

Music, Musicians And Politics: The Case Study Of The Nigerian 2015 General Elections

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Abstract: Music and Musicians have been part of politics and political movements everywhere ever since. The role that music and musicians played during the Nigerian election of 2015 has been significant in the change of government that people witnessed during and after the general elections. The paper therefore tries to analytically x-ray the role these musicians in the course of the general elections used music to communicate to the electorates on the manifestos and promises of their candidates of choice. Using variables such as the lyrics contained in some of the songs sampled for content analysis, the paper discovers that there is a very strong bond between campaign songs and electorates and hence the relationship between music, musicians and political movements. The paper therefore recommends amongst others that the use of music in the electioneering process should be encouraged as its imperativeness in Nigeria's just concluded general elections cannot be overemphasized.

Keywords: Music, Musicians, Lyrics, Politics, Nigeria, General, Elections

I. INTRODUCTION

Music and Musicians have been part of politics and political movements everywhere ever since. The role that music and musicians played during the Nigerian election of 2015 has been significant in the change of government that people witnessed during and after the general elections. The imperativeness of the above statement cannot be overemphasized, as it has been seen to have played itself out in the political history of countries around the world. Take for example the role played by Bob Dylan in promoting civil rights with his songs like *Blowing in the winds*: Bruce Springsteen with his songs on the "determination and hard work of working class people" has been great, particularly in the album; *THE RIVER*". Bob Marley led the Rastafarian musicians in showing the Black people globally faced in economic, political and socio – cultural discrimination how to liberate themselves from the scourge of decolonization by civil means.

Tracey Chapman with her album -----, demonstrated without any doubt that; the Black women globally faced, political and economic discrimination when compared with their male counterparts in any respect. Fela A. Kuti of Nigeria spent his entire musical career exploring corruption, hypocrisy and economic burglary by the Nigerian government. For that, you could tie most of the albums he produced during his life long struggle to equality, justice and honesty for the Nigerian people by the Nigerian governments which has raged on for a long time.

It is for these reasons that we can say that a lot of people today are generally politically apathetic, and the trend for their participation in politics is a negative one. However, in the recent past, access to all kinds of political media has been booming and ever increasing in Nigeria. According to some theories this should prompt an increase in people's participation in politics. This research tends to focus on the relationship between music and musicians and their effects on

the participation rates of people who listen to them and what effect that may have on; political apathy, party relations with voters, political culture, political behavior and alas, level of acceptable of candidates by the electorates.

It is apparent that for any democratic system to thrive, it is vital that political parties and candidates provide the electorates with adequate information on party policies, clear-cut vision as well as their political agendas to enable electorates actively choose their candidates based on full information. To achieve this, political parties use the media in campaigns. Curran (2005) adds that the media assists voters to make an informed choice at election time. This is done in form of paid political advertising, social media campaigns, commentaries and news stories. In fact, for an election to be considered free and fair, electorates must have adequate knowledge of the candidates, political parties and election policies. Recently, political parties and their candidates are becoming increasingly aware of the effectiveness of advertising and its role in getting the electorates to choose a particular candidate or party over the other by way of informing them. The use of political ad campaigns has become increasingly popular and is very important to the electoral process and voting behavior because it bridges the communication gap between political parties, political candidates and electorates. Hence, political parties and candidates all around the world devote a lot of financial resources to political ad campaigns to sell themselves as the preferred brand to the electorates. Interestingly, the most questions raised in elections are concerned with voting behavior i.e. why the electorates voted for a candidate over the other and the implication of their choice.

Scholars and communication experts argue that, when the politician crafts his campaign messages as being the fight to improve voters' lives, or something similar and come with some good measure of integrity, the voters are more likely to believe him (Feyipitan 2015). In other words, the electorates are most likely to trust candidates whose political ad campaigns offer to satisfy their basic needs as opposed to those who dwell on their personal achievements. However, these same experts also argue that personality, appearance and language use, play crucial roles in political ad campaigns. Still, many political experts question the efficacy of political ad campaigns in getting the electorates to vote in a candidate's favour. The recently concluded 2015 general elections in Nigeria witnessed political parties and candidates flooding various forms of media with ad campaigns all struggling to win electorates' votes. At the end, Muhammadu Buhari who was the candidate of the All Progressive Congress (APC) emerged as the President. Before the elections, his ad campaigns filled media airwaves, social media and billboards with messages for every class of people who made up the electorates. His pervasive jingles dominated radio and television stations, social media sites while his messages streamed the print and outdoor media with promises to deliver. As such, this research addresses a gap or link between information (music) and participation of musicians in developing political parties and delivering party campaign promises by exploring whether or not people are more likely to participate in politics and in the process vote for a certain political party.

II. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The materials used for this research will consist of existing literatures and data from recorded songs of artists who partook in making jingles for candidates of political parties in the just concluded general elections in Nigeria. It means therefore, that the research is qualitative in nature meaning that it will be based on content analysis.

III. WHAT IS POLITICAL IN MUSIC: JUXTAPOSING THEORIES

When trying to answer the question of what can be political in music, two diametrically opposed approaches can be distinguished. One view is that there is only a limited interest in studying the political dimension of music, since politics mainly takes place in political institutions. Most mainstream political scientists implicitly defend this view. Another view considers that music, like any other human action, is always political and cannot but be political in one way or another. This view is sometimes advocated in the field of cultural studies. Against these two rather extreme and simplistic approaches, we are simply claiming that it is interesting to examine the political relevance and importance of music and popular arts generally. Focusing on the processes of music production and dissemination, we distinguish three elements that potentially have a political meaning: lyrics, rhythm and sounds, and performance. Lyrics are the component in music which has the most obvious political meaning. Firstly, the name of the artists and bands can sometimes express social and political concerns. Many examples could be presented such as the French-Algerian Rai-inspired band of the 1980s *Carte de Séjour* (residence permit) and the British band UB40 whose name refers to the English unemployment benefit form, filled by the numerous applicants in the band's hometown of Birmingham in the 1970s. Secondly, artists have frequently taken an explicit position in their songs regarding political situations such as South African apartheid, the African-American Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, the Irish Civil War, the protection of indigenous minorities, the protection of migrant rights, etc. Hundreds of examples could be provided from the famous 'Fight the Power' recorded by Public Enemy to Steve Earle's commitment against the death penalty in the song 'Billy Austin'. Even though the direct political impact of protest songs on politics and policies is probably impossible to measure, we can however make two general comments on the political significance of lyrics.

First, even though the political message contained in some songs is more explicit than in others, it cannot be inferred that the former are more political than the latter. Street (2003: 124-5) has rightly pointed out that artists who fear they may be censored tend to develop skills to hide political messages within apparently 'harmless' songs. For instance, one of the most famous Greek political songs is undoubtedly 'Cloudy Sunday' written by Vassilis Tzitzanis (Holst 2001), despite the fact that at first sight the song just describes a rainy day in Greece and makes no explicit reference to the German invasion of the country during World

War II. Second, lyrics may seek to frame the mindset of the audience on a particular question (see for instance Ben Auslander (1981) on protest songs during the Vietnam War) or to educate citizens or ethnic groups on a particular question (Lee Cooper 1979). But the influence that artists wish to have on their audience through lyrics is sometimes much larger than this. In the case of the Salvadoran National Liberation movement, Almeida and Urbizagástegui Urbizagástegui in refs (1999) found out that the process of revolutionary mobilization was supported by indigenous popular music, which served as a 'powerful educator of movement strategy' for the disenfranchised and illiterate population. The particular music group they studied not only gave its opinion on a specific political situation but also provided its audience with tactical advice on how to engage in collective action.

IV. DOES MUSIC MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Consultant Dean Rindy believes the soundtrack...can be the key to what makes an ad work. Ron Faucheux, editor in chief of *Campaigns and Elections* magazine, contends, "Music is crucial to [an advertisements'] overall emotional appeal" (Rindy 1992; Faucheux 1994). From campaign jingles to televised political advertisements, music has played an integral role in Presidential campaigns for centuries. Its resilience through history suggests that music truly does have tangible positive benefits for the campaigns that employ it. However, only recently has this critical assumption's legitimacy been evaluated. In political advertisements, campaigns utilize music to accentuate whatever message they are trying to convey. For positive advertisements, campaigns accompany images of "softly lighted hometown vignettes, romantic landscapes, and stirring patriotic imagery," with "brightly colored" and "soothing" sounds (Hallett 1998). In negative advertisements, "grainy black-and-white footage" featuring "menacing visuals" and "chilling footage" are accompanied by "low-toned ominous music, baleful chords, wailing sirens, sharp blasts of percussion, and eerily repetitive piano notes" (Baden 1998) Furthermore, discordant music in minor keys tends to strengthen sentiments of anxiety, whereas melodic passages in major keys produce feelings of optimism. These powerful musical cues are frequently covertly embedded into political advertisements in order to bolster the arousal of specific emotions, without listeners' even noticing (G. Smith 1999; J. Smith 1999). Ted Brader, an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan, was one of the first researchers to conduct a series of clinical studies to evaluate the efficacy of these musical cues.

V. MUSICAL DEMOCRATIZATION: THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

For centuries, the music used in Presidential campaigns was monopolized by the campaigns themselves. Candidates and their respective staffs would oversee the production and distribution of campaign jingles, and later on, official campaign TV advertisements containing music in the background. However, with the onset of the Internet and social

media, any person with an idea and a camera can compose a political campaign song and share it with the world. This musical democratization has empowered individuals to make a tangible difference in the outcome of political elections. During the 2008 Presidential election alone, certain homemade musical tributes to the Presidential candidates featured tens of millions of views on video-sharing websites such as YouTube. These videos are able to achieve a tremendous amount of popularity primarily because independently manufactured ads can be more daring and controversial than official campaign-endorsed advertisements. Issues that the Obama and McCain campaigns both tried to avoid, such as race and religion, proved to be common themes amongst political musical tributes in video-sharing communities. In addition, campaign songs shared on the Internet differed from official campaign jingles in that they targeted certain constituencies and ethnic groups. One of the most popular amateur campaign songs from 2008, entitled "There's No One as Irish as Barack Obama," featured the lyrics "O'Leary, O'Reilly, O'Hare, and O'Hara, there's no one as Irish as Barack Obama." Similarly, a Louisiana-based folk group created a music video in Cajun, entitled "Oui, On Peut-- Yes We Can," which contained lyrics that touted Obama's various accomplishments. Ultimately, the proliferation of original musical compositions via social media sources represents the latest transformation in the role that music plays in Presidential campaigns.

VI. MUSICAL DEMOCRATIZATION: THE AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

Music performances are central to artistic expression and experience in African tradition. Nketia (1974) defined music performance as the act of playing musical instrument, singing with the voice, dancing with the body, or acting in a music drama. Musical performance in Africa maintains an integral relationship with other aspects of life. A notable feature of this interaction, as we have stressed, is the fact that music is often performed in a multi-media context in which dance, elaborate costume, mime, poetry and drama are featured in a total theatre spectacle. The location of this total theatre spectacle within the context of religious, social and political activities underlines the indigenous perception of music. As an expressive idiom combines musical and are characterized by an engaging interaction between professional musicians. Okafor (2002) observes that 'we forsake the conscious, constructive use and power of music to our loss' In interpreting this fully, it means the product of music in the electioneering campaign must be able to function at the best and highest levels of the country's political development. In the traditional Yoruba society, songs and music occupied a unique place in the preparation, mobilization and prosecution of war. The importance of songs in instigating conflict is aptly captured by a Yoruba proverb that says "*orin ni isaju ote*", meaning songs herald hostilities (Olarewaju, 2011). Scholars such as Olutoye and

Olapade (1998) and Ilesanmi (1998) examine the importance of drums, chants and songs among the Yoruba and aver that more than their entertainment roles; they perform

religious, social and military purposes. As a communicative device, songs are employed for inspiring warriors and for launching verbal assault in inter-personal conflicts. In many instances verbal assaults often result in physical assaults such that thought is provoked about the linguistic process that accentuates a conflict. Song of assaults are almost always accompanied by cheering, laughing and savouring of the exchanges, until the conflict intensifies into brawl. What this implies is that the metaphors or linguistic devices employed in songs are not innocent and should be taken seriously. Songs of assault have a long history, and can function not only on a personal level but also as politically effective weapons.

Campaign and post election pretest song in Hausa language are situated within this frame, and like war songs. This communication through artistic medium opens up danger and provocation against the person the artist sing about. Just like the elections during the colonial rule, first, second and third republics, songs have continued to play a key and dominant role in Nigeria Fourth and Fifth Republic elections. One time foremost afro-beat exponent, Late Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, used his music to preach against political domination, oppression, economic hardship, unemployment and nepotism. If music is used as a cross-fertilization of ideas through the medium of television or radio, then the electioneering campaign will be made easy to reach the teeming population who are willing to hear what each political party needs to deliver to electorates. What the people hear or listen must have a communicative power and this is one of the reasons politicians had used music to their advantages. Only through music can political parties and politicians get their information to the grassroots. It is like advertisement which is used to reach out to the public. Whatever message to be set into music must have common objectives of attracting positive reaction and which will work with the people for the upliftment and good of the citizenry. Servae (1985) agreed that information must be of relevance to the genuine, development and also involve social participation. This implies that music as Emeka (1992) considers it "is a useful tool in dissemination of information". It is only through it that the electioneering campaign can reach the grass root. In attempt to educate the people, music should be used to get something done and equally used in controlling behavior, thought and character. Its Communicative role is a two-way traffic, a dialogue when used realistically; and also, it provides adjustment and redirection for political enlightenment. Sometimes, slogans in form of music are used in political rallies and campaign Songs like "come out and vote it is your right, come out and choose your leaders for the future of your children" were played by INEC. Sunny Ade was also used to sing *Nigeria yi ti gbogbo wani* (this Nigeria is for all of us) during the 2011 post election violence in some part of the country.

VII. THE ROLE OF MUSIC AND MUSICIANS IN THE LEAD-UP TO 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS

In Nigeria, political advertising has grown immensely in the last few decades. This is owing to the fact that there is increased awareness amongst political parties and their candidates on the usefulness of advertising in making the

electorates better aware of the candidate as a better brand and in communicating their offerings in form of manifestoes to these same electorates. Olajude et al (2010) notes that; advertising have become the most commonly used technique to create a favourable image for the candidate and a negative image for the opponent. Before now, political parties and candidates channel most of their resources into political rallies, speeches and direct contact to gather the support of electorates, as noted by Opeibi (2004).

Between the 2007, 2011 and most recent 2015 elections in Nigeria; presidential and even gubernatorial, the use of political advert campaigns have widened from mode of delivery, type of language used, to forms of media used to communicate these messages. The role of musicians in influencing the decisions of their fans and other people in favor of or against a cause has always been exploited fully by political parties and candidates in Nigeria. The presidential candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2015 general elections, Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari of the major opposition, All Progress Congress (APC) and now incumbent President have caused major divisions in the county's entertainment circle like never before, as many musicians have taken the spotlight at any given chance, to let their fans and minders know whose tune they should dance to. With these songs, they canvassed for votes day and night, online and offline. Whether for personal interest or not, the role of musicians in Nigeria's 2015 general elections was more than just supporting a political party or candidate. Meanwhile, they inspired people to come to the realization of the scandals and damage that has been happening in the country for over 15 years of democratic leadership. For instance, a young Nigerian musician by the name Olamide used his song to get more votes for the general election for his interested party, the All Progressive Congress (APC), the quote for his musical lyrics says what may mean;

'Enjoyment for the people', 'happiness for the nation', 'everyday jollification, it's the change we want for our country', maximum security, too much electricity, job opportunities, it's the change we all want. 'Buhari and Osinbajo, it's the change we want for our country', 'the market women and all the workers will enjoy', and 'my people thank you, nagode, dallu'

Through this medium, he endeared his fans and those who bother to listen to him to the his Presidential candidate of choice hence influencing their decision by highlighting the concerns of the ordinary people, like; talking of the market women and workers as shown above and by also adding a thank you note in all three major languages in Nigeria.

Worthy of note is the song "Ala Wakar Malafa", a song done by Aminu Ala, a musician and song writer who hails from Kano state. He also has nine books to his glory, very talented; his music is seen as highly educational. He implores the use of proverbial terms to tell the people the implications of the ills of the PDP administration on ordinary Nigerians. In his song he highlights how the PDP led government denies the people their right in a democratic government. He even went further to say 'the PDP led government intends to enslave the people'. 'He Prayed that God should give Buhari the peoples mandate so that he will bring change', 'he goes further to educate people to use their voters card as a weapon to fight the

weakness in the country from the federal to local governments. 'He highlighted in his song the need for Buhari to be vigilant as some members of the APC and indeed loyal to the PDP.

Another song worthy of mention in this regard is the song which gain fame in the lead up to the 2015 general elections and after "MASU GUDU SU GUDU", this was a song done by Dauda Kahutu Rarara, a northern born music artist who became famous due to the sensitivity of the lyrics in the song. The song gives insight into the highhandedness and mismanagement of public wealth by previous administrations. He elaborates the serious and dangerous trend, pattern and dimension corruption had taken in the previous administration, and the role played in deepening this act of corruption by high placed people and elder-statesmen who are supposed to be in the vanguard of the campaign for fostering socio-economic and political development in the country. Rather than utilize these resources for a common good, people in government connived to siphon the resources of the common people". The song 'masu gudu su gudu' resonated in the minds of its listeners especially the underprivileged and downtrodden, those who suffered deprivation occasioned by hardship. The song also portrays 'the government and their cronies as haven stolen the peoples common wealth for their private gains, thereby allowing them and their immediate family live a life of luxury at the expense of the ordinary people. The song was let out in the public realm after the victory of the APC Presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari emerged, as a corollary the song gained prominence owing to the impeccable character of the President-elect. The songs 'masu gudu su gudu' meaning; 'those who are wrong should run', serves as a warning note to those who have misappropriated and siphoned the wealth of the common people. He also highlights the fact 'that there are high hopes and expectations amongst the ordinary people from the government to turn around their situations. He also mentions some ills which the opposition government used to dent the image of Muhammadu Buhari before the elections i.e 'that he did not possess a secondary school certificate and that he was too old and unhealthy to govern the country. Other APC members such as; the Vice President, Bola Tinubu, Rotimi Amaechi etc. were also mentioned and hailed.

After the declaration of Muhammadu Buhari as the winner of the election, kahutu and some of his colleagues in the music industry, including; Adam A. Zango, Nazifi Asnanic, Sadi Sidi Sharifai, Abubakar Sani, Adamu Nagudu, Naziru M. Adam, Yusuf Baban Chinedu, Hussaini Danko, Umar M. Shariff, Nura M. Inuwa, Ali Jita, Sanusi Anu to mention but a few. They composed the song titled "LEMA TA YAGE". This is a political song that discusses the ills of the opposition party in the past general elections in Nigeria. The title symbolizes the end of PDP. The words 'lema ta yage' to be translated to English means 'The Umbrella is torn', umbrella being the logo of the PDP has lost its place. While the symbol of the APC is 'Broom' which signifies 'unity' and 'togetherness' of the people of Nigeria. The artistes in this song praised various state governors and the President. The said all sort of things about how change has come to "stay in Nigeria". They sang it in different ways; each of them distinctly played his role. One thing that stands out is that

none of them influenced the direction of the song. Each one of them gave his contribution after the chorus "lema ta yage", first Adam A. Zango started by emphasizing on how 'Kanawa' (people of kano) should elect Ganduje, and the people of Kaduna should elect El-Rufai, Jigawa should elect Talamiz Badaru, Katsina Should elect Masari, Zamfara should elect Yari, Sokoto should elect Tambuwal, Nassrawa should elect Al-makura, Yobe should elect Gaidam Bura-bura, Bauchi should elect Barrister, Adamawa should elect Bindo, Benue should elect Samuel, Plateau should elect Lalong and the people of Kwara should elect Abdul-Fatah.

These songs entails or describes in details praises and prayers for all the various APC members, and also the use of proverbs such as 'Kowa ya sakar maka', meaning; everyone deopends on him. This shows the extent of trust and hope the common people came to place in the President.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The paper examined the very critical and significant role music and musicians played in the just concluded general elections of Nigeria in her 2015 general elections, be it at the state or federal level. The content and context analysis of these campaign songs expose some findings about the roles and imperativeness of campaign songs for political mobilization. Campaign songs are evidential of non-elite's capacity for political communication. Lyrics of campaign songs are quite entertaining and most of them are easy to memorize. The songs are modification of popular, religious or traditional music and as such are reflected in different structures and forms. But most campaign songs have one thing in common- they disseminate the candidate and his ideology and also inform the crowd of how those whom they intend to vote for will deliver some of their manifestos to them.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is traditional in any research endeavor that when problems are identified, solutions are proffered. Proffering solutions takes the shape of recommendations. Recommendations are directed at providing the leeway to solving the research problem. It is against this background that the following recommendations are advanced. Hence it is imperative to note here that all elections require a deep knowledge of the contribution and understanding of the important role of politicians. It is duty-bound on politicians to deliver the responsibility and dividend of governance to the people and must in the course of doing this be accountable to the people. Democracy exists and can only thrive when the relationship between the governed and the government abides by the principle that the state is at the service of the citizens and not the citizens at the service of the state and it is understood that the government exists for the people. For a successful transformation of the electioneering campaign, music plays a prominent role in our lives as it is very functional in enlightening the people. Whatever the future holds for us, Nigeria has come a long way. Each and every citizen must rise up to the challenges of our national

responsibilities without considering first, the gains and benefit to be reaped for participating in national programmes. Music and its forms as a veritable tool for mass mobilization and should be used to reach out to rural areas and hinterlands to create awareness and enlightenment campaign about the 2015 general elections and beyond.

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