

On the Current Crisis in Nigeria: An Open Letter to K1 De Ultimate (Posted on Facebook on 11/27/2020)

Dear Mayegun of Yorubaland:

I am writing this letter against the backdrop of the ongoing crisis in Nigeria. But before I continue, I would like to thank you for making this world a better place with your fine music. Although you produce music, and I produce knowledge, I have been deeply inspired by your art, hardwork, and creativity. Academic writing, like music production, entails ability to impose order or to tame chaos (figurative) and bring disparate ideas together to form a coherent whole. For me, no living musician does this better than you. You have proved that the best artists, like the best scholars, are nonconformists who do not follow the crowd or copy others. Rather, they are original thinkers, who invent and reinvent themselves, and whose creativity appeals to multiple generations of admirers. Songs, like books and ideas, can stand the test of time, if thoughtfully composed and rigorously executed.

You will agree with me that Fuji, like other genres of Yoruba performance art, rely on patronage. Throughout eras, artists, including yourself, have served as proxies, using their poetic license to advance the political agenda of their patrons in exchange for cash. The idea of an apolitical artist does not exist. But history--that beautiful thing that is more than facts and narratives--has compelled us to locate this moment in the past, without overlooking the realities that threatens the foundation of our humanity. One has to be historically dead to think that contemporary artistic patronage is "normal" and "ethical," simply because our foremothers and forefathers also took money from politicians.

This brings me to your well-known romance with the ruling party (APC). I think you need to reflect critically about how your partisanship is (indirectly) contributing to the deepening of the crisis of leadership in Nigeria. I think that those images of conspicuous flouting of Nigeria's commonwealth (example Buruji Kashamu) at your performances are injurious to the public. In addition, that scandalous video of your critique of Akinwumi Ambode is annoying, not because I give a damn about the former Lagos State Governor, but because it trivializes the essence of political leadership and distribution of public wealth. I think that you should begin to see your partisanship as a channel through which looters of Nigeria's patrimony intensify violence on the public. Music is supposed to heal, not cause pain.

History is our witness, our judge, and our moral compass. In August 1980, Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, the greatest Fuji artist of all weather, admonished Fuji artists against partisan politics. Barrister was thinking against the backdrop of how art can intensify division and impoverish people, both in their soul and in their body. He did not believe that music should be used to exploit people's consciousness and intensify their vulnerability. Every artist, like every human, is a political being, not doubt. But, the involvement of musicians in modern partisanship has a unique way of worsening the pains inflicted by economic rapists that they praise in their songs.

Nonetheless, you are still my most favorite artist. Your art has influenced my scholarship more than the works of many rogues who call themselves professors. I still plan to give you money in exchange for a song to rebuke one Nigerian-American idiot who boasted 10 years ago that I cannot publish a book without his patronage.

Yours Sincerely in Fuji:
Saheed Aderinto (Alias Emperor Saedo Okola and His International Fuji Lions)

MUSICIANS SHOULD AVOID PARTISAN POLITICS

OUR GUEST

— Ayinde Barrister

By OUR REPORTER

LIFE has a way of shapping one's fortunes.

Imagine a man aspiring to be an academic success finds himself dropping from school in Secondary Class Three owing to financial problems only to end up learning typing and shorthand under a local instructor.

Obtaining the RSA Stages One, Two and Three in typing, taking up an appointment as a typist then over to the army as a combatant and finally ending up as a successful musician, an art acquired at the early age of ten and which he had no initial ambition to pursue.

This aptly describes the life span of Alhaji Sikiru Ayinde Balogun, popularly known as Alhaji Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, the Fuji music exponent.

Shy off stage but articulate and highly entertaining on stage the medium built 32-year-old Alhaji Barrister had this to say about his early life:

"I attended Mushin Mission School and Mainland Model School for my primary education.

I later attended the defunct Yaba Polytechnic College from where I had to withdraw in 1964 owing to

financial reasons which forced me into learning shorthand and typewriting under a local instructor.

How then could he reconcile his academic ambition and early music involvement.

He explained that he started playing during the Ramadan (moslem fasting) period to wake up moslems for the early breakfast preceding fasting as early as the age of 10 in 1958 at Mosewefe and later moved on to Odi-Olowo Mushin in 1965.

He took part in Were Ajisari festivals and won laurels all over Lagos State and thus became the "Barrister of Fuji Music."

How did he become a soldier and what effect had soldiering on his music?

And, he explained: "I had lots of fans and these included non moslems who also followed me about with my singing group in

the early hours of the day during the Ramadan

This group of people pressurised me into playing at engagements usually at parties, after the Ramadan period.

There had been Fuji music before my coming into it but I seemed to have popularised it, and this led me into forming the Sikiru Ayinde Barrister and His Golden Fuji Group in 1965.

I enjoyed the tunes of late Abibu Oluwa, Haruna Ishola, late Sanusi Aka and others. All these tunes I have combined to make up my brand of music, plus of course, Afro music tunes.

His tune gradually became very popular and signed on a 10 year recording contract with the TYC Recording Company in 1966.

How did he become a soldier and what effect had soldiering on his music?

"I had been working

with the Nigerian Breweries as a typist before deciding to join the army as a combatant on February 24, 1968. It was a hell then I found myself at the battle front serving under the 10th Brigade,

own. But those going to Mecca should concentrate on worship rather than going on merriment," he appealed.

At the expiration of his recording contract with TYC in 1976, he renewed it for another two years terminating in 1978 at the end of which he decided to go it alone in the recording business. Thus, owning his own record label, the Siki Ohuyole Records.

How has it been like owning a record label? "The beginning was rough," he said, adding that he was duped of N11,000 by one of his distributors while he has another outstanding N31,000 to collect from another. All these I have taken as part of the sacrifice needed to see me through.

Politics

On politics, Alhaji Barrister said he had been accused of partisanship. But he affirms: "I was and am never a politician but a musician with fans cutting across political barriers. The musician who takes sides in politics will, no doubt, destroy his career," he said.

The fuji exponent had a lot of admiration for Chief Commander Ebenezer Obey, leader of the Inter-Religious

103 Battalion of the Second Division of the Nigerian Army.

"It was on getting back to Lagos after the war that I resumed my music."

"Some of my officers were so entralled by my music that they usually engaged me to play for them whenever the need arose."

"I was getting so much involved with my music and the pressure on me eventually made me to leave the army in 1978 as a substantive sergeant."

There is a belief in some quarters that most of his fans are the never-do-wells, touts, dupes etc. How far is this true.

"Everybody is free to hold an opinion but, as far as I know, my music is well accepted. I have had the opportunity of playing for leading members of the society. I have also had the privilege of entertaining members of the Island Club in the Club Premises and other top men. This goes to confirm that