



## Music: A Vehicle for Regime Change in Zambia, 1950s-2021

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**Abstract:** *This study examines the role played by music in the Zambian political sphere between the 1950s and 2021. It brings to the attention of the reader the fact that music has been a vehicle that has been used by politicians to transmit their campaign messages which in the end have influenced people to vote for them. Historians and other scholars have given attention to the role music plays as a form of weapon for cultural and political struggles. However, this is not systematically developed in Zambian studies. This study discusses music as a form of speech on political issues in Zambia since the 1950s. The bond between music and politics is the dominant theme in the discussion. The founding of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) in April 1960 released unusual energy for activism and heralded a diversity of political changes. The African National Congress (ANC), United Party (UP), and United Progressive Party (UPP) were major opponents of UNIP. Political struggles between UNIP and its opponents provided a forum for various forms of free speech through songs about social and economic issues that affected many social groups in Zambia. The study argues that music has been a critical tool for disseminating political messages which have greatly contributed to regime changes in Zambia.*

**Keywords:** *Music, vehicle, song, political, regime, change*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

A variety of methods were employed by different African Nationalist leaders to awaken their nationalist aspirations in their countries. In Zambia, Kenneth David Kaunda, was one of the leaders of the freedom fighters who fought for independence through non-violent, yet relentless struggle. In his political struggle for independence, Kaunda embraced music as one of the vehicles for information dissemination to his people. Political discourses are found not only in speeches and newspapers but also in cultural artefacts such as architecture, art, and music.<sup>1</sup> This is true not only for Zambian historiography but the entire world. The use of music by Zambians to express their feelings has been there for a longer period. In many instances, people express their emotions not only through newspapers or online media but also through music. Musicians compose and sing songs to express their feelings depending on what is obtaining in society at that particular time. According to Kaputula, “Zambians are said to be a people that sing and dance during happy and sorrowful moments. They dance when in high spirits, satisfied, disturbed, pained, serious, troubled, hopeless, miserable, unhappy, discouraged, down, upset, depressed, and/or disappointed.”<sup>2</sup> Uche outlines that:

Music permeates significant aspects of African society, culture, and tradition. There is no activity which does not have music appropriate to it: weaver, farmer and fisherman each sings in perfect time to the rhythmic movements of (ones’) craft ... there is also the great social music which accompanies religious, festive, and ceremonial occasions.<sup>3</sup>

Zambians have sung many songs that have communicated different messages to the people. If well composed and sung, music has a serious effect on the emotions of the listeners. John stresses that, “if anything, songs, and sounds are more powerful weapons in this armoury because of the way music works directly on our emotions. Just as the soundtrack to films or advertisements generates moods

<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lyndon, ‘Protest Music, Populism, Politics and Authenticity: The Limits and Potential of Popular Music’s Articulation of Subversive Politics’, *Journal of Language and Politics*, Vol. 15:4 (2016), p. 422.

<sup>2</sup> G. Kaputula, ‘Which Song Shall Win the 2021 Zambian General Election?’, *The Mast*, June 21, 2020, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Onyebadi Uche, ‘Political Messages in African Music: Assessing Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, Lucky Dube and Alpha Blondy’, *Humanities Journal*, Vol. 7(4):129 (2018), p. 1.

and feelings, so too do campaign songs.”<sup>4</sup>Nimrod adds that, “officials ... are well aware of the important role that popular music plays in modern life and its power to influence people’s thought, sentiments, and behaviour.”<sup>5</sup>Political songs are composed and used by politicians during their campaigns. This is because music plays a key role in campaigns. Nimrod expands that state control and music have been linked to each other in China since antiquity.<sup>6</sup>Therefore, the role of music in Zambian politics cannot be overemphasized.

There are diverse forms of songs Zambians have sung and have continued to sing. They sing in different situations and for a variety of purposes. Some songs are adapted to many different situations. Many songs are also borrowed by one ethnic group from another. In this case, some songs are translated into the language of the group that borrowed or adopted a song. Under the influence of entrenched cultural exchanges such as community joking relationships and the notion of unity in diversity, songs that are borrowed are not always translated. These songs express group feelings such as those of the youth, workers, or a political party. The songs are also forms of cultural expression and thus contain an unquantifiable amount of data.

In the 1950s, the Central African Broadcasting Services (CABS) had two programs for Africans. The first one involved travelling throughout the country to record cultural music that was played on the radio. The radio station for Africans began in the early 1940s to inform them about the Second World War. The second programme invited Africans to take part in discussions or to perform and record plays which were broadcast from the radio station. Some music, discussions, and plays were televised when television was introduced on the Copperbelt in 1963.

All in all, music has been very helpful to the people of Zambia and the world over because it has greatly helped them to communicate their feelings. This was very important in the colonial days when Africans could not freely voice out against colonial injustices. Grundlingh states that as far back as the 1930s and 1940s distinctive form of township music such as Marabi carried with them their own implicit and sometimes explicit political messages against the apartheid system in South Africa.<sup>7</sup>

## **2. WHY USE MUSIC DURING POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS?**

As mentioned earlier in the introductory part of this study, music, just like other means of communication, is very cardinal during political campaigns. Music plays a cardinal role among Zambians and other people from other parts of the world. Commenting on how the Emperor of China valued music, Nimrod highlights that, “music is perceived by the emperor as being as important as the sword with which he defeats his rivals; whereas the latter may be used to exert physical control, the former is necessary to exert spiritual and ideological control.”<sup>8</sup>Unlike Europeans who can freely engage with each other through debates when campaigning, Africans, especially those in power, block those in opposition so that they can be the only ones campaigning. Therefore, music is used as an alternative means of spreading political manifestos for those in opposition. Allen posits that while public contestation is largely done through the mass media in Western societies, in Africa, people find other ways of voicing who they are ... and what they want.<sup>9</sup> Music is therefore one of the ways through which Africans voice out their views.

The use of music is common in political activities the world over. In South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) is among the political parties that used the power of music in its political activities. The same can be said about some political parties in Zambia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and other African countries. Music is a universal language of humanity due to its power to bring positivity and entertainment to people. Most people love music because of its ability to change a person’s mood and bring a sense of relief in his/her life. Most of the unanswered queries can be answered through the use of music. Therefore, music is cardinal during political campaigns as discussed below.

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<sup>4</sup> J. Street, ‘Fight the Power’: The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics, Government and Opposition, *An International Journal of Comparative Politics*, Vol. 38, Issue 1. (2014), p. 114.

<sup>5</sup> B. Nimrod, *China’s New Voices: Popular Music, Ethnicity, Gender and Politics, 1978-1997* (London: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 194-95.

<sup>6</sup> Nimrod, *China’s New Voices*, p. 192.

<sup>7</sup> A. Grundlingh, ‘Rocking the Boat’ in South Africa? Voëlvry Music and Afrikaans Anti-Apartheid Social Protests in the 1980s’, *The International Journal of African History Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3, (2004), p. 486.

<sup>8</sup> Nimrod, *China’s New Voices*, p. 193.

<sup>9</sup> L. Allen, ‘Music and Politics in Africa’, *A Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 30, Issue 2, (2008), p. 1.

One of the reasons for employing music during political campaigns is to unite people. Music can unite people in different ways on several occasions. In most Zambian societies, people traditionally used to meet in the evenings to sing and dance. People from within the village and even those from other villages could meet and sing in the night up to around midnight or even beyond. Singing in the night helped them to get united because some songs had messages that encouraged people to get united in their communities. Moreover, unity could be attained because music helped people to forget about the problems they had in life. Prominent people that composed songs ensured that they came up with songs that could help a certain ethnic group or even people across ethnic groups to get united. Such composers could also compose some songs that united people of one political party. A famous Zambian song, *Tiyende pamodzi ndimtima umo*, called on Zambians to march in unity and courage to engage in the liberation of settler-ruled Southern African States in Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa.

Just like other means of communication, music has been used in Zambia and even in other parts of the world to disseminate political messages. Hitler is among the world leaders that used music to ensure that his fascist ideas were spread quickly to all the people of Germany. Lyndon stipulates that in 1920s Europe, art and architecture, as well as music, were used as central parts of communicating fascist ideology.<sup>10</sup>

Not everything that one would want to share with others can be communicated through talking, newspapers, or other means of communication. Many are feelings that people sometimes fail to express but through music, it becomes easy to communicate such feelings to people. For instance, it is very difficult to openly come out and condemn an oppressive regime because doing so might risk one's life. In situations like this, music is used as an alternative too of communication for one's message to reach the intended audience. Makwambeni outlines that:

During the reign of former President Robert Mugabe Zim dancehall music emerged as an alternative public sphere separate from the state where counter-discourse is produced and consumed largely by unemployed urban youths who have been excluded from mainstream communicative spaces.<sup>11</sup>

Zim dancehall music became very popular during the reign of Robert Mugabe because the state could not allow messages that criticised his regime. Therefore, to ensure that there was an alternative voice for the youths, who happened to have been the majority in Zimbabwe, Zim dancehall music was given priority to enable the voiceless to be heard.

In an African growing democracy, music has occupied a large space to enable people to deliver their messages to their potential voters. This is cardinal as music enables some voters who may not have an opportunity to meet with a particular candidate to listen to his/her campaign messages. Through music, political candidates can deliver their messages to the electorates even without physically meeting them. This is common for civil servants who are restricted from attending political rallies, especially for the opposition. Kaputula puts it that:

As African democracy is growing and evolving, music is increasingly being used in the electoral processes to deliver messages about political candidates, parties, manifestos, and importantly to attract potential voters. Music is proving to be a powerful communication tool especially when communicating political messages to both existing and potential supporters and voters.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, music is vital in political campaigns because it can influence voters towards a certain candidate even when that candidate has no convincing manifesto or vision for the country. From the bits and lyrics of the song used, some people are influenced to vote for certain candidates. This was the case during the 2016 General Elections where people voted for Edgar Chagwa Lungu because of the song 'Dununa reverse' which he used during his campaigns despite him having announced to the country that he had no vision for the people of Zambia. To stress the influence music has in politics, Kaputula stipulates that:

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<sup>10</sup> Lyndon, 'Protest Music, Populism, Politics and Authenticity', p. 422.

<sup>11</sup> B. Makwambeni, 'Zimbabwe Dancehall Music as a Site of Resistance', in Onyebadi, U., (ed.), *Music as a Platform for Political Communication* (Hershey: IGI Global, 2017), p. 246.

<sup>12</sup> Kaputula, 'Which Song Shall Win the 2021 Zambian General Election?', p. 2.

Music has been influential and an unstoppable force in the victors of the past elections. In fact, some voters have openly come out confessing that their voting was influenced by the songs and not the quality of the candidates or a party. The power and influence of music cannot be underestimated in Zambian politics today.<sup>13</sup>

Despite Edgar having announced that he had no vision for the people, he won the elections because of *Dununa reverse's* bits. The song had no message that could influence people to vote for Edgar. The only message in the song was 'dununa dununa reverse' which simply meant 'going backward.' What 'going backward' meant no one knows up to date. However, despite using a song whose meaning was not known by anyone, and the presidential candidate not having a vision for the people, Edgar still won the elections because of *dununa reverse's* bits.

Considering the part played by music in Zambian politics, it can be concluded, especially for the past three general elections (2011, 2016, and 2021), that music had a serious bearing on who would win the elections.

Music is also a powerful tool used for propaganda in politics. Many politicians, the world over, have used musicians in their campaigns to ensure that they disseminate their political messages. World Super Powers like the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), now Russia, Germany, and Britain greatly used music in their political and military activities. John outlines that:

During the Second World War, the USSR funded bands and other forms of entertainment in its bid to maintain military morale. The Nazi too used popular songs for propagandist purposes. The British did something similar with ENSA, the wartime entertainment organisation, and the US with the Glenn Miller Orchestra.<sup>14</sup>

Other than the above Super Powers, most African countries used music in their political campaigns for propaganda purposes. Mark highlights that:

More recently, nationalist movements have exploited music's propaganda powers. In the late 1960s and 1970s, President Mobutu of Zaire made extensive use of bands such as OK Jazz to sing his praises, and in Kenya Daniel Arap Moi sponsored musicians who celebrated him in songs that became national hits.<sup>15</sup>

Key among the messages spread through songs is propaganda. According to John, the music chosen to accompany election campaigns act as a form of propaganda. It serves to evoke particular images and associations, much in the same way that politicians' photo opportunities with pop or film, or soaps star are supposed to do.<sup>16</sup> Propaganda messages are played on radios and televisions or during physical campaigns. Songs with messages that discredit opponents as thieves, failures, tribalists, drunkards, prostitutes/womanisers, etc. have been common in Zambian politics. This is done to ensure that the owners of the songs influence the electorates to lose hope in their opponents. On the other hand, some politicians have come up with songs that praise them as the messiahs or the ones sent by God to solve humanity's problems. They praise themselves as better politicians or servants of the people who will bring to an end, once voted in, all the bad things done by those in power. For those in power, songs are used to praise themselves and remind people of what they have done for them. This is a very common trend in Zambian history from 1964-2021 as observed in many political songs where those in power have told musicians to compose songs that talk about what they have done like the construction of roads, hospitals, schools, provision of food to the less privileged and many other things they feel will add value to their campaigns.

Nationalism is another reason for the use of songs during political campaigns. This has been a common trend in most countries in and outside Africa. In China, the emperors ensured that they used music to unite the people for the people to continue supporting them. Nimrod expounds that:

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<sup>13</sup> Kaputula, 'Which Song Shall Win the 2021 Zambian General Election?', p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Street, 'Fight the Power', p. 115.

<sup>15</sup> M. Slobin, *Returning Culture: Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> Street, 'Fight the Power', p. 114.

Except for its emphasis on traditional culture, the official agenda of Music Television ... closely follows the basic principles that underlie the cultural policy of the revolutionary period, allowing for a limited range of expression that basically includes only expressions of patriotism and nationalism, and positive, idealised sentiments towards life in general.<sup>17</sup>

Several political leaders from different countries in Africa embraced music and used it for national unity. According to Mohamed, in the late 1960s, Sudanese musician, Mohamed Wardi, used his platform to arouse nationalist fervour among his compatriots ...<sup>18</sup>Saunders adds to Mohamed's view by giving a South African picture that, "under apartheid, the South African authorities promoted their 'homelands' policy by encouraging the playing of 'rural' music on the so-called Bantu radio stations; the intention was to create a particular sense of nationhood."<sup>19</sup> From the Chinese, Sudanese, and South African political situations given above, it is very clear that political leaders in these countries knew the role music played in arousing nationalist feelings among people, hence their use of songs in their political activities to unite the people for them to be relevant politically.

Coming to Zambia, most hit songs that have been used by different political leaders, from the first Republican President, Kenneth David Kaunda, to the current one, Hakainde Hichilema, have serious messages that influenced people to become patriotic citizens. A review of songs used for political campaigns in Zambia, especially by those in opposition, shows that most of them had messages that encouraged the listeners to become patriotic and take a move to liberate themselves from the challenges they were facing under the leadership in power. On the other hand, those in power came up with songs that encouraged citizens to remain united and support their government because of the good things they had done for the people. Therefore, music has been key in the political struggles among different leaders in Zambia to unite the people.

Music is further used politically to resist or protest against some perceived wrongs done by those in power. Resistance or protesting music has not only been common in the Zambian political systems but the world over. According to John, music has long been a site of resistance. From the folk songs of rural England to the work songs of slaves, from anti-war protest songs to illegal raves, music has given voice to resistance and opposition.<sup>20</sup>This is very common and effective in countries where media freedom is shrunk for the opposition and their rights of assembly and movements are restricted. Therefore, to ensure that the electorates are educated about the evils committed by those in power and that citizens rise or protest against them, songs are used. Lyndon stipulates that:

Oppositional voices in mainstream media are not a universal reality. Turkey is one such place where its press has been deemed "not free". During Turkey's 2013 protests, mainstream media, for the most part controlled by the government, initially avoided covering the protests and subsequently under-covered them. At the same time, over 100 protest-supporting videos were uploaded onto the internet appearing oppositional as part of a protest against the ruling party.<sup>21</sup>

Protest music was common in the colonial days to awaken people to rise against the colonial masters. Onyebadi puts it that African politics and political activities are also impacted by music. For instance, the history of colonialism and independence in the continent will be incomplete without adequate attention to music and songs that were used to mobilise people to agitate for political freedom.<sup>22</sup>According to John, ...rather than being simply entertainment or escapism, popular music provided a space in which acts of resistance could be articulated.<sup>23</sup>Onyebadi and John's views are very critical because political songs played a very important role in helping people to get united and fight against colonial injustices.

Gakahu, in her study, *Lyrics of Protest: Music and Political Communication in Kenya*, brings out some colonial injustices that were covered in the Mau Mau freedom fighters' songs which the people were persuaded to fight. "During Kenya's independence struggle against colonial Britain, most Mau

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<sup>17</sup> Nimrod, *China's New Voices*, p. 194.

<sup>18</sup> Onyebadi, (ed.), *Music as a Platform for Political Communication*, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> Frances, S., Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta, 2000), p. 151.

<sup>20</sup> Street, 'Fight the Power', p. 120.

<sup>21</sup> Lyndon, 'Protest Music, Populism, Politics and Authenticity', p. 423.

<sup>22</sup> Onyebadi, *Political Messages in African Music*, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Street, 'Fight the Power', p. 121.

Mau freedom fighters' songs were a discourse about liberation from colonial injustices such as torture, rape, massacre, castration, forced labour, high taxation, and land displacement."<sup>24</sup> Freedom fighters' songs about colonial injustices were a serious catalyst towards colonial resentment among the Africans. In South Africa, Erick gives a picture of Afrikaners' use of music to help them fight for their rights by stating that, "twelve years after Afrikaners lost control of South Africa's political system, music became a fulcrum for Afrikaners to begin mouthing discontent about their place within the post-apartheid socio-political order."<sup>25</sup> Music has therefore been a powerful weapon used in different countries, Zambia inclusive, to protest against some injustices perpetrated by those in power.

The other crucial reason for using music during political campaigns is to attract an audience. This is true because human beings are social beings that love to be in interesting places. Politicians, therefore, use music in their political excursions because of its entertaining power. According to John, ... a star's ability to secure an audience is what eager politicians see in the performers they recruit to their campaigns ....<sup>26</sup> Kaputula adds that:

As African democracy is growing and evolving, music is increasingly being used in the electoral processes to deliver messages about political candidates, parties, manifestos and importantly to attract potential voters. Music is proving to be a powerful communication tool especially when communicating political messages to both existing and potential supporters and voters.<sup>27</sup>

Music's ability to attract bigger audiences is key among politicians. This is so because no politician would wish to address a smaller audience because doing so has no serious impact on the campaigns. Politicians would wish to address huge clouds of people so that their manifesto is known and accepted by many people. In addition, politics is about perceptions. The larger the population one address, the more it is believed that he/she is popular and that his/her chances of winning an election are higher. On the other hand, a politician who addresses small rallies is believed to be unpopular, hence such a one is believed to have fewer chances of winning an election. Therefore, politicians invite musicians that are believed to be the best to perform during their campaigns so that a lot of people can attend their rallies. True to state that there are a lot of people who attend some political campaigns for some political parties they do not support but they attend the rallies because of the availability of musicians who entertain the people. Instead of just listening to music, such people also listen to the campaign messages which might change positively their perception of these politicians. Music is indeed a powerful weapon for attracting and entertaining the electorates.

### **3. REGIME CHANGE SONGS IN ZAMBIA**

Zambia has witnessed some important songs which have been called in this article 'regime change songs'. These songs have been called so because they took prominence, despite having other campaign songs, to influence the electorates to vote for some political parties. This has been a common trend from independence to date. During colonial rule, the misrule by the colonial masters caused intense grievances among many Zambians as expressed in diverse contemporary forms. Using music, ordinary Zambians conveyed a strong dislike of colonial rule and were fertile ground for protest. The nationalist organisations recruited easily because disorientation and dislocation were widespread in rural and urban areas in the 1950s and early 1960s.

During the struggle for independence, there was no specific regime change song that was common in all parts of the country. People in each area sang their song(s) common to them. However, among the fishermen in Mweru-Luapula and other parts of the country like Copperbelt, Northern, Central, and Lusaka, in the late 1950s, *Bwelelenimo* (go back) was a commonly sang against the colonial administration:

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<sup>24</sup> Nancy Gakahu, 'Lyrics of Protest: Music and Political Communication in Kenya', in Uche Onyebadi (ed.), *Music as a Platform for Political Communication* (Hershey: IGI Global, 2017), p. 259.

<sup>25</sup> Louw Erick, 'Afrikaner Music and Identity Politics in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Bok van Blerk and the De la Rey Phenomenon', in Uche Onyebadi, (ed.), *Music as a Platform for Political Communication* (Hershey: IGI Global, n.y), pp. 89-90.

<sup>26</sup> Street, 'Fight the Power', p. 128.

<sup>27</sup> Kaputula, 'Which Song Shall Win the 2021 Zambian General Election?', p. 2.

*Bwelelenimo, bwelelenimokumwenu, ukomwafuma, tempangayenu,  
mwabulaabakaya abo mwasanga, ebomwaalulainama, shampanga, mulibamwisa.  
Owe ne Sabitata, ne sabibalibindaabalwani, namasumbutusunkelafye,  
ne namabalibinda, nemitibalibindamumpaga.  
Mwebalumendo, mwebalumendobonse, bonsetucononepeLamba,  
bonsetichonenekuTauni, bashalebekateimfumu, inotempangayabo.*

From the song above, Africans brought out their grievances against the colonial masters such as the forbidding of fishing during the fish ban, paying taxes, prohibition of the cutting of hard trees such as *Umulombwa (Pterocarpus Angolensis)* without a license, and many more injustices. All these were infringements by the colonial regime which made Zambians demand that Europeans should leave Africans in peace. The song rejected any external intervention that undermined local sovereignty over resources. Anti-colonial feelings were strong, especially when expressed through music. Therefore, *Bwelelenimo* was very fundamental in fueling anticolonial feelings among Zambians. Using such kind of a song, nationalist leaders like David Kenneth Kaunda, Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula, and many others were motivated to recruit a lot of people who helped them to fight against colonial injustices. Nationalist leaders could *Bwelelenimo* during their political activities, funerals inclusive. Kalusa observed that sufficient evidence suggests that on the Copperbelt, UNIP transformed funerals and cemeteries into a terrain for recruiting new adherents and waging a relentless campaign against alien misrule.<sup>28</sup> Consequently, the attainment of independence was made easy with the aid of regime change songs such as *Bwelelenimo*. Such a song could still be sung even after Zambia became independent for people to remind themselves of the injustices they faced under the colonial masters.

Other than *Bwelelenimo*, ‘UNIP is my shield’ was another regime change song used specifically by UNIP nationalist leaders to organise people to rise against the colonial masters. According to Kapasa Makasa, UNIP made its impact felt in all ways but the most stirring were the political songs-almost like hymns-which served to stir up feelings of nationalism, unity, and total dedication to the party and the struggle.<sup>29</sup> ‘UNIP is my shield’ is recorded below:

UNIP is my shield forever  
Nothing shall I fear at all  
Even though chains of slavery bind me  
Always shall I remember.  
Gnashing of teeth and misery  
Is black man’s curse indeed  
Shedding of tears and weariness  
These are our daily sorrow.  
To lead never shall I forsake  
In my own land of birth  
Until I see my liberty  
Under black man’s rule.  
Ye spirit of our late forefathers!  
You rise and help us all  
And let all children young and old  
Rejoice in freedom.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> W. Kalusa, “Politics of the Gravesite: Funerals, Nationalism and the Reinvention of the Cemetery on the Zambian Copperbelt”, 2014, pp. 165-199.

<sup>29</sup> Kapasa Makasa, *Zambia’s March to Political Freedom* (Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), p. 118.

<sup>30</sup> Makasa, *Zambia’s March to Political Freedom*, p. 118.

Despite having attained independence on October, 24<sup>th</sup>, 1964, Zambians felt they again needed to change the government in the late 1980s and early 1990s because of some problems Kaunda inflicted on them. The desire to remove Kaunda from power was propelled by Peter Kalumba Chishala (PK)'s song 'common man':

*We mufyashi, watufyala niwe trade union, mayo, umfwa ifwe fwe bana tuleilishanya,  
tatuleikuta, ubwali bulecepa pantu umutengo wa bunga, naunina,  
ukucila amalipilo elyo nabambi tababomba.*

*Tuletasha, icinto tulabomba tufwile nokulya bwino, imilile iisuma,  
iwanya amatontokanyo nokubombesha, Abengii, bekala nensala palanci kwaule imyau,  
nokubelenga, bamo kulanda ilyashi elyo bambi kuteya isolu.*

*Elyo bambi, lanci yabo kulambalala mulunkoto, bamo bashinguluka,  
mumashitolo kwati palifyo baleshita, bambi banwa, amaheu balelila na mabanshi,  
bamo mataba, ifyumbu nangu tute baletobela ne mbalala.*

*Tulekabila ukulya ulucelo, akasuba necungulu, nomba tulefilwa,  
mulandu wa mitengo yafyakulya naicilamo, tuleshipikishafye, amacushi emufundo wa mano,  
ayalenga, tukwebe mayo tulombeleko kuli batata.*

*Babuteko, batulundileko ulupiya imikalile yashupa, ecilenga, tulefilwa nokusunga balupwa lwesu.*

*Ala mayo landeni na batata, ababuteko, batubeleleko uluse, balunde fimbi,  
batushileko ubunga fwe balanda.*

*Ukufwala, ukunwa no kupepa, temulandu, icikulu kulya bwino,  
pantu insala nga yacilamo ilaleta umusebanya.*

'Common man' was a regime change song composed against President Kenneth Kaunda and his UNIP government. The song was an expression of how common people in Zambia dependent on lunch-hour blues as their backdrop. The Majority of Zambians could not manage a decent meal; hence they were subjected to spending their lunch time lying down on the lawns or playing *isolu* (draft) or window shopping. Those who managed a meal ate buns, groundnuts, sweet potatoes, cassava, a cob of maize, and *Maheu* drinks. Many people desired to have three meals in their homes but this was impossible due to the high cost of living. Having been subjected to this kind of suffering, 'the common man' gave a fervent petition to 'Mother' (the trade union) to talk to the 'Father' (the Kaunda government) to fix the economy. The biggest appeal in the song was to the trade unions to request Kaunda to increase the cost of other commodities and not that of mealie meal because having a better meal made one have a peace of mind.

Unlike *Bwelelenimo* which was only common in Luapula and nearby provinces, 'common man' was a national regime change song. It was sung and played on radios in all parts of the country. The song had a serious impact such that it raised the emotions of many Zambians to a point that when elections were held in 1991, Kaunda lost to Frederick Jacob Titus Chiluba of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD). Therefore, 'the common man' influenced people's thoughts to replace Kaunda's government with another government that would take care of their needs. Nimrod appreciates the power of music when he states that popular music plays a big role in modern life because of its power to influence people's thoughts, sentiments, and behaviour.<sup>31</sup> It is indisputable that 'common man' was a regime change song in the history of Zambia because of the role it played to open people's eyes whereby when it was played on radios or sung by anyone in the community, some people could even shade tears because of the sufferings they went through under the Kaunda era. With the coming of MMD on the scene, especially with its promises of liberalising the economy to ease the economic challenges Zambians faced during the Kaunda regime, 'common man' became like national anthem because its main message was in tandem with the MMD manifesto. As a result, UNIP was removed from power with the aid of 'common man' because its message touched and influenced people's emotions.

The removal of MMD from power by Michael Chilufya Sata of the Patriotic Front (PF) party would not have been easy without the use of music. Just as it was in the fight against colonialism and the removal of UNIP from the helm of power in 1964 and 1991 respectively, music also played a big role

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<sup>31</sup> Nimrod, *China's New Voices*, pp. 194-95.



in the removal of MMD from power in 2011. Sata adopted 'Donchi Kubeba' mantra to spread his political campaign messages. In its precise meaning 'Donchi Kubeba' means 'don't tell them.' The slogan 'Don't Kubeba' was coined by Dr. Guy Scott, Sata's Vice President, whereas the song 'Donchi Kubeba' was composed by Wesley Chibambo who is popularly known as Dandy Crazy. 'Donchi Kubeba' had the following wedding:

*Adonchi kubeba wilalila ashiii, adonchi kubeba wilalila ashiii,  
Adonchi kubeba apenta ne ilinso, adonchi kubeba... .. nakana,  
Adonchi kubeba apenta ne ilinso, adonchi kubeba ... .. nakana,  
Adonchi kubeba wilalila ashiii, adonchi kubeba wilalila ashiii.*

*Cilongoma isomone ca dilika, umushili wasampauka walepuka,  
Muno calo tulembamo na kopa, kwikala bwino bonse proper,  
Nakwataka na bodi Kabulonga, nokwangala na bana Mundawanga,  
Anicifye calo ca lufyengo, naisanga mu geto no ge.*

*No musebo twikalamo ulanda, twalinaka nomba twalileka no kulanda.  
Cilongoma kwimbamo na kopa, kamana kulobamo pale.  
Imbokoshi kushikamo no muntu, li famu kusombolamo ne fipushi.  
Donchi kubeba, donchi kubeba.*

*John kukalale epo aila, diploma mu failo yala bola,  
Mukufwaya icinto ubushiku bwaila, bamwikata shishita elo alila,  
Mayo ala lwalilila kumushi, mucipatala tamwaba ne miti,  
Fertiliser ya shota twacula, pamushi pesu papona insala,*

*Kaleta yapalama imyaka, infumu bailasa ne bata,  
Headman bamusove icigayo, citenge bapelako kamayo,  
Wikalaba eflyo waikala, wikalaba eflyo wacula,  
Wikalaba eflyo waikala, wikalaba eflyo wacula.  
Atwikatane tumane akapi, nangu benga tubolaula namapi.*

*Nalikwata share pa zed yandi, nkafwilapo pantu ine patali.  
Ba teacher donchi kubeba, ba doctor donchi kubeba,  
Ishi maini donchi kubeba, shi ma farm donchi kubeba,  
Ba muntu donchi kubeba, cub driver donchi kubeba,  
Shi ma bakery donchi kubeba, i nurse donchi  
kubeba.*

Just like 'common man', 'Donchi Kubeba' was the sole regime change song used by the Patriotic Front party during the campaigns leading to its victory in the 2011 August general elections. This song was loved by many people, even those who did not support PF because it was a hit song from the word go. Many drinking places played the song and rarely could people listen to it without dancing. 'Donchi Kubeba' became the national anthem for most Zambians in 2011. The song was in line with the PF manifesto which propagated more money in the citizens' pockets, lower taxes, more jobs, media freedom, and many more which were nonexistent in the MMD regime, especially under the last President of MMD in power, Ruphia Bwezani Banda.

Dandy Crazy covered a wide range of challenges Zambians were going through during the MMD regime of Rupiah Bwezani Banda. Among them were hunger, lack of employment among the youths, headmen, and chiefs being bribed with hammer mills and bicycles during elections, and many other challenges. With these and other challenges faced in the country, Dandy Crazy urged people to pretend as if all was well by 'Donchi Kubeba', not telling the MMD government what was in their minds. In short, 'Donchi Kubeba' encouraged citizens not to disclose their loyalty to the PF, instead, people were to act as though all was well under Ruphia Banda's regime. Dandy Crazy concluded his song by pleading with citizens to remain united even if it meant police breaking their legs. It is also important to note that 'Donchi Kubeba' encouraged voters to vote for Sata despite them having been bribed by other political parties. Having received the message in 'Donchi Kubeba', Zambians pretended as if they loved Ruphia Banda. However, he was shocked to an extent of crying when lost and handed over the instruments of power to Michael Sata on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2011. 'Donchi Kubeba' was therefore used by Sata as a vehicle of regime change to remove MMD from power.

The August, 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021 victory of the United Party for National Development (UPND) under Hakainde Hichilema (HH) against Edgar Chagwa Lungu (ECL) of the PF cannot be discussed without looking at the role played by music. Just as it was with other political parties, UPND adopted a regime change song titled *Tatwafola*, literally ‘we are not yet paid’. The song went as follows:

*Bushe civil servant walifola eee?*

*Tatwafola, awe, tatwafola ukepushe tu PF eee,  
tatwafola ukepushe tu PF, utotwine utwikele apo.*

*Bushe wemwina Zambia walilyamo eee?*

*Tatwalyamo, awe, tatwalyamo ukepushe tu PF eee,  
tatwalyamo ukepushe tu PF, utotwine utwikele apo.*

*2021 kuyaaa, kuyaa bebele eeeee, 2021 kuyaaa, kuyaa bebele eeee,  
twambe ukulonga, kuyaaa, kuya bebele eeee, webo nisika bonanza,  
kuyaaa, kuya bebele eeee, kasaka ka ndalama, kuyaaa, kuya bebele eee,*

*zwa zwa, kuyaaa, zwa, eee, zwa zwa,*

*ukulonga balelonga, zwa, nangu tabalefwaya zwa, zwa,*

*ukulonga balelonga, zwa, nangu tabalefwaya zwa zwa,*

*ukulonga balelonga, zwa, nangu tabalefwaya.*

*Bushe wemunandi ulabomba eeee?*

*Awe tatubombaa, tatubomba ukepushe tu PF,  
tatubomba ukepushe tu PF, utotwine utwikele apo.*

*Bushe bursary ekoyaba eeee, kasukulu?*

*Takwaba awe, awe takwaba awe ukepushe tu PF,  
takwaba awe ukepushe tu PF, utotwine utwikele apo.*

Just like ‘Common man’ and *Donchi kubeba*, *Tatwafola*, a song sung by Andrew Chisala, popularly known as Cavman, was the main campaign song for the UPND, especially in the towns. It was the main song that was played wherever Hakainde went for campaigns. Despite the ruthlessness of the PF members who did not want people to talk about UPND or see them wearing UPND regalia, *Tatwafola* was played in many homes and by many drivers, especially those driving private vehicles. The song had a touching message in relation to the challenges the citizenry faced under PF, especially under President Lungu.

The song had four (4) major questions to the people of Zambia. The first one was asked to the civil servants if they had been paid their salaries or not. This question was asked because it was common for civil servants to get their salaries late. For some workers like those in councils and those from universities like the University of Zambia (UNZA) and Copperbelt University (CBU), staying for some months without a salary had become a common trend under the PF regime. Bwalya bemoans the challenges faced by UNZA and CBU by stating; “... let me appeal to President Lungu, and his PF government to stop this madness. His government should stop these perpetual salary delays at UNZA and CBU. The trend is chasing away qualified personnel.”<sup>32</sup> Delayed salaries at the two institutions of learning had become a serious challenge to an extent that some landlords, when advertising their houses, specified that they did not need anyone working for the Council, UNZA and CBU.

The second question was asked to the Zambian citizens if they had benefitted anything from the PF government. The question was asked because it was common in the PF regime for only those aligned to the PF to benefit from different government programmes whereas the majority of the citizens who seemed not to support the government benefitted less or nothing. Most of the government empowerment programmes, especially for the youth and women, could only be given to PF-aligned citizens. Those who were known to have belonged to or supported other political parties could not access such empowerment programmes. According to Anthony Bwalya, “all we keep seeing is the “fund” churning out “empowerment” in the form of cash, buses, projects, and equipment; with known named “cooperatives” clear beneficiaries of the same.”<sup>33</sup> This is why the answer to this question in the song was that Zambians did not benefit anything from the PF.

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<sup>32</sup> Tuesday Bwalya, ‘PF Government Causes Brain Drain at UNZA and CBU’, *The Mast*, 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2020, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Anthony Bwalya, ‘Presidential Empowerment Fund Apex of Corruption’, *Zambian Watchdog*, 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2020.

The third question in the song asked Zambians if they had jobs or not. This question was cardinal too. This was because, in the last year of PF in power, jobs were almost nonexistent. About fifty-five thousand teachers and more than twenty thousand health personnel were trained but the government could not employ them. A lot of youths were loitering the streets without the government providing job opportunities for them. Only those aligned to PF or those who had money to corrupt some people in government could easily find a job.

The final question asked if bursaries were there for university students. Just like jobs, bursaries were almost nonexistent. Only those coming from rich families and those aligned to the PF could access student bursaries. Meal allowances for students had been scrapped by then Minister of Higher Education Professor Nkandu Luo. “On 6 February 2019, Minister of Higher Education Professor Nkandu Luo announced that her ministry had with immediate effect stopped disbursing the stipend, popularly known as ‘meal’ allowance, paid to government-sponsored students in public universities for their upkeep.”<sup>34</sup>The removal of meal allowances was a disaster because many university students from poor families were pushed out of school due to their inability to meet their basic needs.

The most crucial part of *Tatwafola* was its chorus which stated that 2021 was the year for the PF to leave power. This was to be done whether PF liked it or not. Cavman finally told PF to start packing in readiness to leave the office.

The song *Tatwafola* greatly contributed to the victory of the UPND in the 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021 general elections. This was so because, in the first place, its beat was good. Most of the people that listened to it were forced to do so for the second or third time because of its well-arranged beats. Secondly, the song inspired a lot of people to change the PF government because of the many weaknesses that it had exhibited as discussed above. Lastly, the youths and many other unemployed Zambians were motivated to remove PF to bring in a government that would provide job opportunities in the country. When asked to explain the impact *Tatwafola* had on the 2021 General elections, Albert Chifita stated:

*Tatwafola* greatly influenced the people of Zambia to remove the Patriotic Front Party from power because its message was provoking to the people of Zambia. For example, the part where Cavman asked if the civil servants had been paid or not was very provoking to the civil servants. This was because whenever the song was played it was like workers who did not get their salaries or those who received their salaries late were being fooled by the song. By so doing, they were frustrated to an extent that they had no option but to remove PF from power.<sup>35</sup>

With such a touching message, the Zambian voters were influenced such that UPND had to win the elections with two million, eight hundred thousand votes followed by PF which got one million, eight hundred thousand votes. The gap of one million votes between UPND and PF is extraordinary in the history of Zambia. This is because there has never been any sitting president who has ever lost an election with such a margin. *Tatwafola* is given credit for having exposed the weaknesses that were associated with the PF. With such exposure to the PF’s weaknesses and the encouragement the song gave to the Zambian people, a regime change was inevitable.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This article investigated the role music played in Zambian politics from the early 1950s to 2021. The study has revealed that music has been used by different politicians to communicate their political messages. Other than communicating political messages, the study has underpinned the fact that music has been used during political campaigns to attract voters. When hit songs were played, a lot of people were attracted to attend political meetings. As people attended these political meetings in the name of following music, they also listened to campaign messages which made them develop a positive attitude towards the politicians that came with the musicians. This at the end of the day helped them to win elections. Moreover, it has come out that songs are used by politicians to help in uniting the electorates. A classic example of a uniting song used by politicians is *Tiyende pamodzi ndimtima umo*. This song helped Zambians and other people from other countries to get united and fight against the colonial administration.

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.lusakatimes.com/2019/02/26/the-real-reasons-why-nkandu-luo-is-taking-students-meals-off-the-table/>

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Albert Chifita (UPND Central Province Chairperson), on 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2022.

This article has been closed with a discussion on regime change songs in Zambia. Under this discussion, songs used by UNIP, MMD, PF, and UPND when they were still in opposition have been discussed. It has been observed that each of these political parties had to use songs to arouse people's emotions and feelings to stand united and remove the regime that was in power then. The study clearly shows that songs have been used as vehicles for regime change in the history of Zambia. Therefore, it is appropriate to state that music is a vehicle for regime change in the historiography of Zambia.

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