Fela Kuti was a musician, composer and activist, born Olufela Olusegun Oludotun Ransome-Kuti into a middle class family in Nigeria. His mother was a feminist activist and his father became the first president of the Nigerian Union of Teachers, while both of his brothers became famous Nigerian medical doctors. Like his brothers, Fela was also sent to London to study medicine but decided to study music instead at the Trinity College of Music.

It was at the Trinity College of Music that Fela formed the band *Koola Lobitos*, playing a style of music that he would later call afrobeat. Fela was a gifted multi-instrumentalist who played the saxophone, keyboards, trumpet, drums, and guitar. He was also a talented singer and a highly energetic live performer. His lengthy songs of which most were over ten minutes long were backed up by a consistent groove of drums and bass, a style which heavily influenced the genre of hip-hop.

In 1961, Fela married Remilekun Remi Taylor. They had three children, Femi, Yeni and Sola. Later in his life, Fela became a strong believer in polygamy, and married dozens of women. In 1963, Fela moved back to Nigeria, re-formed *Koola Lobitos* and in 1969, Fela took the band to the United States. It was in the United States that Fela discovered the Black Power movement which would heavily influence his music and political views, he soon after renamed the band *Nigeria ’70*.

Fela and his band, now renamed *Afrika ’70*, returned to Nigeria. He then formed the Kalakuta Republic. Kalakuta Republic was the communal compound that housed Fela’s family, band members, and recording studio; it had a free health clinic, and recording facility. Fela declared this compound independent from the Nigerian government. As popular as Fela's music had become in Nigeria and elsewhere, it was also very unpopular with the ruling government, and raids on the Kalakuta Republic were frequent.

In 1977 Fela and the *Afrika ’70* released the hit album *Zombie*, an attack on Nigerian soldiers using the zombie metaphor to describe the methods of the Nigerian military. The album was a hit but infuriated the government, setting off a vicious attack against the Kalakuta Republic, during which one thousand soldiers attacked the compound. A year later Fela formed his own political party, which he called Movement of the People. In 1979 he put himself forward for President in Nigeria's first elections for more than a decade but his candidature was refused. Fela attempted to run for Nigerian President several times, but was never allowed to.

Fela continued to make music with his new group *Egypt ’80*. His album outputs slowed in the 1990s, and eventually he stopped releasing albums altogether. Rumors were also spreading that he was suffering from an illness for which he was refusing treatment. On August 3, 1997 Fela’s brother, Olikoye Ransome-Kuti, already a prominent AIDS activist announced his younger brother's death a day earlier from Kaposi's sarcoma brought on by AIDS.