Music: An Instrument of Identity and Social Stability for the Youths in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

As one of the most ancient arts known to man, great thinkers like Plato and Aristotle highly spoke of Music as a powerful tool for taming the restless souls and appealing to emotions, especially the youths in the 21st Century. Understanding this intrinsic power of Music is necessary to turn art into an effective tool for various human expressions. This expression is linked to the overall makeup of a person or a group of persons. It defines them as individuals bound by a common aspiration, tradition, history, ancestry and future. This expression is also the truth of the principle of identity expressed as a law of thought but lived as a principle of existence. This is the position that this paper seeks to express: that Music can become a tool for identity and art that preserves social stability for the youths in the 21st Century, especially in Nigeria. Data for this work was obtained through observation and the library, and conclusions were made based on the findings. Findings from the work showed that Music serves as an instrument for identity and social stability for the youths in Nigeria in the 21st Century.

Keywords: Identity, Social Stability, Youths in the 21st Century, Music as Instrument of Identity and Social Stability for the youths.

INTRODUCTION

Identity is a display of behaviour or personal character through which an individual or group are recognised. Identity also is seen as a person's conception of group affiliation and individuality. It is a belief that human beings are driven deeply by their sense of identity, that is, the identity of who they are, beyond the basic need for a sense of control. It is also observed that this identity brings social stability to those individuals, whether children, youths, or adults. Each of these categories experiences social stability when they define their identity. The Youths are often caught in the web of identity; they either try to imitate an idol or want to be the idol themselves. More often than not, Music has been at the centre of this identity and stability in all these discoveries.

IDENTITY

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2000:593), identity in this study is the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that differentiate people from others: a sense of national, cultural, personal and group identity. The above statement means that a people or a nation is often identified by the character they display, which leads to their stability in most cases.

It is also observed that people categorise themselves in terms of other people and groups, as evolution taught that it is beneficial to live in tribes, where one can share the work of daily survival. This means that when

asked about oneself, one may describe oneself in terms of work and family relationships. For example, 'I work for a Tracas transportation' or 'I am married and am married to Charles and we have five children'. That describes to what extent people identify themselves and the things attached to those identifications. Other types of Identity are explained below.

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity is a theory of membership and behaviour (Hogg et al. (1995:146). Horowitz (1985:53) defines it as 'an umbrella concept that easily embraces groups differentiated by colour, language, religion; it covers tribes, races, nationalities and castes'. It is also an identity category in which membership eligibility is determined by attributes associated with, or believed to be associated with, descent, culture, a shared history, a familiar territory and a common language. Horowitz further asserts that two properties are intrinsic to ethnic identities on average: "constrained change" and visibility. By constrained change, he meant that while an individual's ethnic identity changes in the short term, the underlying attributes constrain the pattern of change and the mechanisms driving that change. By visibility, he meant that some information about an individual's ethnic identity categories and those she does not belong to could be obtained through superficial observation.

Moreover, Fearon & Laitin (1996:20) believe Ethnic Identity entails a group more significant than a family for which membership is reckoned primarily by descent, which is conceptually autonomous and has a conventionally recognised natural history as a group. To them, it means that the ethnic group must have the following attributes: membership is primarily by descent, consciousness, and sharing distinguishing cultural features. These cultural features must be valued by most members who share a history as a group that is not wholly manufactured but has some basis.

Social Identity

Social identity, on the other hand, deals with how an individual, family, community or Nation views themselves, referring to who they are, what they are and where they belong. It has to do with how people identify themselves to others based on their common characteristics, such as religion, political affiliation, culture, country, vocation and even relationship. Social identity is seen also as a person's knowledge of belonging to a social category or group (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). More so, Stets & Burke (2000:225) see a social group as a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or people who view themselves as members of the same social category, who label themselves as the in-group people and refer to those outside their group as out-group. Stets and Burke further identified two critical processes involved in social identity formations: self-categorisation and social comparison, and these two produce different consequences. According to them, the consequences see self-categorisation as an accentuation of perceived similarity between the self and the other in-group members and that of out-group members. This accentuation is in all the attitudes, beliefs and values, affective reactions, behavioural norms, styles of speech, and other properties correlated with the in-group and out-group members, meaning that one's self-esteem is enhanced by evaluating the in-group and the out-group. All the above entails those social categories in which individuals place themselves as parts of a structured society that exist only with other contrasting categories. The social categories precede individuals born into an already structured society. Once in society, people derive their identity or sense of self mainly from the social categories to which they belong. Each person, however, for his or her personal history, is a member of a unique combination of social categories; therefore, the set of social identities making up that person's self-concept is unique.

National Identity

The term "Nation" came from the Latin word 'natio' and was initially described as the grouping of students in a college, speaking the same language" (Wan & Vanderwerf, 2009:13). The Oxford Advanced Learner's

Dictionary (2000:780) defined a *Nation* as "a country considered as a group of people with the same language, culture and history, who live in a particular area under one government". It is also a large group of people with strong bonds of identity; hence, National identity is based on shared culture, religion, history, language or ethnicity. More so, the people in a Nation are part of the political and cultural landscape of the Nation. Moreover, BusinessDictionary.com, an internet source, explained that national identity is a community or race with a shared culture, traditions, history, and (usually) language, whether scattered or confined to one country. For example, the UK is inhabited mainly by people of four nations: the English, the Irish, the Scot and the Welsh. Whereas the term "Nation" emphasises a particular group of people, "Country" emphasises the physical dimensions and boundaries of a geographical area, and "state" is a self-governing legal and political entity.

All the definitions above explain that nations were first individuals, kindreds, communities, or ethnicities before being Nations. These individuals had descents rich in culture and codes of conduct that differentiated them from others, through which they identified themselves socially, which is reflected in their slang, mode of dressing, and even how they walked. Nigeria as a nation is a totality of different ethnic groups with diverse cultures and ways of life; these ethnic groups reveal traits of impossibility in agreeing on any particular thing because of the imbibed way of life according to their ethnic identity. Revealing the fact that all the ethnic groups which were brought under a state and, in turn, a 'nation' in summary, were not supposed to be considered a nation. This is the case with Nigeria.

Nigeria has three major ethnic groups (Igbos, Yorubas, and Hausa/Fulani, categorised as Easterners, Westerners and Northerners) and other smaller groups. These three significant groups are in constant conflict. The easterners feel they are marginalised, the Yorubas feel they should have significant governance proceeds, and the northerners believe they are born to rule. Therefore, any hindrance to their idealogy or mindset should not be tolerated. This mindset of Nigerians, especially the Northerners, has always brought with it constant fighting and ethnic wars in the Nation amongst the ethnic groups strictly motivated politically. As a result of this selfish ideology, many Innocent lives have been destroyed. The Nation Nigeria should not have been by all standards because of the above mentioned disagreements; however, they are together as a nation brought together by colonialism and severed by ethnic standards. Yet, they could stand and live together, though not in peace, but in pieces, because of the continued fewer issues between them. Although the ethnic standards differ and create a robust and unbreakable barrier between them, the one factor that unifies them is Music. Every person, irrespective of ethnicity or social identity, listens to Music, and the lyrics of the Music have helped unify these groups and given them the courage to fight for a common goal and cause.

MUSIC

Music is defined as a humanly organised sound (Blacking 1973:57). Elliot (1995:128) says it is a diverse human practice of constructing aural temporal patterns for primary values of enjoyment, self-growth and self-knowledge. Walker (1998:57) believes it is a living analogue of human knowing, feeling, sensibility, emotions, intellectual modus operandi and all other life-giving forces which affect human behaviour and knowing. Music is a form of communication worldwide; it transcends nations, cultures and history. It is a universal language of the soul that appeals to everyone irrespective of age, colour, and race. As such, Lull (1985:363) says it constitutes a core feature of life. Also, Terri et al (2008:148) believe that music can transcend social boundaries, express cultural meaning and amplify message content blocked to other forms of communication. It is a vehicle for expressing group and cultural identities. For instance, during the 1960s, when the United States was experiencing major upheaval and unrest, Music provided the younger generations a vehicle for expressing their opinions about the war, feminism, civil rights and sexual freedom that was going on then.

In supporting the above statement, Okafor (2005:1) observed that though there are many sounds in creation – some natural, others made by living things it is only sounds which have been deliberately organised by man to specific ends, such as expression of emotion, communication of ideas, touching the senses and the emotions, calming the nerves or tuning the minds to certain planes of communication and worship that qualify to be called Music. It is an organisation that makes a difference. Furthermore, Esimone & Umezinwa (2012:4), in complete agreement with the above-stated facts, stress that the instrumental organisation and the lyrics from a voice termed 'song', which unavoidably forces itself into man's conscience through its ear to get him to do what is right, has made the subject (Music) very special and distinct from other fields of life. Music is an operational subject in all societies, and it is used for everything from the cradle to the grave. As Okafor (2005:2) rightly says, 'Music in a society is by nature dynamic – expressing the changed, changing and still changeable environment.

Music is a gift from God; through it, humankind strives to express their joy for the things that are real to them and their longings for the things that might be. More so, Esimone (2009:1) believes many things tend to influence life and reveal evident changes in character, and Music is so influential and very prominent as such. To her, Music goes beyond organised sounds that please the ear to penetrate man's innermost being to cause a conspicuous change in man's attitudes. Acting as Plato observed, Music is as old as man. It has been reckoned with in all areas of man's recorded history. To those with the muse, it is almost an obsession as their imagination and fantasy prompt creative actions. Music entertains, informs, educates, invigorates, lifts the spirit of man and enforces human bonds and interaction. Music equally stirs violence, riots, protest and decadence. Its role and importance in the life of man are very numerous. It is one basic umbrella all humans are brought together in a national identification and social stability.

Music and its lyrics constantly change the conduct and attitudes of the hearers. Everyone listens to one form of music or the other, whether it appeals to them or not, and as such, endeavours to conform to the instructions of the lyrics. Hence, the power of Music has been attested to even from the time of Plato in Greek philosophy. The natural effect of Music on human emotion is not in doubt, and there is no doubt that this inherent power of Music can still serves as a means for social stability.

SOCIAL STABILITY

Social stability is a situation where an individual or a group of people can function normally in a society due to the stability given to it by its group identification. Stability is also where there is solidarity amongst the people of the exact identification, either as a group or a community. Nigeria as a country is a society; it is its stability that gives its citizens the mind to function normally, and as a nation with a diversity of cultures and languages, Nigeria has functioned as a nation, yet from time to time, there seems to have been much malfunctioning in almost all facets of its system. This malfunction results from its leadership, which has often disillusioned its citizens. Music, in all of these times, has served as a bridge that united the people and its government and healed wounds of disappointments in the hearts of the citizens while giving them hope for a better future. This has led to the citizens identifying themselves with their country. Music is, most of the time, God's voice. Where the Pastor or the Priest on the pulpit could not bring influence to humankind, in the face of disillusionment, discouragement, hopelessness and despair, the need to 'keep moving forward, all will be well', or where the pen of mass media could not get to, Music had gotten there. It had succeeded in turning the minds of the masses in the right direction. The power of songs is unquantifiable, and this is not debatable.

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Music affects society due to their listening ability, which tells which emotion the people are to adapt. When

a troubled nation, society or group of people like Nigerians listen to songs or Music that calls them to order when it appears that the Nation or society will be swallowed up by its angry citizens, there is calmness because Music influences the mind and its actions. An example is a situation in 1984 in Nigeria, during the military rule. The Nation was heading towards destruction, and the citizens were disgruntled, discouraged and despaired in the then leadership's ability to care for its citizens; then, the quest to leave the Nation and travel out was the order of the day. A song detailing Nigeria's vast human natural potential against the troubled reality held that Nigeria would survive the obstacles. It was a time when the future of Nigeria looked bleak, and no one knew what the next day was to bring with it. Then the song "Nigeria Go Survive" by Veno Marioghae surfaced, and that calmed the nerves of many Nigerians who had given up hope for the country, bringing about social stability.

The song was a massive hit in the 80s through the 90s and into the 21st Century, where a 2010 version by DMSquared featuring J'odie with similar ideologies was released. The song is a call-and-response song. Moreover, it read thus:

Nigeria go Survive

Call:　　　　　If dem thief our oil ooo, Even if they burn the oil, ooo

Response:　　Nigeria go survive.

Call:　　　　　I say if dem drink the oil ooo, No matter how they try to,

Response:　　Nigeria go survive.

Call:　　　　　Our roots dem strong for ground ooo, Ancestors no go gree ooo

Response:　　Nigeria go survive

Call:　　　　　They glide of thunder and lightning, United chained Nigeria

Response:　　 Nigeria go survive.

Refrain:　　　Nigeria go survive, Africa go survive

　　　　　　　　My people go survive o Nigeria go survive.

The song depicted the power of the human will to survive despite all odds. It was a call for all Nigerians and, indeed, the whole of Africa to put aside our differences and realise that what binds them together is more significant than their differences. The Music brought sanity and hope to the Nation and its individuals.

Nelly Uchendu, according to Okafor (2005:53), also used Music to unify the Nation and instil patriotic and nationalistic feelings in the society by appealing for a positive change in her song "Be a True Nigerian and Make a New Nigeria".

Be a True Nigerian

Be a true Nigerian today. If we love our country

We will make greater progress; all those things we talk about

Will one day be forgotten? Only you can make a great Nigeria

Come and let us make a great Nigeria; Sacrifice to build a great Nigeria.

Refrain: Be a true Nigerian, Do everything right

Always be patriotic, You will see you, too, can make Nigeria great

Do not be avaricious; don't ever mislead

We must contribute now to the growth of our country

With good sanitation and excellent behaviour

Let us be proud now to make Nigeria great

(Nelly Uchendu, 1986)

The two songs above show that music is an instrument for identity and social stability. The people joined in the song and took in the message behind it, and it brought about social stability in the Nation.

In summary, identity starts with the family into which an individual is born, to the ethnic group, social group and, of course, national group. Nigeria as a nation has people with diverse cultures, languages, religions, and ways of life, which often brought about much shedding of the blood of innocent lives. However, despite all the misunderstandings and misrepresentations, Nigeria still stayed together, and one factor amongst others, which had served as an instrument of unification and had equally led to social stability, has been Music. Music is also one major factor through which identities are constructed and sustained and social stability achieved; it is indeed a vehicle capable of communicating and creating understanding. This paper has proved this point.

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