

## What Amala Cannot Do, Does Not Exist! By Saheed Aderinto

On a sunny Lagos afternoon in June, Samuel Olukayode, a mentee who is a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, took me to one amala buka at Onike Roundabout/Professor Ayodele Awojobi Park, around the road that leads to the University of Lagos second gate.

While queuing to order amala, I saw a food dispatch rider on WhatsApp video call with a customer, who was picking the desired meat and giving both the dispatch rider and the amala server real-time instructions on her culinary desire. I was like, Wondafull! So these people are using virtual technology to address centuries-old problems. Many Ibadan mechanic apprentices have spanner holes in their heads because they chose the wrong meat for their boss. Instantly, I began to draw inspiration, amala buka-induced one, from this experience for my research on Fuji. It has been difficult to track down people to interview partly because I could only be in Nigeria for a few weeks during the summer. I was still following the old-school convention that I must be physically on the ground to shoot the documentary. If a food dispatch rider could use a WhatsApp video call to get his customer to pick the right meat from a pool of meats at a buka, I could also use WhatsApp video call to direct my documentary shooting, especially now that I have a good hold on the project.

That's it! So, since I returned to the US on July 25, I have shot five additional scenes of the documentary, via WhatsApp video call. I will schedule the interview and then get my mentees, (Kabiru Amusa, Tolani Onike, Wale Ayanniyi, and Yusuf Adekojo), who have been shooting with me, to transport recording equipment to the location.

On getting to the location, they call me on WhatsApp video, and I tell them how to arrange the shooting background. I check the frames of the two cameras and direct the cast positioning. They press the record button, as I give additional instructions for the best possible shooting experience. I begin to ask questions from my cast, provide lines, and direct the proceedings— "Eskis sir, say it this way. Could you please take that again?" Because I'm using WhatsApp on my 27-inch desktop, I have a better live video view of the location.

If I hadn't adopted this approach, I wouldn't have been able to interview Chief Demola Oyefeso, a renowned global art promoter who took Barrister on his 1994 US tour on August 14 and Mr. Abiodun Ayeni who was Barrister's sound engineer from 1990 until his passing in 2010, for the first episode scheduled to be released in February. I wouldn't have, through the help of Polytechnic of Ibadan lecturer [Timothy Kayode Ajiboye](#), covered the remake of Barrister's Fuji Garbage (1988) by graduating music students of the institution for their final year project on August 1.

Shooting and directing through WhatsApp video calls are just one of the two things that digital technology has helped me achieve since July 25. Once the idea of WhatsApp video call was consolidated, something told me I could also use Zoom to work with my video editor, Aderibigbe Abiola (Provost), who is based in Ibadan. Through Zoom, he simply shares the editing interface with me, and I tell him exactly what I want, as we collectively work together to deliver the first episode in February. Because he's only sharing the editing interface, we don't need a big internet bandwidth to work. A fairly stable internet connection is enough to do the magic.

The moral of the story is that buka is not only where I temporarily quench my gluttonous addiction to amala—it's also a site of inspiration for research problem-solving. If I didn't follow Samuel Olukayode to the buka in question, I wouldn't have thought of shooting and editing the Fuji documentary, virtually. My plan to release the first episode of the Fuji documentary in February wouldn't have been possible. Of course, this method poses its own methodological challenge that I intend to write about, comprehensively, later. Until then, I repeat, What Amala Cannot Do, Does Not Exist!

Yours Sincerely in Fuji,  
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