

Fujicians and National Honors

When I became full Professor of History early last year, I posted a note on Facebook, affirming that Fujician K1 De Ultimate is my role model for consistency. Some people couldn't reconcile the correlation between music production and knowledge production. Worst still, they couldn't understand that inspiration could come from unusual places, in uncommon contexts, and from unexpected people. They think that because I'm a professor, my role model for consistency would be a professor. The central questions that have shaped my career—can I do it again, and again, with different publishers and journals, and on different topics, with the highest possible rigor, is evident in the creativity of the best artists, including Fujicians like K1 De Ultimate. The energy required for top-notch knowledge production requires higher forces—like art, like music, like Fuji—to flourish.

If I admire K1 for his consistency, Barrister is my role model for composition and wordsmithing. The order—line-by-line setting that allows each sentence and paragraph to gradually form a comprehensive whole—that you find in my writings is from Barrister. It's from orthodox Fuji. And if Barrister is Fuji, Fuji is Barrister. Kollington fuels my imagination of "take-no-prisoners." As in, Pawon! If you want your work to be published in the best outlets, you must be rigorous—you must have a Pawon mentality that allows you to stretch all your energy, imagination, and resources, beyond limits, to achieve excellence—against all odds.

Yesterday, the Federal Government of Nigeria conferred the national honor of Member of the Order of the Niger (MON) on Fujician K1 De Ultimate. I'm happy that K1 was recognized, but I'm angry that it came 30 years after he deserved it. Yes, K1 deserved an MON in 1992, when he recalibrated Fuji, completely. Yesterday, we should be celebrating something higher than MON for him. But K1's underappreciation has a long history. Fuji creator, Barrister, received the Member of the Order of the Federal Republic (MFR), four years before he passed. This is an award he should have received in 1981, when I think the rhythm of his Fuji changed forever, making it possible for younger artists to play the sound.

To worsen the matter, Kollington is disrespectfully neglected. This is a human who reported Nigerian politics in lyrics and sounds. If the three highest ranked Fujicians struggled to be recognized by the Nigerian state, how about Sefiu Alao Adegunle (Baba Oko), Obesere, Pasuma, Rasheed Ayinde (Merenge), Taye Currency, Saheed Osupa, Sule Alao Malaika, Adewale Ayuba (not in any particular order)?

Fuji is the most important Yoruba musical culture in the 21st century. It's the most adaptive and the most transformative of any of the pan-Yoruba popular culture. Fuji is more than sound and lyrics. It's a way of life for millions of us. It's the prism through which we attempt to reconcile the contradictions of the past and the present. From a professor's cozy home office in Miami to a makeshift mechanic's shop in Ibadan; from an elite nightclub in London to the tarmac of Lagos Island, the ubiquity of Fuji is as expansive as the imagination of Fujicians that created it, the expressive cultures that stole from it, and the world it created for millions of people.

The utter disrespect of the Nigerian state in recognizing the true creators of wealth, Fujicians whose hard work and creativity initiate chains of economic transactions that feed millions of people, providing means of livelihood that forms the basis of micro and macroeconomic

policies. At least, if you are artistically porous and unable to appreciate creativity, you should see the clear economic impact of music production in communities you have neglected and in the lives of people struggling to overcome economic annihilation that you caused. So, you mean Fujicians who put food on people's table don't deserve to be honored before politicians who take food from their table? If I don't need a private jet to be happy, Fujicians don't need national honor to be respected by millions of people who REALLY CARE about them.
++++Photo Caption: Isola Ojurabemasa and K1 De Ultimate (Lagos, June 2012).

Yours Sincerely in Fuji,
Emperor Saedo Okola and His International Fuji Lions