval of their music production. This is because such music was believed to inculcate ideals of patriotism in the minds of the young, perpetuating certain ideologies and political socialization. Artists told me about the painstaking process of censorship and their struggle to defend, articulate, and reassert their 'being' through music during socialism and beyond. Artists variously deploy their skillful musical storytelling—as strategies of inculturation, accommodation, activism, resistance, and revolution (Dibaba 2015; Abebe 2020). Their struggle both represents how the cultural front is a creative site for a dialectical fashioning of the oppressed self, the subjugated subject, and the self-liberating being (see also Kasule 2013; Chikowero 2015).

Supported by social media, music has been utilized recently as a strategy of reclaiming identity and a tool of activism by youth, including the fight for human rights. They do so against powerful and restrictive institutional measures. It is not uncommon for artists to be prevented from holding concerts or have their songs 'delegitimized' and, subsequently, not be able to air their songs on national media outlets or even 'free' Frequency Modulation (FM) radio stations. During the 2014–2018 Oromo protest movement, 'resistance' and 'revolution' songs were banned—if not by law, in practice. For example, I observed that government security forces routinely checked the mobile phones of young people to see if they were listening to or circulating songs that encouraged the protests. Musicians told me how police systematically denied permits and security clearances to concert organizers if the concert would include artists whose songs were associated with the youth protest movement. Artist-activists—some of whom were harassed, imprisoned, tortured, or in exile for fear of persecution—expressed how this is a violation of their right of voicing their ideas and cultural identities. They also spoke about the continued criminalization of musical culture and hidden forms of denigrating and dehumanizing their creativity as artists and performers.

2.2. Positionality and Analysis of Music Videos

This article is part of a larger study that uses popular music as a lens to understand generational and ethnic relations, politics, and development in Ethiopia. It builds on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2015–2018 on 'miktivism', i.e., the role of music in activism for social justice. I studied how young people deploy music to speak about precarity engendered by land grabbing and educated unemployment in the Oromia region (Abebe 2019, 2020). I interviewed singers who produce music videos that contest diverse forms of political unfreedoms as well as government's policy of development (The research involved (participant) observation of online spaces (e.g., specific sites for popular music, online forums, media texts, and participation in other online communities) and offline spaces (e.g., protests, demonstrations, meetings, and concerts). In addition, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were held with singers, lyricists, performers, and producers.

Interpretation of Beelbaa's song lyrics and music video discussed in Sections 4.2 and 4.3 employs what Ennew et al. (2009, p. 34) call the 'back translation methodology'. Building on this methodology, I first transcribed and translated the lyrics from Oromiffa into English. Afterward, a native speaker of Oromiffa translated back my translation into English. This enabled me to compare differences and similarities and explore meanings that have been 'lost in transition' as well as identify some new ideas that were introduced. Further, another native speaker translated the lyrics from Oromiffa into English, facilitating a comparative discussion of the translations and ambiguous words. Whereas translation is 'dialogical, political, and partial' (Silver 2020, p. 177), it creates conversations with and bridges the gap between languages, cultures, knowledge systems, and epistemological traditions. However, engaging with music videos as a tool to study society and politics goes beyond translation to instead incorporate analysis (content, discourse, visual). This is because collective memory entangles people in nostalgic memory work (Walder 2011), that is, what they remember and forget is shaped by present needs and unmet demands as well as the desire to re-envision the future. People's meaning-making processes of music may also reflect collective narratives of the past as something different than what the past was. This implies that using music to study social memory requires excavating the historical and socio-political context in which they came about and how society envisions life by 'taking cultural artifacts and combine and manipulate them into new kinds of creative blends' (Knobel and Lankshear 2008, p. 22).

The goal of studying music to engage with social memory is also to go beyond undertaking literal translation, which does little to unearth their meanings. It is knowing what does not immediately translate (Silver 2020), to bring into the mix cultural knowledge and ask how multiple interpretations are possible. This requires unpacking meanings, and maintaining associations between the song's lyrics, language, visuals, and the cultural, political, and historical contexts (Knobel and Lankshear 2008; Rose 2016). As Rastas and Seye (2019, p. 599) argue further, it is impossible to 'imagine popular music without the visual content that accompanies the sound'. Whereas words and lyrics conjure complex meanings in and of themselves, when they are combined with sound, moving pictures, images, and soundtracks, their multiple assemblages stir the imagination. The analysis draws insights from visual methodologies (Rose 2016) and research on digital forms of cultural production, both of which can be considered particularly topical in generating situated knowledge on music videos. Rose's advice of analysis of music materials that draws attention to a closer study of the relationship between discourse, images, and context is instructive (for more on methodological issues of engaging with poplar music, see Rosenthal 2001). The study adhered to basic principles of ethics and the ethical guidelines on internet research prepared by the Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH 2019).

I am inspired by scholars who seek to reactivate Indigenous knowledge through translating, disseminating, and holding sacred multiple ways of being, knowing, learning, and acting (Smith 2012; Chikowero 2015; de Sousa Santos 2014; Chilisa 2020). I grew up

observing and listening to Oromo folk songs at religious and cultural festivals. My parents also audio and video recorded such songs that were replayed at home afterward. I see immense value in studying archives of music as historical evidence—to delve into the collective memory of societies that may not have written/recorded documentation. As Silver (2020) reminds us, while these resources may not be created for research or teaching, they often cross boundaries and communities and inspire radical scholarship. In seeking to create critical knowledge, I challenge myself to move beyond my role as a scholar to engage in a theory of change that sees music as not only a space of relief but also as a tool that contributes to peace, reconciliation, and intergenerational healing. I hold the knowledge of ordinary people from which I acquire cumulative knowledge in high regard. I learn from immersive listening, translating, interpreting, and analyzing songs and music videos. In so doing, I bring my motivation to reconnect with my ancestors' culture and history into a relationship with my ongoing identity as a father and scholar of childhood studies native to Ethiopia. I spent the past two decades in my present home in Norway—first being educated and then as an educator as well as a researcher with capacity sharing endeavors with several academics and institutions in resource-poor contexts. My academic work also allowed me to undertake longitudinal ethnographic fieldwork, documenting the cultural, material, and political-economic contexts in which young people come of age in Ethiopia.

3. Oromo Musical Culture and Tradition

Oral traditions—especially songs and storytelling—are important components of Oromo culture and identity. Oromo musical tradition offers distinct and valuable insights into how and why they cultivate and foster musical arts within the multicultural national framework and beyond. Ethiopia is a 'nation of nations', and music is a key marker of identity. The Oromo population, which accounts for over 35 million of the country's 105 million inhabitants, speaks Oromiffa—a Cushitic language. They live primarily in Oromia Regional State, geographically spanning Ethiopia's central, western, southern, and southeastern plateau and lowlands. A sizeable Oromo-speaking community resides in Somalia and Kenya (about half a million), a legacy of the interplay between Africa's colonialism and boundary demarcation of the infamous 1984 Berlin conference on the one hand, and, on the other, Ethiopia's much contested 'nation-building' of the late 20th century.

Although Ethiopia was not directly colonized by European powers, coloniality of power underpins its national historiography. The close ties Abyssinian kings had with Europeans facilitated the supply of arms that created the political conditions that legitimized the incorporation of Oromo land into the present-day Ethiopian state (Megerssa 1996). This 'historical experience as colonized people in Greater Ethiopia' (Baxter et al. 1996, p. 8) and the conditions under which they suffered conquest and subjugation informs what Megerssa (1996, pp. 92–93) calls 'the Oromo consciousness'. Dibaba (2015, 2018) further argues that this consciousness is part of the wider 'African personality' that evolves from connections to life, land, and nature, a belief system in a monotheistic Creator (Waqqa) and worldviews that are transmitted orally across space and over time. Oromo language—also called Affan Oromo (meaning 'Oromo mouth')—and music are important features of Oromo tradition (Megerssa 1996). Oromoness is, therefore, both the 'conditions of life' often presented as jiruf-jirenya ('work' and 'living') and social consciousness, sustained through the spoken word—the 'oral literacy'—through which collective aspirations are shared (Megerssa 1996). The interplay of these—tradition, consciousness, and social experience—constitutes what it means to be Oromo and guides their existence as they traverse through the life course (Megerssa 1996).

A vital dimension of social memory I explore is how songs are used to express the social experience of loss, intergenerational trauma, and the struggle for freedom (Dibaba 2015, 2018). I engage with Oromo music as a tool to dig into Oromo collective memory. This is particularly important as the Oromo language was not part of the national education until 1992, and its written language (qubee) is still in its infancy. There is also a struggle to

retain and transmit knowledge and cultural practices in written forms across generations. As Jirata and Benti (2013) note, among Guji Oromo of southern Ethiopia, the introduction of mass schooling has led to the sedentarization of the pastoralist population and removal of children from the livelihood activities of animal husbandry and transhumance, with which cultural practices of storytelling and music are closely entwined. These disruptions of knowledge flow create a 'generation gap', an intergenerational misunderstanding, that Jirata and Benti (2013) argue could be alleviated by incorporating music and storytelling into school curricula. Although young people perform music in community settings, there is a widening gap between the unschooled generation and the new generation who have access to formal education. This connects to a broader concern in the field of applied ethnomusicology that underscores how models of education that restructure society often overlook the important transformative roles embedded within musical traditions (Mapaya 2014).

Music in Oromo culture is taught to children or shared by one person to another orally. My ethnographic observation and interviews reveal that music is considered largely a social activity owned collectively by and a product of society. Few musical instruments are used: drums, clapping, flute, and string-based instruments. The main instrument in Oromo music is the human voice—the vocals of a lead singer and a choir. Traditional Oromo songs reflect issues of mundane day to day community life but are also sites where locally constituted micropolitics are contested (see Dibaba 2015). Music is commonly performed by a lead vocal and a choir in an alternative fashion, something that is also common in 'modern' popular music. In recent years, young musicians have begun to mix choir singing with diverse traditional beats supported by modern musical instruments, thus producing unique genres and soundtracks. *Dhaloota qubee* ('qubee generation') refers to this generation of young Oromos who have come of age after the fall of socialism, having access to formal education using qubee. Remixing Oromo music using modern instruments on a scale that is now considered a 'cultural revolution' is associated with them, contributing to a dynamic and vibrant musicscape. New forms of power are also emerging for musicians who have access to digital means of production.

Another aspect of the qubee generation is that—empowered by the written language—their music videos and soundtracks took radically different dimensions. Learning qubee has enabled musicians to compose lyrics that juxtapose their Oromo consciousness and to sing their way back to power, claiming restitution (of rights, narratives, histories) from systems of domination and exploitation. Young musicians' capacity to tell stories through music is enhanced by digital platforms such as YouTube. Digital platforms enabled them to not only break away from the stifling state censorship but also find alternative mediums of relief and resistance to the hegemonic narratives of mainstream media. These generational responses to questions of freedom through art and music are examples of the multifaceted struggle (qabsoo) in Oromia. Yet, as Dibaba (2018) argues, Oromo oppositional culture including 'political' songs are not mere resistance or resentments 'with a negative and reactive attitude to what is wrong' (p. 96). Instead, they have ethical and social justice dimensions, in that they are a 'realistic source of thinking and acting on what is right for a peace-loving and freedom-seeking people' (Dibaba 2018, p. 96). These flourishing musical traditions need to be seen as part of this proactive engagement, where the older generation engages with folk songs, bringing them into the emblem of culture, whereas the younger generation adopts these songs to generate popular genres that convey diverse messages into the wider world.

4. Poetics of Reconciliation and Intergenerational Healing

4.1. Background to Beelbaa

The music video Beelbaa is produced by King studio/Buriqaa promotion in Addis Ababa/Finfinne. Its production is sponsored by Minew Shewa Entertainment, an American company owned by an Ethiopian American entrepreneur. Minew Shewa Entertainment has a goal of 'promoting Ethiopian arts and culture' and fostering a sense of 'community

solidarity by bringing together diverse populations, young and old, artists and audience to share [. . .] the transformative power of arts'. The lyrics and melody are created by Jambo Jote, an artist known for his unique style of singing, blending folk melodies with modern beats (Figure 1). Jambo Jote also raises socially conscious topics in his work, expressing diverse 'human conditions': love, intimate relationships, dignity, diversity, respect, co-existence, justice, etc. His hit soundtrack that came out at the peak of the youth protest in 2017—Raada Garree ('Heifer')—was an iconic resistance song that mobilized youth. Using the metaphor of a barren calf that is neither strong enough to plow the land nor fertile to reproduce or be milked, he contemplates whether slaughtering her could be a feasible way forward, infusing notions of 'alternatives' and 'serving with purpose'. The song envisages the possibilities of 'change'—suggesting that a new 'political alternative' could be around the corner.

In the following sections, I will present and discuss the music video Beelbaa that came out a few months after the change of political leadership in Ethiopia that was propelled by the youth revolution.

4.2. Presenting Beelbaa's Lyrics

Beelbaa by Jambo Jote—https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QY5bZ9q5a3Y (accessed on 12 November 2020).

The lyrics of Beelbaa tell a captivating story of love and separation woven into narratives of loss, reconciliation, healing, and recovery. The music contains melodies that evolve gradually. One hears three seamlessly flowing melodies in the soundtrack that lasts 6 minutes and 54 seconds. The changing beats have distinct sets of musical instruments, choreography, and lyrics that address a dimension of the love story it tells, contributing a part to its complete message.

The first part of the lyrics focuses on the protagonists' history of separation, highlighting both the desire for reunification and a promise that their separation will not be for life. He asks his lover not to bring up past wounds that left them scarred or be sad and he will do the same.

Addaan baane hinhafnu yaa jigaa koo,	We won't remain apart my love
Sirras enyu naa beeka gubaa koo	Who else knows my suffering better than you
Kan darbees amma dhissi sitti hin kasasu natti hin kassin,	Don't bring up things of the past, as I too will leave it in the past
Wanna yeroon nu goote san yaadde sammuu hin gaabbin	Don't think about what happened to us in the past, and regret
Waan bonni gogse gannatu jiisaa,	What dried up in the summer/sun will get wet in the winter/rain
Ooleen bula malee yooman si dhiisaa	Time may pass but I will never abandon you
Barris dabareedhaan nama geechi yoo rabbi jedhee (2x)	It might be our time/things might go our way; God willing

In the second part of the song, the melody changes slightly along with the singer's style, going into a higher pitch singing. Here, the lyrics speak about the time and place for the protagonists' inevitable meeting, and what they would do to rekindle their long-lost love after they resolved their differences that endangered it.

Barri hindarba na eegi, gadaatu kan milkiiti	Dawning is inevitable, please wait for me, this is a time of good fortune/success
Beelbaa nu fura yoomuu hir'uun barana guutti	Beelbaa (one of the five parties in the gada system) restores relief/mends our wound
Waliif galla kullee koo waldhabni nama miiti	What we lacked in yesteryears, will be abundant this time
	Let's us bring peace, avoid fights that hurt us long
An nan dhufa na eegi irreecha baranaatti	Meet me at this year's Irrecha, as I will be there
Waqeefanna galletoo malkaa hor-arsadiitti	At Hora Arsadi lake, where we thank our Creator
Waan jirtu numat hikika, anaaf sumat walbeeka (2)	We resolve everything ourselves, only us know the issues well (2)

Jirtuu mammagaallan koodee tiyyaa	Greetings to you my beauty,
Yaa jaalala ijoollummaa kan biyyaa	My young-age sweetheart from my village/country
An amma si argun koo waan hin oollee	It is certain that I will see you soon
Nan dhabe dacheerra kann si caalee,	Nothing else on this planet is better than you
Waan na dhukkubus wannan wallaale	Wondering about what I am ill of,
Gad jedhee gaaffera lafa laalee	Looking for the cause of my sleeplessness
	I found out that I am missing you.

The third part involves both the lead singer and a choir, exploring themes of truth, love, disorientation, traumas, and pains of separation. It also touches the protagonist's homecoming and why that should be enabled. Following the lead singer, the choir repeats one theme: 'korbeechi bakke hin bulu', meaning an uncastrated sheep—which is considered a valuable resource in Oromo society—does not sleep outside where he wonders at daytime.

Bakkalchi dhugaa mumul'achaa jira	Light of truth is shining on the horizon
Barri dukkanaa suni darbeera	Oh, that period of darkness has passed leaving its pain
Mee kamtu akkakee nat dhiyaata	Who else is closer to me? You are my only real friend.
Arge firi koo suma ijibaata	Despite being far away, with my complicated problems
Lafti haa fagaatu rakkinni haa hammaatu	Nothing is greater than seeing you
Annaf si argachuurra homtuu hin caalu	My beautiful love, my homecoming is inevitable
Rabbi yoo jedhe kullee koo galli hin ooluu	
Korbeechi bakke hin bulu (2)	Ram does not sleep outside
Egga koo galli hin oolu	My beautifully slender lover, my homecoming is certain
… korbeechi bakke hin bulu	Ram does not sleep outside
Qallookoo galli hin oolu	
… korbeechi bakke hin bulu	
Asii fi achi hinlaalu	
… korbeechi bakke hin oolu	
Dhafer ken is call	Nothing is greater than you
… kombucha bake him bulk	Ram does not sleep outside

The soundtrack repeats all three melodies one more round, but the lyrics change. In the second round, Jambo Jote introduces new themes that deepen ideas raised in the first round. For example, in the second round, the song elaborates on secret stories of the protagonists as well as the problems that caused their separation. One also learns that the protagonists were childhood friends and lovers who grew up together playing games of 'obstruction' (where children mischievously tie grass on fields so that whoever crosses it would trip) in their village where he promises to take her back after they have reconciled (Figure 2). He suggests how their love deserves another chance, a new beginning. He sings about going back where they grew up, rediscovering their place of togetherness. However, one theme that recurs in both the first and the second round is making up and reconciliation by forgetting past differences—where the singer promises he will not bring them up, nor should she. They need to talk heart to heart to understand each other.

Figure 1. Artist Jambo Jote.

Figure 2. Children playing games of obstruction.

Gargar bane hin hafnu yaa jigaa koo	We will not remain separated
Simalees namuu hin bekku gubaa koo	I have no one else who truly gets me
An amma wannan yaaden ichitiidhaan sitti odeessee	This secret I wanted you to know
Hin hambisu rakkoon kun na tiruu kee biyyaa bassee	This problem will not hold me, your love, out of my place/country forever
Namati hin nan himinii looyeen dhufa qarreeti	Don't tell anyone, I will come before sunrise
Kunoo iyya hindaaqqoo hafoo lafa bariitti	
Bara meqqa waal sakkaalle wal illalle akka alagaatii	We shackled each other for long, as if we were foes?
Natti hirkadhu qallootoo nuti gaadisa waliiti	Lean on me we are protector of one other,
Bashaqqannaa galleetoo qa'ee itti guddanneeti	Let's come back to where we grew up and have fun
Wan haftes numatu hiika anaaf sumatu wal beeka	We can resolve all the rest, we understand those issues
Mariituu hunda hiika	If we discuss we can resolve anything
. . . korbeechi bakke hin bulu	Ram does not sleep outside
Hir'uu tenyaa nutu bekka	We know what is lacking
. . . korbeechi bakke hin bulu	Ram does not sleep outside
Jibbaaf hammeennya diigi	Demolish hate and evil
korbeechi bakke hin bulu	Ram does not sleep outside
Hora-arsadiitti naa eegi	Meet me at lake Hora-Arsadi
korbeechi bakke hin bulu	Ram does not sleep outside

4.3. Contextualizing and Interpreting Beelbaa

The music video Beelbaa is about homecoming. It tells the story of a couple who were separated by bad circumstances. The music video shows the return of a young man who had long left his childhood home to live elsewhere. It demonstrates the young man's quest to be reunited with his protagonist wife and start life afresh. The video starts by showing the artist—Jambo Jote—standing on a canoe/boat on lake Hora-Arsadi. It then shows the life of the protagonist man and woman apart, the tiring journey he makes to reconnect with her, traveling a long distance by foot, alone (Figures 3 and 4). The lyrics suggest that the couple have come a long way, overcoming painful years of separation. The trajectory of their life stories from a boy and a girl growing up in their 'native homeland'— Bashaqqannaa—playing on the fields as childhood friends to lovers, buddies, partners, husband and wife, to individuals leading separate lives 'as if they were foes' is instructive about their resiliency during the assaults of time. Time and temporality (e.g., yeroo, barri) here have multiple meanings beyond the conventional 'clock-time'. They denote occasions, happenings, or events that are historic, present, future, and cyclical. The lyrics explore change and transformation, using the metaphor of seasons—rain, sun, summer, winter, this time, yesteryears, etc. The passage of time is presented as an antidote to recovery from the traumas and loss borne in their untold story. Jambo Jote states how 'times have now changed', that the governance of life seems to have aligned with their ethos. He suggests the 'end of the dark period', and that 'truth of light is on the horizon', invoking a 'hopeful future'. The emotional poignancy of these lyrics reaches across multiple themes— interweaving a messy mix of loss, separation, rupture, vulnerability, pain, connection, hope, and love. The lyrics connect change and history and how their present 'fortunes' call for gratitude and a reaffirmation of life as a powerful motivating force. Towards the end, the arrival of the young man at his home is shown, with people from the community celebrating around an evening bonfire, singing and dancing (Figure 5).

The music video came out on YouTube on 29 September 2018, a few days before the celebration of Irreecha, an annual cultural and thanksgiving ritual that marks the beginning of the harvest season. Irreecha days involve ceremonies and sacraments where people go to lakes and rivers carrying grass and daisy flowers, giving blessings to each other, and thanking their Creator (waqqa). Historically, Hora-arsadi lake, located 40 km south of the capital Addis Ababa/Finfinnee, is a site that attracts millions of people (Figure 6). The location where the music video was recorded—on lake Hora-arsadi and its environs—and the timing of its release convey a symbolic message, namely paying tribute to the men, women, and children who died in the 2016 Irreecha ritual (at the height of the Oromo youth revolution). At that ritual, instead of the elected elderly chiefs—Abba Gada—who normally lead the ceremony and give blessings, government-appointed officials took the stage. In response, the crowd began to demonstrate what has now become a widely known Oromo sign of oppression (arms crossed and held above head). The gathering took a political tone when one young activist took charge of the microphone and chanted 'Down Down TPLF' (Tigrayan People Liberation Front)—the ruling party until the political reform in 2018. Subsequently, government security forces fired teargas and bullets on the crowd and hundreds of people died due to a stampede, drowning, and bullet shots.

Figure 3. Protagonist young man.

Figure 4. Protagonist young woman.

Figure 5. Celebrating homecoming and reconciliation.

As the music transitions from the first melody to the next, Jambo Jote mentions a proposal for a meeting—the protagonist tells his wife to meet him at 'this year's Irreecha

ceremony of Hora-arsadi'. As noted above, Hora-arsadi is a sacred site where people collectively ask for forgiveness from the Creator, but it also resonates with the Oromo culture of peacemaking. While the singer verbally articulates the lyrics about this 'planned date', the video visualizes Hora-arsadi and evergreen sycamore trees (Odaa) to conjure images and imaginations of places where Oromo traditional Council (gada) meet to mediate conflicts as well as discuss concerns regarding the welfare of the community they are elected to serve. The shade of Odaa tree is where Oromo basic laws (seera) are enforced—grievances heard, wrongdoings corrected, and decisions given—'all out in the open'. The Odda tree is also a symbol of democracy and of Oromo people's aspiration for political freedom (Figure 7).

Although Beelbaa is presented as the life story of a couple, the sociopolitical striving injected into it through carefully choreographed, figurative lyrics and videography generate a vivid perspective of a multi-layered story of love, power, politics, and quest for national reconciliation. One popular interpretation is that it represents the need for a genuine national dialogue that concretizes the perceived political change in Ethiopia. The metaphor of dialogue between the couple who live apart evokes a transformative political discussion between the state and otherwise excluded political groups, involving them as active participants in the political transition the country is said to have embarked upon. Yet, the song also suggests mediation—to create a space for historically marginalized populations to air the grievances of past injustices to talk about them openly. The lyrics raise complex ideas around memory and peace and the desire to transcend the sufferings of the past. These sufferings are not explicitly stated to be engendered by the political history of the period the protagonists live. However, we know that they are characteristics of trauma—separation, loss, migration, threats, loneliness, sleeplessness, displacement—problems the protagonist told his wife about 'in confidence' before he fled to live elsewhere. The music personalizes a cultural narrative of historical injustices experienced by Oromo communities. By connecting the couple's history of loss and recovery with cultural mediation practices, it suggests that estranged political forces need to come together for national reconciliation.

The lyrics also imply the significance of identifying and recognizing problems as preconditions for addressing them. The phrase 'if we discuss we can resolve everything' reminds us of the potential that dialogue has for peacemaking and conflict resolution. It echoes open and inclusive discussion, highlighting the value of talking about present differences and historical injustices. Interpreting the music video, one cannot help but think that reaching consensus regarding one's troubled past not only helps to come to terms with it, but it is also indispensable for healing and moving forward. The song suggests that going beyond history requires purposeful acts of peacemaking. It entails 'putting out the fire' first—something the protagonist woman does literally while her husband returns home—which figuratively could mean truce. Yet, as I will discuss below, letting go of the past—'forgetting history'—is not erasing or denying its existence or consequences. Instead, it is 'knowing' and embracing its contemporaneity in the lives, pains, fears, hopes, and aspirations of the present generation, calling for radical acts of forgiveness. Jambo Jote's emphasis on discussing past issues as a prelude to forgetting past wounds is instructive of how truce and reconciliation are preconditions to transformative peace. His elicitations call for not only imagining collective responses but also opening spaces for action—spaces for intergenerational understanding—where the 'social wounds' engendered by powerful political-historical circumstances are acknowledged and discussed so that they can potentially be transformed and healed.

It is worth noting that the song came about at a moment in Ethiopia's history when the language of 'inclusive democracy' and 'opening up the political space' took hold in the national discourse and when several exiled activists and opposition political parties—previously categorized as 'terrorist groups'—returned home. The idea of 'homecoming', a theme in the song, is construed as the coming back of banished political parties, including the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). In this sense, the story the song bears coalesce with the way politicians and citizens alike started to reimagine 'what could be' and 'what is possible'

regarding the country's politics and future. Furthermore, the music video shows how people construct a new hut in which the protagonist couple will reside. Men and women pull together labor and resources, mixing soil with grass and water to prepare a sticky mud and using it to plaster the wall of erect split wood (Figure 8). Building collectively could be understood as the project of nation-building, in which its inhabitants could be brought together as stakeholders. It lends interpretation on building a nation in ways that are not only inclusive but also appeal to and reflect the desired image of its population.

Figure 6. Lake Hora Arsadi/Site of Irreecha.

Figure 7. Sycamore Odda tree.

The evocations by the song's lyrics to transcend 'hate and evil' and 'obstructing one another' are reminders to move beyond practices and narratives that reflect the contemporary polarized, national political environment. At the center of this polarization is the tendency to frame, for example, proponents of 'multinational federalism' as the antipode to 'Ethioipianness' rather than viewing them as advocates of diversity and a system of decentralized governance. It is not uncommon to witness in social media feeds that emerge from Ethiopia and Ethiopians in diaspora narratives that inflict epistemological violence, in which people who hold political opinions different from those in power are rendered 'problematic' and 'the other'—'ethnic separatists', 'anti-peace elements', or 'destructive forces'—that conspire to wear down the sovereignty and 'unity' of the country.

Figure 8. Collective homebuilding.

5. Identity and Politics of Remembering and Forgetting

Beelbaa has generated debates about the meanings of nation, unity, identity, rights, language, history, systems of governance, etc. In this section, I will discuss three key aspects of these debates, namely identity politics (e.g., Oromo*ness* and Ethiopian*ness*), interpretations of national history, and the politics of forgetting and remembering engendered by the song's lyrics. This discussion is informed by online forums and analysis of the comment field of the music video, which has been watched widely, with nearly seven million views on YouTube.

Most comments on the music video begin with appreciative notes saying how the work is 'timeless', 'shows raw talent', and 'deserves an award'. Many viewers wrote how they have listened to the song and watched the music video 'countless times', and are 'addicted', 'touched', 'moved', or 'get emotional' by it. They praise the musician saying '#1', 'superstar', 'skillful', 'an Ethiopian free of racism', and that the Leza national award he received in 2019/20 is 'the right award for the right person'. One striking theme is how some viewers liked the music video, although they 'do not understand the language' and wished they 'knew what he was saying'. The comment field, which has over 3500 threads (that I have read) written in English, Amharic, and Oromiffa, is replete with remarks by viewers who mention their ethnic background or country of origin and provide an account of why they like the song or how they ended up on this space. One recurring comment is that viewers are from various and different ethnic groups, but they love the song or have fallen in love with it (e.g., 'I am from Tigray or Amhara and I don't know why I like Oromo Muzika').

The theme of liking the music video by the viewers despite a language disidentification with Oromiffa suggests an interesting paradox—how ethnicity and language are markers of identity, despite the dominant national rhetoric that downplays them. I raise this point because one would not expect such comments for songs that use other main languages in the country, such as Amharic. It is uncommon for someone to watch an Amharic music video or listen to an Amharic song and say, 'I love it even though I am Oromo'. This observation raises three questions. First, why are Oromo songs presented or talked about as if they are 'different'—and not considered as 'Ethiopian'—as such? Second, how to make sense of such comments that are expressions of diversity when national discourse capitalizes on similarity, unity, and oneness? Third, what are the implications of treating some ethnic groups as 'the Other' when they strive for recognition of their ethnicity, whereas 'privileged groups' unproblematically identify with their ethnic/linguistic backgrounds (a point I will return to later)? Roza Teklay (username) summarizes these contradictions as follows:

> I have seen lots of comments here [which says] "I'm from Amhara, I'm from Tigray but I like Oromo music". Come on guys, what is wrong with you? We all from Ethiopia—[such] comments should be written from [for example] Nigeria, Sudan or from any other country, not from the people who live in the [same] country. You make me feel Oromia is out of Ethiopia.

This comment generated a string of 24 additional comments of which I present one of them here:

> I'm glad to know that I'm not the only one who noticed this. It's so stupid that people don't even realize what they are writing. If you ask . . . almost all of them want ONE Ethiopia, but their ****** comments are so divisive.
>
> (Bene Zemelekot, emphasis in original text)

A related dimension of the online discussion is the hegemonic interpretation of ethnicity and ideals linked to citizenship (Ethiopianness). In Ethiopia, 'ethnicity' is often conflated with 'race'. For example, if someone takes pride in their ethnicity or supports a cause linked to ethnic identity, they tend to be labeled as 'racist'. This is a striking but often overlooked point because the country's ethnic minorities and nationalities who neither have the background nor the 'historical advantage' of being from the dominant language and culture—Amharic, northern highland, Christian—often experience 'double oppression'. Whereas they are underprivileged from the national structures and bureaucracy that leaves no space for linguistic diversity (Amharic is the only official national language), their struggle and aspirations to develop their identity, culture, language, and traditions become a source of 'Othering'. In other words, the very condition that causes their disadvantage becomes the weapon of oppression. This 'double oppression' aggravates the repressed resentment and disenchantment embedded in unequal historical relationships (see Dibaba 2018). The practice of Othering—the tendency to frame cultural, social, ethnic, linguistic, and other differences as 'problematic'—reflects power structures and ideologically hegemonic discourses that heighten the sense of marginalization. It is symptomatic of systems that perpetuate forms of diverse unfreedoms borne out of the entanglement between history, entrenched inequality, and ongoing structural violence (see Balagopalan et al. 2020). It also speaks volumes about institutions that seek to consolidate new forms of power in the mundane, in language and sponsored narratives, producing and justifying violence and systemic oppression. How national identity is discursively sustained (as mutually exclusive to other forms of identities) might account for why the politics of peacemaking continue to be complicated and unfinished.

As the online comments show, the Oromo identity is perceived to be different to other comparable national identities, most notably that of the Amhara but also Tigray (see also Baxter et al. 1996). A closer reading of Ethiopian politics reveals that the 'Oromo question' is tied to resisting the assimilationist nation-building project that does not respect multinational federalism. The current discourse of Oromo politics locates the historical question of recentering itself as a 'dominated majority' into the national political landscape and exercising the right to self-rule and developing Oromoness (Holcomb 2019; Østebø and Tronvoll 2020).

Discourses of what it means to be Ethiopian and its relation to other ethnicities are also contested. One comment reads as: 'I get mesmerized by Oromo music, but I have Ethiopian blood'. Another comment—commonly taken as an articulation of the 'unitary Ethiopia' discourse: 'I have a religion but no race [ethnicity]'. Yohannes Shiferaw considers such comments, which leave no space for debating ethnic identity, deceptive:

> We do love you so much [referring to Jambo Jote] because you are our cousin, you are a part of us, the blood that flows in my vein is the same as yours. Oromos do not get fooled by the idiots, and the fools of today [politicians]. I take pride in Oromo. (translated from Oromiffa)

Analysis of the discussion linked to some of the lyrics of the music video's message—forgetting and remembering—reveals interesting findings. Some viewers wrote about why

the present generation of Ethiopians pays for the actions of an emperor who conquered the Oromo population.

> We would love it if Oromos love us, the problem is they don't forget Menelik [Ethiopia's emperor in late 19 century], whom we don't know, and we are as if the enemy. (translated from Amharic)

Several comments caution why it is problematic to bury the internal history of war and subjugation but selectively glorify wars fought against neighboring countries. One comment read: 'Why are we proud of Ethiopia's external wars but are unwilling to discuss the war in Oromo's heartland' (Atomsa Tedla)? Another comment highlights that Oromo people 'went through a lot to preserve the integrity of the country we live in today, but our accomplishments are neither appreciated nor respected' (Geda Bilisuma). Saken Kemugn (apparently a fictive username) further commented:

> As you say [referring to Jambo Jote], it is better to forget, what is the point of holding onto ancient [history]. [However] even if we try to be like them, those people poke our wounds. We tolerated ... for the sake of this forsaken nation [hoping] maybe a better day will come, and we all would be united [but] we won't abandon being proud of Oromo.

The above excerpts offer an interesting lens to the debates regarding identity and the politics of forgetting and remembering. They highlight how dominant narratives of history are reinforced by what De Jorio (2006, p. 79) calls 'selective remembering' of aspects of a nation's 'glorious past', as they are told from the vantage point of the 'victors'. Selective remembering is often implicated in selective forgetting of the collective wound and trauma borne by real lives, and which are left untreated. Selective remembering and selective forgetting—and the epistemological violence they engender—have actual and potential costs. They make peace and reconciliation uncertain, unfinished, tentative, indefinite, and open. This is evident in how visions 'homemaking' and 'emplacement' sit next to experiences of war, displacement, and expulsion. Construction of development projects sits alongside the destruction of infrastructures key to community wellbeing. A call for healing sits next to practices of inflicting wounds. A claim for reconciliation sits with the dehumanizing effect of the assassination of artists and activists such as Hacalu Hundessa, 'with the call and response of a "cold world"' (Silver 2020, p. 178).

Reconciliation and conflict resolution are radical acts of human behaviors that contribute to intergenerational healing and peace. Peace is a bedrock to coexistence because it emphasizes rectifying the underlying causes of injustice and oppression that make it fragile. Indigenous Oromo's perception of peace is such that it is not 'freely given' (Debelo and Jirata 2018, p. 201). Maintaining peace requires 'continuous and earnest negotiation, social actions, and cooperation among many stakeholders who possess political, cultural, and spiritual powers' (Debelo and Jirata 2018, p. 201). In this sense, transformative peace is predicated on deliberate, 'people-to-people reconciliation' (Tronvoll 2020, p. 58) that consolidates formalized conflict resolution measures. It also requires genuine 'bottom-up' peacemaking that allows affected communities to heal and reimagine their futures in ways that acknowledge their interconnectedness and transcend historical injustices.

6. Musical Storytelling as a Pathway to Healing and Transformative Peace

Jambo Jote's popular music video and the debates it generated on visions of peaceful futures as well as the politics of remembering and forgetting highlight four interrelated issues. First, there is a need to create a truce, mediation, and reconciliation forums as ongoing strategies to quench the thirst for national, interethnic, and intergenerational dialogue. Truce and reconciliation are the foundations of transformational peace. Analysis of the music video demonstrates the dynamic, articulate, and meaningful ways in which young people embody, challenge, and transform the lived and contemporary ideas of interethnic relations in today's national political context. Beelbaa is a resolution and a call to cross-cultural, generational, and political boundaries, facilitating the essential work

of healing and peacemaking. For me, Beelbaa is an aspiration and a collective effort for peace and intergenerational healing. I interpret the music video as an invitation to reexamine practices of selective remembering and collective forgetting. I contemplate its quest for truce as a necessary effort and sacrifice expected of authentic reconciliation. Beelbaa reveals that peace is elusive without acknowledging and embracing history as well as rectifying its lopsided interpretations. It suggests reengagement with history and bottom-up reconciliation processes in ways that facilitate radical acts of forgiveness. Political leaders have 'memory duty' (De Jorio 2006, p. 100). They need to 'demolish' the wall of silence and take seriously the practice of genuine dialogue by presenting a more heterogeneous and an all-encompassing account of the roots of our collective pain, thereby fostering intergenerational understanding and inclusive national identity.

Second, storytelling through music opens a space for intergenerational dialogue and healing of social wounds. 'Social wound' invokes questions of social injustices that are political-historical, perpetuated via present-day social, cultural, and economic systems. I argue that social wounds are about the enduring effects of history and taken-for-granted privileges of those in power that sustain exclusion and subjugation of populations rendered 'the Other'. Its scars are vivid in ethnic minorities and social groups that not only shoulder the burden of cultural unfreedoms but who are also excluded from economic and political decision making. As the analysis of the music video and online discussions revealed, 'wounds' are inflictions—psychological, physical, and epistemological. They are experienced as systemic, cyclical, and intergenerational—'recorded' in the collective psyche and transmitted across generations. The presence of a 'wound' implies a vision of collective wellbeing that must be found within social-political imaginaries, which means that while wounds are painful, and 'wounding' is destructive, they can be healed.

Third, analysis of the music video reveals people's desire to develop a shared vision of nation and nation-building in ways that reflect the cultural and political diversity of its inhabitants. As Sharon Stephen (1995) reminded us long ago, a nation is that interface between construction, representation, and future, a never-ending work of reimagining and remaking a country wrested from the aspirations, hopes, desires, and ideals of its diverse social and cultural groups. In his speech on winning the award for listeners' choice of the best music in 2019/20, Jambo Jote advocated for religious coexistence, stating that followers of Islam, Christianity, and Waqeefanna (Oromo indigenous religion) all pray for love and a peaceful future. He highlighted the role of multilingualism in building respectful relationships and overcoming barriers. He called for the much-needed discussion to upgrade Oromiffa—a widely spoken language in Ethiopia—into a national language, alongside Amharic. In promoting peace and tolerance, Jambo Jote's music video has implications for taming the current highly polarized national political context. It invites us to take seriously the conflict-driven displacements and ongoing unrest and violence. It draws attention to how transformative peace and social justice are intertwined. It is informative of the need to alleviate what Silver (2020, p. 179) regards as the every-day and structural violence and change the environments, policies, and cultural logics that lead individuals and groups to cause and oftentimes simultaneously experience harm.

Finally, the music video is an excellent example of how (young) people overcome the many constraints on their speech and find ways to convey what is important to their lives, ideals, and futures, expressing them via songs and lyrics of high poetic quality. It also makes a case on why we need to respect the modalities they choose to tell their stories, inviting us to *listen* to them and recognize their creativity. This is a key but overlooked point because, historically, articulations of political thoughts or ideological differences are often silenced. They come at the expense of harassment, imprisonment, torture, and, in some cases, assassination. We need to listen closely and recognize the ways in which young people express themselves through popular artistic mediums of storytelling, and how they leverage these stories to promote transformational peace and intergenerational understanding. We also need to engage in practices that mobilize political and material support for the alternative pathways to peace elucidated by their music. The role young

people play in their creative utilization of popular music to promote connection, mutual coexistence, peace, and transform national politics cannot be overemphasized.

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