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Relevance of Music in Social Stability and Security Challenges in Nigeria

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Abstract

In the wake of the current security challenges and social instability in Nigeria today, there is a great need to employ a broad range of measures in dealing with the situation. Since the social instability and insecurity in Nigeria seem to have resisted the police and military guns, a far-reaching solution must be sort to redress the current menace that is threatening the stability of Nigeria as a nation. Music is one of society's weapons of offence and defence because it can be used to regulate human conduct. This paper explored the avenues of using music as a unifying force to institute lasting security and social stability that is devoid of ethnocentrism in a multi-ethnic country like Nigeria. This is hoped to be achieved through survey method and bibliography. A suggestion is made for music practitioners from various ethnic groups in Nigeria to produce music that possess universal appeal geared towards fostering peace and security in the country.

Key Words: Music, Social stability, Security challenges Ethnocentrism and social control

Introduction

Encarta Premium defined security as "the state or feeling of being safe or protected" while stability is defined as "the condition of being stable". The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language (2010) equally defined the two concepts thus: security: "the state of being secure; specifically, freedom from danger, risk, care, poverty or apprehension" (p. 1138) and stability as "the condition of being stable; steadiness (or) the quality or character of being steady or constant; steadfastness of purpose or resolution" (p. 1218). Going by the definitions above and considering the security challenges and the state of social stability in Nigeria presently, one can easily deduce that Nigeria seems to be very far from being secure and stable.

Nigeria is a nation that is highly endowed with rich human, natural and material resources and can be distinguished among African States by the maintenance of a Federal system of government for virtually all of the period since the immediate pre-independence era. Unfortunately, the problem of insecurity and social instability has persistently reared its ugly head and are threatening to tear the unity of this great nation to shreds. Aminu (2011) lamenting on the state of Nigeria's security alleged, "the level of insecurity in Nigeria is rising at an alarming rate, bomb blasts, assassinations and other terrorist acts have become the order of the day in our once peaceful country" (Nigeriamasterweb.com). Nigeria has witnessed series of politically motivated, ethnic/religious crises since the emergence of 1999 democratic dispensation. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation with diverse cultures, languages, religions, modes of life and affiliations. "The existence of over 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria does not make for social stability, political harmony and security since there seemed to exist some sort of congenital discordance between the major tribes" (Nzomiwu, 2012, p.357). Nzomiwu further decried that, in Nigeria today, each ethnic and tribal group is vying for a position of supremacy, using any means available under the sun. For most of these groups, it is not the interest or economy or stability or unity of Nigeria that matters but the interest of their ethnic groups.

The country's security must be a responsibility shared across the entire nation. It must cut across the local, state and federal governments. Academic communities, civil society organizations, and businesses must be partners in securing the homeland (Ogunlana, 2012, p. 53). Ogunlana further stated:

The strategy towards combating this menace is far beyond the security provided by guns, gates and guards; the nation is going through another phase of security challenges and perhaps the most difficult trouble after the end of civil war in 1970. Everybody is in fear including those who are supposed to be in charge of our security. The military approach alone cannot bring about the desired solution... (except we explore) far reaching measures to strategically meet the nations demand for a cadre of professionals to carry out Nigeria's national security imperatives over the long term during the 21st century (p. 53).

Speaking on the level of insecurity in Nigeria, Olubolade (2012) stated "studies have shown that a number of factors are responsible for violent conflicts in Nigeria which are poverty, unemployment, religious intolerance, ethnic rivalry, growing acculturation and resource control agitation and ignorance" (p. 19). Olubolade further opined that there is a breakdown of our cherished values. Hitherto, Nigerians are a peace-loving people and therefore have in-built culture of respect for sanctity of human life, elders and constituted authority, appreciation for ethnic differences, hard work, diligence, cooperation, hospitality for strangers, and encouragement of communal living. In the days of yore, our seeming diversity was our strength. These values accounted for the peace that pervaded our society in the past. Unfortunately, the evasion of these values due to increasing ethnocentrism and negative external influence has also contributed largely to the spate of violent crimes and general insecurity we have today.

The diversity, complexity and intractability of the Nigerian security challenges and social instability have posed some of the greatest challenges to the theory and practice of conflict management and resolution. Tested and conventional formulas of conflict management and transformation have not had much success. More creative strategies

in such previously neglected areas as indigenous or traditional forms of conflict resolution should be sort (Onwudiwe & Suberu, 2005).

Ethnicity as a Major Cause of Insecurity in Nigeria

According to Microsoft Encarta Premium, ethnicity means ethnic affiliation or distinctiveness. It further defined ethnocentrism as the ‘conviction of own superiority: a belief in or assumption of the superiority of the social or cultural group a person belongs’. Ethnicity to a large extent seems to have contributed greatly to the problems of insecurity and social instability in Nigeria. Ethnicity according to Nnoli (1989) is a “social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups” (p. 9). Nnoli further wrote that ethnocentrism is “attitudinal in form and perceptual in content”. Nigeria is a nation with over 250 different languages in which separate cultures desperately try to retain their identity. One can only imagine the ensuing chaos (<http://www.postcolonialweb.org>). Often associated with ethnicity are problems of one ethnic group or the other conceiving a feeling of being ethnocentric, marginalized, inward looking, limited to their own belief system, group identity, parochial orientation and group pride that give rise to havoc, fear, danger, social unrest, wars, politically and religious motivated killings and other social vices that are capable of causing insecurity in the society. Nnoli (1989) early in time declared “ethnicity is behavioural in form and conflictual in content” (p. 10). Ethnocentrism according to Emeka (2004) is “culture’s protective mechanism (which) if it is unbridled, leads to racism, irrational hatred of other groups and group xenophobia” (p. 40).

In recent times, the ethnic/religious conflicts have escalated at intolerable speed and have created insecurity and breach of the peace and this seemed to be affecting social stability and economic activities across the nation. According to Iwu (2012) “These problems individually and collectively constitute threats to the peace, security and development of the country. Invariably they have implications for the continuation and survival of the nation’s nascent democracy” (p. 40). No meaningful democratic culture has ever thrived in an atmosphere of insecurity, social instability, ethnocentrism, intolerance, hatred, marginalization, brutality and bloodshed throughout history as can be seen in Nigeria of late. Democracy should be predicted on the principles of rule of law and should be a collective articulation of germane ideas aimed at achieving utilitarian and social justice. On the contrary evidences abound of failure of some leaders to uphold human rights, liberties and justice in the society, resulting to some group of people especially those that feel they are being marginalised taking extreme measures capable of resulting to insecurity and social instability in the country. Commenting on the above, Chukwudozie (1999) lamented, “racism, apartheid, ethnicity, domination, discrimination caste system, marginalization and other serious unfair treatments meted out to citizens, and peoples are evidences of man’s inhumanity to man and serious violations of human rights” (p. 39).

The major challenge among all the problems facing Nigeria is the challenge to sustain and maintain social stability and turn it into a culture and way of life acceptable and workable for the largest majority of the people. This involves managing internal tendencies especially security issues and problems that could impinge on its survival. Iwu (2012) observed that this is a matter of national importance that should be of concern to all stakeholders in the Nigerian State and one that requires comprehensive and committed contribution of all groups and interest that make up Nigeria. The effects

of the insecurity and social instability in the country spare nobody regardless of the social status or ethnic affiliation.

Music as an Integrator and Social Control in Multi Ethnic Cultures

In traditional Igbo community, methods of conflict resolution in a sustained manner between two warring communities abound, such as inter-tribal marriages, friendly soccer, sensitising and teaching morals to people through music. The mechanisms of societal organizations and functions have in-built mechanisms of social control systems. Each society institutes appropriate sanctions against transgressions and device patterns of behaviour for its members in relation to that guarded tenets of society's life, virtually in all parts of the country, "Songs of criticisms are simple methods of social control prevalent in many societies in Nigeria" (Okafor and Emeka, 2004, p.58).

Man being a very imitative animal often changes his style of behaviour or speech to the patterns of behaviour or speech of the people around him or those he has some form of association with. Inter cultural borrowings such as educational systems, language, social skills, music et cetera have always been a source of cultural growth and have resulted in acculturation which is culture transfer. Part of the major strength of music in any culture is that it always has something with which people of other cultures connect.

The aggregate of evidence from the material and non-material cultures of these various ethnic groups showed that they have enjoyed various degrees of culture contacts with one another over a period of time. Each culture transfer leads to changes in the way people live and behave in the society. This brings about social change and social action. Any change which affects or influences people's attitudes, behaviour, action, customs practices, organization and orientation as members of a society, community or human grouping is termed social change while social action is the behaviour intended to influence others or orientated towards other people (Emeka, 2004, p. 44). The method of imbibing other people's ways of life is slow, often un-noticeable as the cultures are learned by slow absorption, learning expected rules of behaviours and developing satisfactory relations with the other side. Music is a very vibrant and fast means of expressing and exchanging ideas. It is therefore a *sine qua non* for bringing about any social change, even when the change is created or propelled by other changes. Music has extraordinary bearing on the human spirit since they open up new and highly effective avenues of communication for all kinds of ideas, information and directives. Music by its very nature can reach and influence not only individual men, but the masses themselves, even the whole of society (Vatican II).

Music is an easily digestible medium of communication and integrator of people even among many cultures. The nature of music cuts across ethnic diversity and can have appealing effect on peoples' consciences. Music also has the potency to entertain as well as educate; it therefore, serves as a powerful measure in combating insecurity and social instability. In order to ensure social stability in a country with many diverse cultures like Nigeria, music must be seen as a powerful process of inter-cultural communication. There is a relationship between the language and culture of any group and their music. It is necessary that people understand the music of their neighbours because by so doing they equally understand their language and culture. Okafor and Okafor (2009) supported the assertion that: "The relationship of the languages of two neighbours reflects in the relationship or otherwise of their music; the closer the

languages, the more similar the music, the more diverse or different the languages, the more different the music” (p. 15). Speaking in favour of music in social stability, Okafor (2005) maintained that:

Music helps to bring a lot of stability into the mind. That type of music not only provides punctuation to the tedium and rhythm of work but also helps to keep the mind from running wild, and not being a destructive force within the individual (p. 12).

Getting the people of other ethnic groups to understand the musical culture of another ethnic group is a very important means of integration of the different ethnic groups in a multicultural society like Nigeria. Societies get closer when people from different ethnic groups begin to understand the language and culture of other ethnic groups. There is a story of one young man from the East who travelled to the North. He became pressed on his way and tried easing himself. As he was not conversant with the area, he fell into a deep ditch. He tried all he could to come out of the ditch but couldn't. He shouted for help on top of his voice but no help came his way. As night was fast approaching, the fear of being devoured by wild animals filled his mind. He thought of the best approach to his problem and resorted to call on God through song thus: '*Allah, Oluwa, Chineke na one God*' (No matter the language, God is one). As soon as he established this song, three men ran inside the bush searching for the singer. When they located him, one of them ran to the nearby house and brought a ladder; another one entered the ditch to help him up while the third one helped in holding the ladder. When they got him out, they introduced themselves and discovered that among the three men that came to his rescue, one was Hausa, the other Yoruba and the other Igbo. They confessed that it was the song that the man sang that attracted them to the bush. From hence they became friends after being integrated by the unifying power of music. The power of music to the human heart is overwhelming. This is in agreement with the words of William Shakespeare in the Merchant of Venice when he opined:

The man that hath no music in himself nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils, the motions of his spirit are dull as night and his affections dark as Erebus. Let no such man be trusted (<http://www.goodreads.com>).

Another example is the Calabar Carnival which is arguably the biggest carnival in Africa. It is usually celebrated every year on the streets of Cross river state having music and dance as the main highlights of the event. Musical groups from all over the country are usually invited to come and perform as well as compete for a grand prize. Here, cultural and ethnic diversities are set aside and the groups compete with a spirit of oneness as a nation.

In all cultures of the world, experiences have shown that music serves as a unifying force bringing together people from different communities, races and cultures to agree. Music is of great benefit for any nation because countries can use music to mould or engineer their societies. Okafor (2005) postulated that:

Music is of course very acceptable as an instrument of change because people digest it and consume it as entertainment while it leaves a mark on the psyche that re-directs the person towards a new personality, towards a new activity (p. 277)

It is high time we resorted to music which has been proved to be a stabilising factor in many cultures of the world. Macaronic verse which is the technical term for poetry which mixes languages together is another way of using music to bid Nigerians to unite in spite of their cultural differences. Nigerian musicians acquire languages outside their ethnic groups and in their singing, juxtapose the wordings of these languages together with English words aimed towards fostering peace, unity and patriotism among Nigerians. For example, unscripted arrangement titled 'Nigerian Unity' by Ngozi Okonkwo thus:

Nigerian Unity

| | |
|---|---|
| Una hear me so o; na unity I dey talk | Listen to me; I am talking of unity |
| If I work, una work, make we join hands o | Let us work together to achieve greatness |
| Nigeria go great | for Nigeria |
| If I push una push make we join hands o | Let us push together to achieve greatness |
| Nigeria go great | for Nigeria |
| Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba we be brothers | Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba are brothers |
| Together, ngwanu o, maza maza, oya | Together let us go |

Music entertains as well as educates. The entertainment function of music is never in doubt as people of different culture, colour, ethnic groups and creeds listen to different music during various ceremonies and at their conveniences during relaxation (Olajide, 2008). Music helps in instilling patriotic and nationalistic feelings in society by appealing for a positive change. This is seen in one of Nelly Uchendu's songs titled:

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 (Uchendu, 1986).

It is worthy of note that very little attempts have been made by Nigerians in utilising the potency of our music industry in educational purposes and in combating crime. Messages about peace and unity are put across in the course of playing various types of music. Nzewi (1979) opined that traditional music is a social organizer. It supervises the operation of the established government, assists in the maintenance of the land, safe guards and perpetuates tradition. It also promotes social equity, fights injustice and enforces rule of law. Nketia (1974), Singhal and Rogers (1999) noted that music is one of the ancient traditions that draw large audiences. Music is also an easier method of softening hardened hearts, especially of those in power. A musician has a role of keeping watchful eye on the happenings in the society as a social critic. Valley (2013) speaking on lesson in courage and determination affirmed that, "instead of writing a piece and standing on a podium and delivering a dry piece, I would rather sing and dance and make that devil fall in love with me in order to make change possible" (p. 26). She further postulated:

Music for me is a platform to access the minds of many people, especially those in power. People that, on a normal day, I couldn't approach; the stage has given me the opportunity to meet. And I have met all sorts of people; including those you will never believe (p. 26).

Suggestions

The Federal government and indeed every state government should endeavour to organise music festivals at least once a year where different people from diverse cultures can spend some time together, sing, dance, clap and feel happy united by streams of music from other cultures. In these festivals, new ideas will be addressed and people get united and feel as one people.

Musicians and music practitioners from various ethnic groups in Nigeria should be encouraged to produce music that possess universal appeal and should be geared towards fostering peace and security in the country. Their music should be seen to be cross- ethnic and inter-cultural and also use macaronic verse to a large extent in achieving the desired goals.

Nigerian popular musicians should not be seen as merely entertainers but as public poets and social critics. 'They should therefore continually aspire towards this social effectiveness so that they can progressively serve the people as partners towards social change' (Okafor & Okafor, 2009, p. 93).

Youth unemployment has been one of the major causes of insecurity in Nigeria. It is the youths who drive the popular music industry and make it circulate to all nooks and corners of the country. It is my humble opinion that the government should encourage viable music industries in every state to tackle the youth unemployment that breeds insecurity and social instability in the country.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to establish that the security challenges and social instability in Nigeria is on the increase and a far-reaching solution and social control measures must be sought to redress the nagging problem. It is the stance of this paper that the Nigerian Government should exploit the properties of music for delivering their special benefits to the society since music has proven to be very effective social control, a way of life and a stabilizing factor in all cultures of the world. Nigerian citizens are itching for a well-ordered civilized and democratically organized society that assures the entire citizens true membership of the country; favourable environment to pursue their individual legitimate and common interests, on a footing of equal protection, fairness, as well as the right to take part in the government. "In a multicultural environment, agencies of integration should, and do, include agencies of acculturation and of socialization" (Emeka, 2004, p.50). Music is a major part of these agencies. Therefore, let us use our musical resources to foster peace, unity and patriotism among Nigerians.

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