

BOMBINO

Agadez

DIGITAL BONUS VERSION



Omara "BOMBINO" Moctar, ...whose given name is Goumar Almoctar, was born on January 1st, 1980 in Tidene, Niger, an encampment of nomadic Tuaregs located about 80 kilometers to the northeast of Agadez. He is a member of the Ifoghas tribe, which belongs to the Kel Air Tuareg federation. His father is a car mechanic and his mother takes care of the home, as is the Tuareg tradition. Bombino was raised as a Muslim and taught to consider honor, dignity and generosity as principal tenets of life.

The Tuareg, known amongst themselves as the Kel Tamasheq, have long been recognized as warriors, traders and travelers of the Sahara Desert - as a people of grace and nobility as well as fighters of fierce reputation. They are a nomadic people descended from the Berbers of North Africa and for centuries have fought against colonialism and the imposition of strict Islamic rule.

Bombino spent his early childhood between the encampment and the town of Agadez, the largest city in northern Niger (population about 90,000) and long a key part of the ancient Sahara trade routes connecting North Africa and the Mediterranean with West Africa. One of seventeen brothers and sisters (including half brothers and half sisters from both his mother and father), Bombino was enrolled in school in Agadez, but he demonstrated his rebellious spirit early on and refused to go. Bombino's grandmother took him in to



keep his father from forcing him to go to school, and, like most Tuareg children, he grew up living with his grandmother.

Eventually, Bombino gave in and began attending a French-Arabic school that taught both French and classic Arabic. After three years, he left the school and at the age of nine he returned to his grandmother to live the life of an independent Tuareg child. The Tuareg culture is matriarchic, and the elder women are considered the chiefs of the community, the wise sages that represent the power of life, generosity and knowledge. Bombino's grandmother instilled in him the Tuareg moral code in order for him to grow up as a respected member of society. Young Tuareg boys are called "arawan n tchimgharen", or "grandmother's children", a term that is considered a badge of honor.

In 1984, a drought hit Niger and Mali, killing most of the region's livestock, forcing people to leave the countryside and move into the cities or migrate to Algeria and Libya. Eventually, Tuareg communities in those countries organized a rebellion to defend their rights, as they felt overlooked and underrepresented by local governments. Before the fighting began, rebels began teaching the community about the goals of the rebellion through song and the recently adopted guitar.

Musicians such as **Intayaden**, **Abreyboun** of **Tinariwen**, **Keddo**, **Abdallah** of Niger and others sang popular songs that proclaimed the rights and heritage of the Tuaregs. The style was called "ishoumar" which derives from the French word "chomeurs" or "unemployed", because Tuaregs had lost their herds in the drought and were left with no other means of supporting themselves. Eventually, the term "ishoumar" became synonymous with "rebels".



In 1990, the first Tuareg rebellion began in Mali and Niger when Tuareg commandos launched an attack against local military and government offices. The governments fought back, declaring Tuaregs enemies of the state and forcing many Tuareg's into exile.

Bombino fled with his father and grandmother to stay near relatives in Algeria. One day some relatives arrived from the front lines of the rebellion, carrying with them two guitars that they left behind for a few months. Bombino began to teach himself to play the guitars, plucking out notes in imitation of the ishoumar songs he had heard.

In 1992 and 1993, the military regime in Niger was replaced with a democratically elected government, and numerous political parties were formed, largely along ethnic lines. A Tuareg party was formed, and music once again played an important role in educating the community, this time about the importance of a democratic system in Niger. While the armed conflict had not formally ended, Bombino and his family decided to move back to Agadez.

During a trip to Niamey, Niger for medical treatment, Bombino met with his uncle **Rissa Ixa**, a famous Tuareg painter, who gave him a guitar. Upon returning to Agadez, Bombino joined the Tuareg political party where he met the best guitarist of the party, a man named **Haja Bebe**. He started



getting lessons, improving to the point where Haja Bebe invited him to join his band. It was during this time that Bombino acquired his nickname. As the youngest and smallest member of the band, the other members called him Bombino, a variation on the Italian word for “little child”.

On April 24th, 1995, the Niger government signed a peace treaty with the rebels and Tuaregs were able to move back to Niger. Around the same time, Bombino got a role as an extra in the French film *Imuhar: A Legend*, which was filmed in the nearby desert. After finishing his work on the film, Bombino settled into life as working musician, performing at political rallies, weddings, and other ceremonies.

He fought often with his father, who did not want his son to become a musician. To escape this problem, Bombino decided to travel to Algeria and Libya in 1996. In Libya, he made friends with some local musicians, and they would spend time watching videos of **Jimi Hendrix**, **Mark Knopfler** of **Dire Straits** and others in an effort to master their licks. Bombino was quickly becoming an accomplished guitarist and was in high demand as a backing musician. While working as a herder in the desert near Tripoli, Libya, Bombino spent many hours alone watching the animals and practicing his guitar.

Eventually, Bombino decided to return to Niger, where he continued to play with a number of local bands. As his legend grew, a Spanish documentary film crew helped Bombino record his first album, which became a local hit on Agadez radio. The success of the album validated Bombino's choice to make a career out of music, and he began playing regularly for tourists and locals alike.

In 2006, Bombino traveled to California with the band **Tidawt** for a tour organized by a non-profit organization. During the trip, he had the chance to record a desert blues version of the **Rolling Stones** classic "Hey Negrita" alongside Stones' members **Keith Richards** and **Charlie Watts**. The track appears on the 2008 album spearheaded by **Rolling Stones** saxophonist **Tim Riese** entitled *Stone's World: The Rolling Stones*

Project Volume 2. Later that year, Bombino served as **Angelina Jolie's** guide to the Niger desert region during a weeklong visit. During their time together, he played her the music of the Tuareg and told her stories of nomadic life in the Sahara.

In 2007, the second Tuareg rebellion began, and the government countermeasures were forceful and indiscriminant. Many civilians were killed and farms and livestock were destroyed in an effort to quash the rebellion. Instead, the government's hard-handed tactics only served to galvanize the Tuareg community, and Bombino and his friends joined the rebellion. Government forces killed two of Bombino's musicians, so he fled in exile to Burkina Faso along with many of his fellow Tuaregs.



In 2009, he met filmmaker **Ron Wyman** who had heard a cassette of Bombino's music while traveling near Agadez. Wyman was enchanted by Bombino's music and spent a year seeking him out, eventually tracking him down to Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, where Bombino was living in exile. While there, Wyman decided to feature Bombino in a documentary he was filming about the Tuareg. Later that year, he brought Bombino to Cambridge, Massachusetts to begin recording the album *Agadez* in his home studio.

Finally, the Tuaregs put down their arms and were allowed to return to Niger. In January 2010, Wyman came to Agadez to finish the album and the film. The sultan of Agadez allowed them to organize a concert for peace at the base of the Grand Mosque, the first time such a performance had been permitted. Over a thousand people came to celebrate the end of the conflict and danced to the irresistible grooves of Bombino and his band.

Although just thirty years old, Bombino's life and travels have exposed him to the problems facing his people. He has taken on the mission of helping the Tuareg community achieve equal rights, peace, maintain their rich cultural heritage and promote education. He is an advocate for teaching children the Tuareg language of Tamasheq, the local Haoussa language as well as French and Arabic, all of which he speaks fluently. "We fought for our rights," remarks Bombino, "But we have seen that guns are not the solution. We need to change our system. Our children must go to

school and learn about their Tuareg identity."

Four thousand years of living in a hostile environment taught the Tuareg that the will to survive with dignity intact is stronger than any external threat. Bombino puts that sentiment to music, writes its anthem, and gives it a life of its own. He is known as being emblematic of the next generation of Tuareg, a new voice of the Sahara and Sahel, fusing traditional Berber rhythms with the energy of rock and roll and songs about peace. After thirty years of drought, rebellion, and tyranny, Bombino extols his audience to remember who they are, but also realize who they can be.

This biography is based largely on an interview conducted with Bombino in December 2010 and on materials prepared by Ron Wyman of Zero Gravity Films.





1 *ahoulâguine akaline*

I Greet My Country

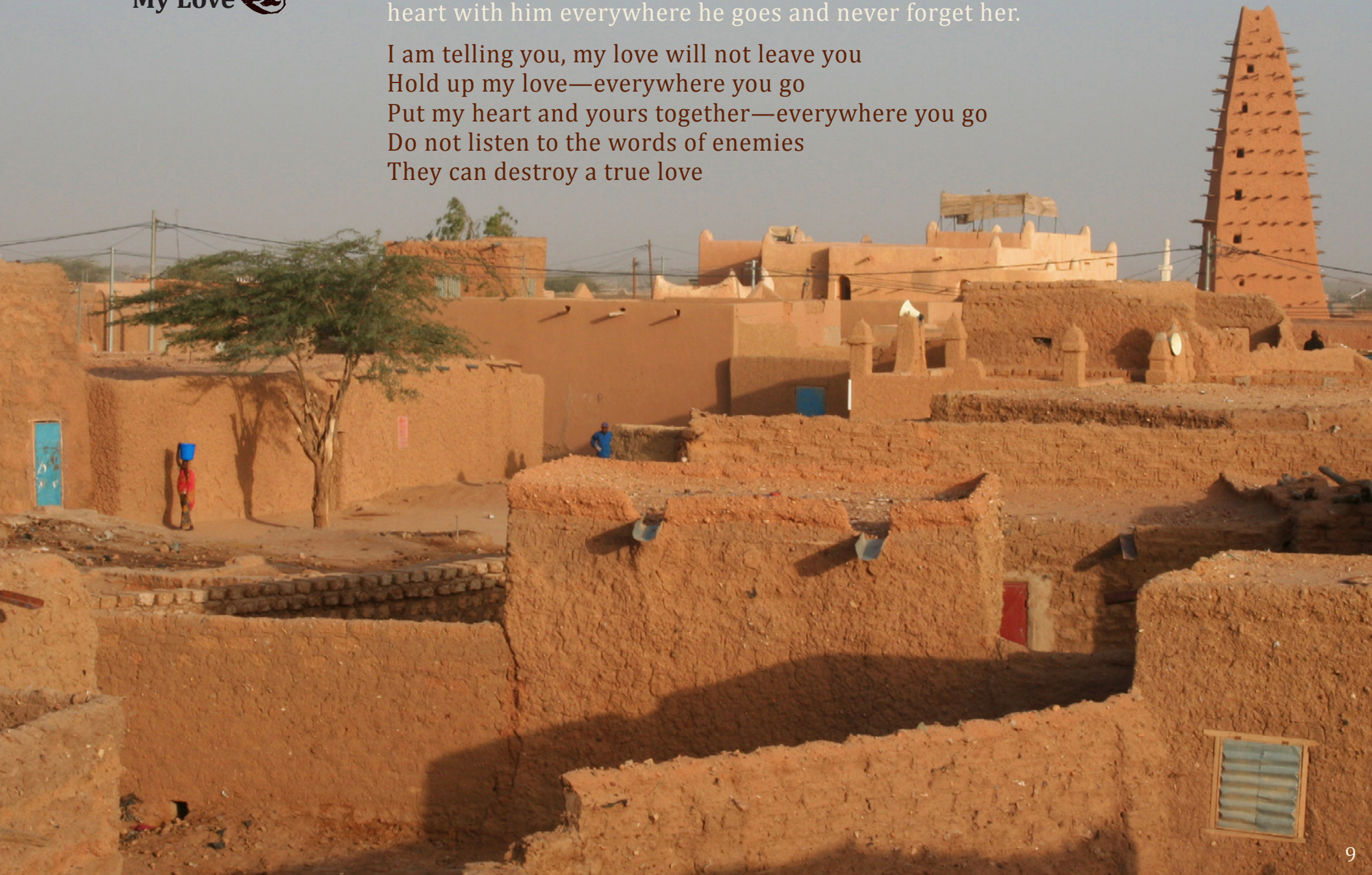
The elder Tuareg guitar player Intayaden originally performed this song. He was exiled to Libya during the drought of 1973. This song is in homage to his homeland, and reflects the pain he endured when he had to leave his family and friends behind. Bombino rearranged this traditional song during the second Tuareg rebellion when he was exiled in Burkina Faso. This song focuses on his homeland, and reaches out to other Tuaregs reminding them to think of their country as well. The trance-like chant about Niger and Mali transports the listener.

I greet my country where I left my parents
I greet my country
I greet my country where I left my love
I greet my country
I greet my country where I left my community
I greet my country
You know that I am suffering from it
I greet my country

2 **tār hāni** My Love

This is a love song written by Bombino. He asks his girlfriend to keep their love in her heart even after she has died. He tells her that he will keep her heart with him everywhere he goes and never forget her.

I am telling you, my love will not leave you
Hold up my love—everywhere you go
Put my heart and yours together—everywhere you go
Do not listen to the words of enemies
They can destroy a true love



3 **Adoun.iã** Life

Bombino wrote this song in 2009 when one of his musician friends, Mahamed Sidi, died in the second rebellion in Niger. The war tore families apart, and destroyed property and landscape. Bombino sings that the war resulted when men forgot the true meaning of life. This song is in homage to his lost friend.

Life! Life! Life! Life! Life! Life!
If you permit yourself to be obsessed by the difficulties of life
They will carry you away!
You will forget your friends
You will forget your community
Life is short and we have to enjoy it during our short stay
Life! Life! Life! Life! Life! Life!



4 kammou taliat

You, My Beloved

In this love song, Bombino expresses his deep love for his first girlfriend. He sings about her love; a love that will forever be in his heart. No matter where he goes, her love follows him.

You - my lover - know that I keep you in my heart
True love deep in my heart links us forever
Everywhere I go, I think about you
And I always listen to my heart
It reminds me of your love
I will never forget you
And I will die with your love
You - my lover - know that
I keep you in my heart



5 tigrāwahi tikmā Bring Us Together

Bombino wrote this song in 2008, expressing the pain he felt after observing the inability of his Tuareg community to unite. He writes that unity among his people is the key to preserving Tuareg culture, land and rights. The Tuareg people are dispersed among five countries and are considered minorities in all of them. It is a constant challenge to unite politically. Bombino sings that this situation makes him ill and for this sickness there is no medication.

I am feeling sick to see my community unable to unite itself
We share the same culture
The same language, the same problems
Why can't we come together?
This situation injures a living heart
We have to love each other and have the same goals in order to fight for our rights
Love must be our link, our culture will bring us together for a better future



6 **tenere**

The Desert, My Home

The word “Tenere” has many meanings, but is largely used to describe the wide-open spaces of the desert. In this traditional song about life in the desert, Bombino highlights challenges of living in such a place, but also writes about the sense of freedom and the desert’s beauty. Bombino was born and grew up in the desert and pledges to remain there until the end of his life.

Wide open spaces of the desert! In the desert! Desert! In the desert!
Desert! In the desert! Oh desert!
There is solitude in the desert, and a lack of water
I am sitting on a dune and thinking about the hostility of life in the desert
I am realizing the hard conditions of the life of my brothers
Sun is burning in the desert. There is no rain in the desert
To live in the desert, we need to have a strong morale
We live in the most beautiful space and the hardest space for life
Wide open spaces of the desert! In the desert! Desert! In the desert!
Desert! In the desert! Oh desert!



7 iyāt idouniā āyāsāhen.

Another Life

This is one of the first songs Bombino wrote. It focuses on friendship and the difficulty of maintaining relationships with old friends in the midst of new monetary wealth. He warns that materialism can destroy the simple life where values of friendship, honor and dignity are cherished.

Another life is the hardest life in that it separates friends
It separates friends because it doesn't allow for heritage
We follow material goods and forget our relationships
We leave our friends because of money
We fool our friends because of material things
Are material things more important than men?

8 Assalam felawan.

Peace To You

Bombino wrote this song during the second rebellion in 2007 in Niger. He greets the Tuareg and asks how they are surviving the hardship. He knows that his people have been persecuted, living in danger and suffer from mental anguish. He tells them to be patient and to never forget their culture and pride. It is an opportunity for him to thank the parents of this generation who raised their children in such trying times. He also asks the rebels to stop the war, which has caused so many problems in their community and to seek another method to gain their rights.

We are greeting you, the Tuareg people
How are you?

How do you experience this difficult situation?

The injustice, discrimination, lack of water, bad health, and lack of education
That refuses to end?

Please preserve our culture! Preserve it! Don't let it disappear!

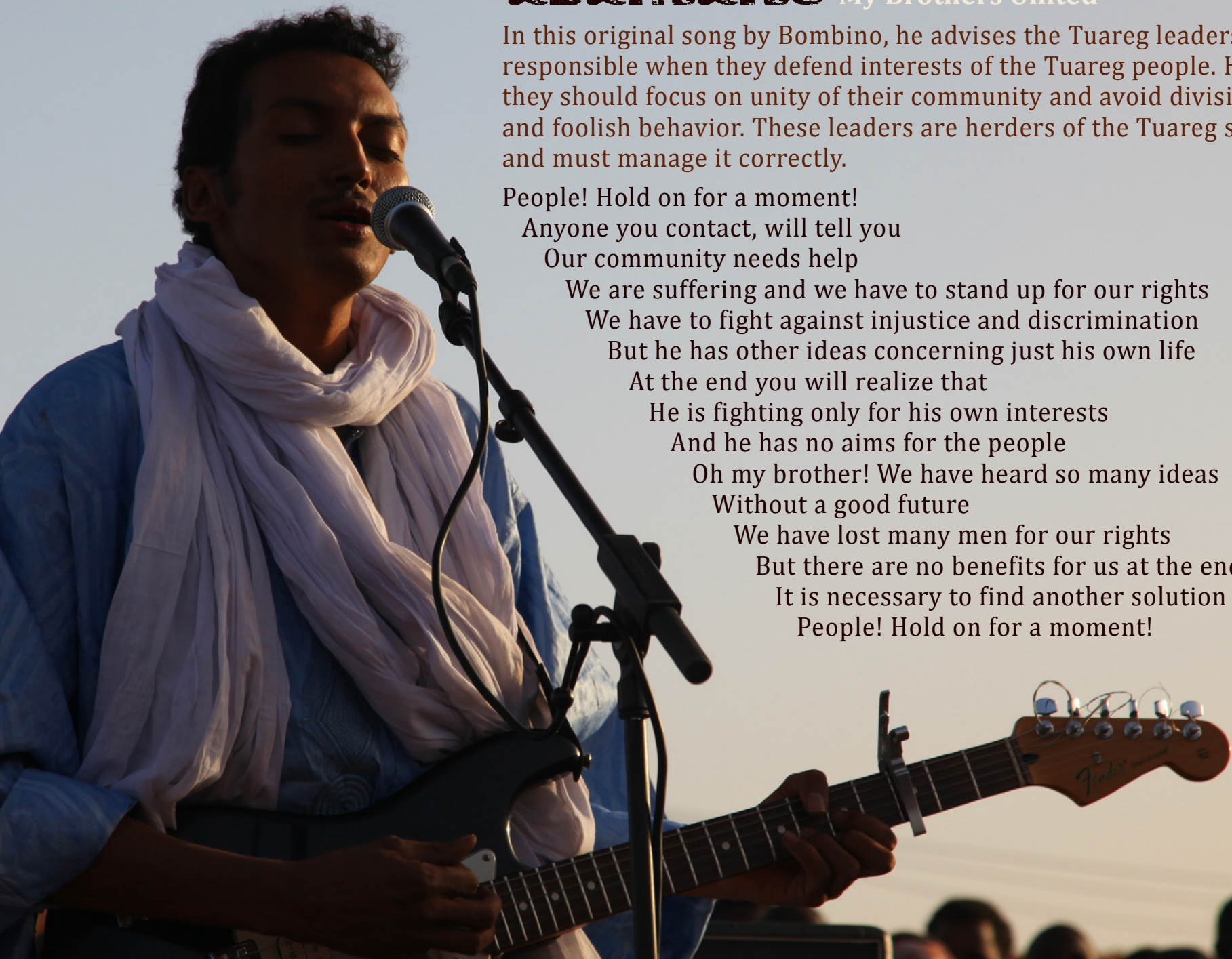
We thank our parents who raised us amidst these difficulties, requiring much patience
Don't let the efforts of our parents disappear for nothing



9 **āzāmane** My Brothers United

In this original song by Bombino, he advises the Tuareg leaders to be responsible when they defend interests of the Tuareg people. He says they should focus on unity of their community and avoid divisiveness and foolish behavior. These leaders are herders of the Tuareg society and must manage it correctly.

People! Hold on for a moment!
Anyone you contact, will tell you
Our community needs help
We are suffering and we have to stand up for our rights
We have to fight against injustice and discrimination
But he has other ideas concerning just his own life
At the end you will realize that
He is fighting only for his own interests
And he has no aims for the people
Oh my brother! We have heard so many ideas
Without a good future
We have lost many men for our rights
But there are no benefits for us at the end
It is necessary to find another solution
People! Hold on for a moment!



10 **tebsākh dālet**

A Green Acacia

Abdallah Oumbadougou was the first person to sing this traditional love song. In Bombino's rendition, he uses the image of the green acacia tree, the most beautiful tree in the desert, to represent the beauty of the women he loves. In many traditional songs and poems, a woman's beauty is compared to this tree. Despite the lack of water in the desert the acacia is always green, and in addition to being an important food source for camels, it is also used in various medicines. This song became popular during the second rebellion, when Abdallah Oumbadougou joined the rebels and asked his girlfriend to be like this tree; beautiful, patient and hardy, especially during the times when he must be absent.

A green acacia in the center of the water makes the soul breathe
Its breathing came to me bringing a soft air
When her love invades me, she becomes like a green flower
Green acacia, which is in the center of the water, makes the soul breathe

11 m.āhegāgh

What Shall I Do?

Solitude is a frequent subject of Tuareg songs and poetry, as nomads are habitually living far away from their families or society. This happens because of the usual nomadic itinerary, droughts or armed conflicts that lead to escape into exile. Bombino is asking the world to tell him the solution to the problem of solitude because it hurts his heart. He becomes sick from solitude and is looking for a cure.

What shall I do?
Oh, what shall I do
Against this endless solitude?
It is located in the bottom of my heart
And lives on it every moment
My friends, do you know
What could cool my boiling heart?

Bombino wrote this song in 2008 while he was in exile in Burkina Faso. He is advising the Tuareg from everywhere to unify their communities in order to defend their rights and preserve their culture wherever they may be. This unity is very important to preserve their identity in the modern world. Since the anti-colonial battles of the 1960s, the Tuareg are separated in five different countries – Niger, Mali, Algeria, Libya and Burkina Faso. But they will not forget that they are the same people with the same cultural identity and very close links within their families. They will have to preserve their culture and promote it together.

Tuareg people, become aware!
Tuareg people
The world is watching us
Tuareg people
We are not able
Tuareg people
To unite our people
Tuareg people
What happens to us?
Tuareg people
We can not
Tuareg people
Assure the unity of our people
Tuareg people
The world is about to evolve.
Tuareg people
Divided, we stay behind
Tuareg people

13 tigrāwāhi tikmā

(Live Version)

Recorded live in the courtyard in Agadez in February 2010. According to Ron Wyman: “ We decided to set up the mics and equipment outside in the large courtyard of the house, lay out rugs, get food and beer etc., and invite people to a ‘live recording party’. That is when Bombino really shined, with the energy of an intimate audience. People were up dancing, clapping and totally grooving.”



1. Ahoulaguine Akaline (I Greet My Country) 4.03
2. Tar Hani (My Love) 6.31
3. Adounia (Life) 5.06
4. Kammou Taliat (You, My Beloved) 4.31
5. Tigrawahi Tikma (Bring Us Together) 5.18
6. Tenere (The Desert, My Home) 3.33
7. Iyat Idounia Ayasahen (Another Life) 9.08
8. Azamane (My Brothers United) 4.32
9. Assalam Felawan (Peace To You) 6.16
10. Tebsakh Dalet (A Green Acacia) 5.09

DIGITAL BONUS TRACKS

11. Mahegagh (What Shall I Do?) 11:28
12. Adinet (Tuareg People) 4:02
13. Tigrawahi Tikma (Live Version) 13:02

Omara "Bombino" Moctar Vocals, Lead Guitar
Kawissan Mohamed Guitar
Ibrahim Emoud Atchinguil Drums

Additional Musicians: Ed Lucie Bass Guitar
Chris Decato Rhythm Guitar | Ghissa Tshoda (Lalo)
Calabash | Joe Galeato, Chris Decato, Ron Wyman,
Mohamed Serge Percussion

All songs written and arranged by Goumour Almoctar
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and "Tbsakh Dalet," which are traditional, Arranged by
Goumour Almoctar.

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Films, Cambridge, MA and Nicole's House, Agadez, Niger
Mixed by Chris Decato & Ron Wyman at ZeroGravity Films
Mastered by Chris Decato and by Lane Gibson at Lane Gibson
Recording and Mastering in Charlotte, VT Photography by
Ron Wyman Translations by Désirée von Trotha
Graphic Design by Tim O'Malley Bombino is managed by
Eric Herman of Modiba Productions [www.modiba.net]



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Films



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