

POTENTIALS OF POP MUSIC IN ENSURING NATIONAL UNITY

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Abstract

National unity is the bedrock for development of a nation. Every administration on assumption of office always calls for peace, reconciliation and unity amongst its citizenry. No meaningful development can thrive where there are anarchy, insecurity and rancor. Recently, the unity of Nigeria is known to be seriously threatened by a number of challenges which in no small measure have affected the rate of development by the present administration. The way out in ensuring national unity is by employing pop music. This arises because its texts carry enlightenment, educative and informative messages which seem to be the only potential tool for ensuring national unity in Nigeria. This paper discussed the concept of pop music, types, and its importance in the society. It also examined some of the challenges to national unity and the potentials of pop music in ensuring national unity in Nigeria. Conclusion was drawn and some recommendations were made for the co-operate existence of Nigerians.

Nigeria's professed unity since independence has suffered multiple jolts. Since after the civil war, between 1967 and 1970 there has been ethnic distrust and tension emanating from nepotism, marginalization and power greed among others, as against national unity which we all claim to advocate for. According to Ejiofor (2012) the inability of successive governments to assuage the various federating units, the feeling of injustice and threats have exacerbated the fear of domination, marginalization and insecurity which consequently have eroded whatever iota of unity that may have existed. Furthermore, he stated that unity and nationhood foundation has never being laid and all that there is, is a mere deception of our entire history.

The evidence of disunity in Nigeria has been proven by the recent unrest in some parts of this country manifested through a number of ethno-religious conflicts that have not only led to loss of thousands of lives and millions of property, but have badly shaken the fate of Nigeria's cooperate existence. According to Ubani (2009), music, be it popular or classical, its acceptance as a universal language is valued and appreciated by all cultures of the world, its utility and bound permeates every facet of life in every society. In view of this, Nzewi (1999) states that when music sounds, the society wakes

Academic Scholarship

up. It means that people are coming together to see, commiserate, share, exercise the body, contemplate, execute actions, learn and give solidarity.

Popular music simply put “POP” music is that genre of music that is liked, admired and enjoyed by majority of the populace in Nigeria. It holds a substantial influence on the life of the people. According to Idolor (2002), pop music texts continue to mine the popular sentiments of nostalgia, faced love, lost youth, the simple pleasures of pastoral life, morality, satires, praise and worship of God, political and social protests, national solidarity, economic recession etc and from the above assertion by Idolor, popular music cuts across every aspect of our lives and cannot be detached from our daily activities. Since popular music brings the people together to learn and share interest, feelings, actions and sympathies, it has proved to be the only potential tool for ensuring national unity in Nigeria.

Concepts of Popular Music

Popular music is that genre of music that deals with familiar themes and issues of the moment. According to Okafor (2005), popular music is understood and accepted by a lot of people. Idolor (2002), sees popular music as a genre of music, encompassing several styles that are readily comprehensive, to a large proportion of the population.

Pop Music Types and Musicians

Pop music is of different types and they have their origin traced to different countries. Some pop music types were developed singly, others emerged through fusion of styles from existing pop music types. The following are some pop music types and musicians in Nigeria:

No. 1 Pop Music Type and Musicians in Nigeria

Pop Music Type	Musician
Highlife	Victor Uwaifor, Rex Jim Lawson Captain Muddy Ibe, Balla Miller Victor Olaiya, Chief Stephen Osita Osadebe, Bright Chimezie Oliver de Coque etc.
Afro-beat	Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, Orlando Julius etc

Goodness Ifeoma Nwonyeh

Juju	King Sunny Ade, Sir Shina Peters Chief Commander Ebenezer Obey and I. K Dairo.
Gospel	Sonny Okosun, Onyeka Onwenu Nelly Uchendu etc
Reggae	Luky Dube, Majek Fashek Ras Kimono etc.
Afro Rock	Onyeka Onwenu, Christy Essien Igbokwe etc.
Fuji	Sikiru Ayinde, Kollinton Ayinla etc.
Ozzidism	Sonny Okosun

Source: National Commission for Colleges of Education 2012:50.

Importance of Pop Music in the Society

According to Okafor (2004) popular music includes all music that is contemporaneous with the present time, that is; music of the past few decades which appeals to a mass audience. Pop music plays very important role in the activities of all peoples. It inspires workers in the farms or offices to do more work and also ease tiredness. The man, after the day's toils and troubles, finds ease and relaxation in pop music. Many famous rulers have used and continue to use pop music to relax their brains. This is because pop music has the power of controlling emotional disturbance and restoring the mind to tranquility.

In Nigeria, pop music is so essential that it is employed in occasions and ceremonies for entertainment. In sporting events like athletics and football matches, the supporters' club use pop music to motivate those involved in the game to perform much better. Pop music plays a very important role in the advertisement world. The aim of most advertisements by advertisers is to make buying an emotional response rather than a logical one. In health sector, pop music is used as therapy for emotionally disturbed persons. For example, the account of David and Saul in the Holy Bible as it is written in first Samuel sixteen verse twenty three (1Samuel 16:23). Pop music is very essential in the education sector. It is used for teaching of such subjects like, mathematics etc. Pop music in recreation form as extra-curricular activity in the school to drive away boredom

Academic Scholarship

and it makes intellectual work easier because it refreshes the brain. Pop music has the potentials for developing emotional, social and aesthetic growth of the child in particular and the society in general. It communicates feelings and emotions that words can never convey. In fact, the importance of pop music in the society cannot be over-emphasized.

Challenges of National Unity

Unity has never been forced, but achieved through a fair and equitable management of federal resources among all the federating units, and also through policies that are geared towards oneness of purpose. It is also achieved when the factors that gave rise to those fears, and suspicion are nonexistent (Ejiofor: 2012). Soyinka (2000) in one of his works, “the open sore of a continent” – a personal narration of the Nigerian crises, argues that Nigeria was yet not a nation. It is very unfortunate that Nigeria’s almost 56 years of independence has been posed by enormous challenges ranging from animosity, distrust, insecurity, suspicion, marginalization, nepotism, tribalism, power greed, illiteracy, different interpretation of government policies to agitations from all units for greater share of the national cake instead of national unity. This has led some government officials and politicians into corruption and embezzlement of public funds, thereby affecting the rate of development in Nigeria.

In most parts of this country for instance, the state Governments do not give employment to non-indigenes in their midst. Students from other states are not admitted into their tertiary institutions to read certain courses of their choice. When the students eventually gain admission, they pay heavily while the indigenes pay little or nothing and they are often given bursary or book allowances; and we say that we are one Nigeria. These acts by the state Governments have proved to us that we are not one after all, though we claim to be.

Recently, rancor, political and racial discrimination, ethnic cleansing, new form of religious crises by the Boko Haram sect, kidnappers, Fulani herdsmen and farmers clashes etc, are the order of the day in this country. People are no longer safe to stay in some parts of this country and even in theirs; they no longer have right to choice of religion, right to life, right to personal liberty etc. These problems have brought disintegration and disunity amongst the people of this nation. It has also marred the aim of section 15 (1) sub section 3, section 23 (1), 24 (1) C & E; 33 (1); 35 (1); 38 (1); 41 (1) etc. of the Amended Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria official Gazette of 2011.

Since a nation is a group of people sharing aspects of language, culture, there is a greater need for the people to understand one another. Owing to the fact that pop music performs the invaluable function of providing a dialogue with other cultures, the writer strongly believe that it will do the magic of uniting the people of this country. Though, Nigeria is made up of people from diverse ethnic groups, our unity must be in diversity and not in uniformity if really we want to remain as one nation.

Potentials of Pop Music and National Unity

Pop music texts often mirror the society. It also documents happenings in the society. Pop music texts sometimes serve as means of instilling morals in the citizenry. According to Idolor (2002), culture, social and political educations are contained in the texts of some pop music. Messages of discipline are also contained in some pop song texts. This extract from one of Luky Dube's numerous albums "Together as One" is about hatred. In this song, he sang about hatred and disunity in this country and employed the people to come together as one and forget the apathy. Generally, the study of national songs helps in inculcating national consciousness and unity in the people. This is embedded in Nigeria National Anthem.

Nigeria National Anthem

1. Arise, o compatriots
Nigeria's call obey
To serve our fatherland
With love and strength and faith
The labour of our heroes past
Shall never be in vain
To serve with heart and might
One nation bound in freedom
Peace and unity.

National Youth Service Corps Anthem

1. Youth obey the clarion call
Let us build our nation high
Under the sun, or in the rain
With dedication and selflessness
Nigeria is, Nigeria we stand.
2. Members take the great salute
Put the nation first in all

Academic Scholarship

With service and humility
NYSC for the noble Youths
Make Nigeria a great nation

Source: NYSC Handbook (Revised in 1995).

The Nigeria national Anthem appeals for a positive change of attitude to work and also preaches the gospel of love, peace and unity among our people. No cultural or geographical entity can exist in isolation. The National Youth Corps Anthem also preaches to the Nigerian Youths to exhibit the spirit of selfless service, oneness and brotherhood of all Nigerians irrespective of their cultural or social background. Pop music texts have served as weapons for socio-political change, through regular comments and criticisms on the general conduct and behaviours of the citizens of a particular society. According to Idolor (2002) some texts of pop music criticize the ills of the society, particularly those of the ruling class. In Nigeria some pop musicians have used and continue to use pop music as a means of achieving national unity. Some of these pop musicians include: Luky Dube, Late Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, Patty Obassey, Onyeka Onwenu, Dan Maraya Jos , Late Alhaji Maman Shata, Sonny Okosun; to mention but a few.

Some of these pop musicians like Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, Sonny Okosun, Maman Shata not minding the risk involved, fought for national unity through the texts of their songs until they left this world. National unity cannot be enthroned where ethnicity, nepotism, hatred and corruption are the talk of the day. A well-known gospel musician known as Patty Obassey never failed to point out this in his album entitled “Billionaire in A Crate” in (1986). The message is about corruption in this country. Sonny Okosun is not left out either in this crusade for national unity in this country. In the album “Which way Nigeria” (1984), and in the tract title “Nigeria Unite” he beckoned on all the people in this country to come together and put off the fire in the country. The above is proved right by this song:

Nigeria Unite

1. Nigeria unite
Unite so that we can stop
The apartheid
Unite so that we can quench
The fire in the country
Remember we are brothers and sisters
Together we will solve our problems
Together we will change the world.

Refrain: Together we shall live forever (repeatedly).

2. Nigeria unite
No matter your tribe and position
No matter the colour of your eye
And your skin
Remember we are one in the land
Together we will solve our problems
Together we will change the world

(Back to refrain)

If Nigeria should abide by the words of this music and other pop music there will be tolerance, peace, love and unity in this country. This therefore, will enable the country to forge ahead and really change the nation for good, and equally solve our problems without the killing of our fellow brothers and sisters. In the same vein, an adage says that together we stand, but divided we fall. The Holy Bible confirms this in Amos 3 verse 3 which asked, “Can two walk together unless they have agreed to do so? The answer of course is ‘no’. However, it is suicidal to ignore pop music because it is the only potential tool for ensuring such important norms as acculturation, maintenance of peace and order, building of character, inculcation of discipline, and cultivation of faith in a nation’s system.

Ways of Disseminating the Message of National Unity

There are many ways of carrying out this message to the populace. The most popular are the television and radio, video recording, cinema, life performance etc. The importance of electronic media in disseminating the message of national unity cannot be over-emphasized. Almost every home in Nigeria has at least a radio set with which they listen to news and music being played from AM (short and medium waves) and FM radio stations. According to Okafor (2005) “most of the stations broadcast music for at least fifty two (52) percent of their airtime which is at least eighteen (18) hours a day” This Chauhan education is another way of disseminating this message of national unity. This is because if the children and youths are exposed to western education, they will develop abilities, skills, attitudes, and values, to make them have positive change in behaviours which will enable them to contribute their quota to the development of the society in which they live in.

Conclusion

Any nation that lacks unity cannot achieve significant progress and development. National unity is an enormous task that requires combined efforts of all the people of this country irrespective of their tribe, religion and culture. Pop music has been found to be the only tool that can rally the people around to intimate them of the true situation of things in this country. It is a very essential part of the educational process. It has been observed that when people are exposed to pop music, it enhances their social, political and emotional development and also teaches tolerance. Pop music has been used in various ways as a unifying force. It is therefore, the only potential tool for ensuring national unity in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The paper recommends:

1. National music festival
2. Free and compulsory western education for all in all states of the federation.
3. Using gingles to sale government policies and programmes, needs for Nigeria's cooperate existence using three major languages in Nigeria.

Through these ways the issue of nepotism, corruption, tribalism, marginalization, hatred, distrust, ethnic cleansing, power greed, religious crises etc, can be properly addressed; thereby ensuring national unity in Nigeria.

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Goodness Ifeoma Nwonyeh

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