

Chapter Forty-Seven



COMMUNICATION AND NON-VIOLENT CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NIGERIA: EVIDENCE FROM THEATRE

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Introduction

In recent years, Nigeria has been a theatre of escalating conflicts. For example, in 2021, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) reported a 22% increase in the number of organized politically motivated violence in the country which resulted in over 9,900 fatalities. This is a 30% increase compared to 2020. The story also indicated that there were incessant multiple security challenges across the country which included the raging Islamist insurgency, ongoing militia activities code-named "banditry" and the Biafra agitation (ACLED). With one of the highest levels of the terrorism threat in the world, Nigeria has recently recorded the second-highest number of people who have died as a result of terrorist attacks globally, after Afghanistan. Russia began the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 - four million refugees had fled Ukraine since the war began (within 7 days into the war) (UN Refugee Agency 2022). According to UN Human Right Chief, 1,189 civilian deaths, including 89 children had been verified in Ukraine since the war

began (Channel News, 2022).

The unwholesome activities of Boko Haram, armed bandits, and Fulani extremists have resulted in attacks on civilian and military targets. Other conflicts had been blamed on the upsurge of conflicts between militant groups and ethnic groups and herders/farmers clashes (Varrella). Obi and Okwechima, cited by Mailandabe, Ibrahim, Isa, and Shugaba (2021) listed a plethora of other forms of worrisome violence as - inter-ethnic, inter-communal conflicts, and religious conflicts across the country. They noted that some of these conflicts raged between neighboring towns, communities, and even villages, and involved in the use of firearms, and bombs, resulting in the loss of lives and valuable properties.

Sometimes, these conflicts had been between a religious group who have hitherto, subsisted in the same political unit. An example of this is the conflict between the inhabitant of Jos South/North (Muslim and Christians) and conflict between ethnic groups, with the same political unit, for example: Ijaw/Itsekiri communities in Warri, Delta state. Beroms and Fulanis in Barkin Ladi, Jos, Plateau state and currently in Zamfara areas. Fulanis in the area have remained for over a hundred years. These armed conflicts have left a traumatized nation. Though conflict is inevitable, the main goal of the chapter is to seek nonviolent means of resolving conflict and to establish the interconnectivity between communication (theatre) and conflict resolution that may lead to the emergence of a peaceful Nigerian society.

Most conflicts are motivated by differences in characteristics that individuals bring in an interaction. These differences include physical characteristics, intelligence, knowledge, customs, beliefs, and so on, which they carry in social interaction (Noer 2018). Experts have blamed the situation on the absence of robust employment of communication as a strategy in non-violent conflict resolution in Nigeria (Ojenike, et al). This narrative review aspires to find evidence of communicative methods in a theatre that could serve as a guide for conflict resolution.

Communication

The human activity which entails sharing or exchange of feelings or information geared at informing, educating, and liberating individuals

or the larger society is called communication. Baran (2009) makes it clearer by describing communication as the process of creating shared meaning. This is true within the context of conflict resolution because, for communication to yield the desired goal, there has to be a point at which the conflicting parties would have to come out of the domain of what they held to be uncompromisable and embrace a shared position that would lead to the resolution of conflict. Oftentimes, this "shared position" represents "reality" which the conflicting parties must come to terms with. Media theorist James W. Carey (1975) thought of this situation and provided a cultural definition of communication as "a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed. (p.10). The goal of communication is to elicit a reaction(s) from a receiver, that is why it has been described as what someone does to others, intending to make them act in a particular way. This implies that communication can take place not only in oral and written media but also in music, pictorial arts, theatre, and, of course, all human behavior, and the goal is to send a message and elicit a response.

Communication and Nonviolent Conflict Resolution

This is the practice of achieving specific goals which are aimed at initiating and sustaining social change through symbolic protests against economic or political noncooperation in a nonviolent manner. It is also described "as the exercise of proactive nonaggression in the pursuit of securing rights, seeking redress or agitating against injustice" (Manny 2008). Musarurwa, Akande, Rukuni, Musingafi (2016), did a study on strategies of non-violent action to address conflict in Zimbabwe in which they identified "clear communication" as an important feature of successful negotiation. Communication relates to the presence and sharing of accurate information about a conflict or conflict situation, being able to talk about feelings and concerns of parties, speaking about what parties would like to change, and discussing the nature and type of the conflict, touching on the positions, interests, needs, and fears of parties. Communication, therefore, has come to represent a key strategy for conflict prevention and resolution Adejimola (2020).

The term nonviolence means the method or the road that leads to

the goal of peace which in its complete form, equates with social justice. Galtung, cited by (Summy, 2009), asserts that society would realize its ideal of peace when every person was able to achieve their full physical and mental potential. That is, everyone's basic (ontological) needs would be met and nurtured. He listed the needs as - survival/security, wellbeing, identity, and freedom. While the struggle to fulfill these needs is unending, the applied commitment to nonviolence moves the individual and society ever closer to their realization (2009). Placing the concepts of nonviolence vis-à-vis peace, Summy (2009), explains that negative peace refers to a state where violence is absent, while positive peace represents the outcome of successfully eliminating the potential for violence. The latter entails the reduction of the instruments of violence (e.g, disarmament) and the realization of structures and values that enable people to experience the full range of their ontological needs, without impeding other people's capacities to do the same. He notes that nonviolence, as a philosophy, provides a code of conduct by which persons can seek to structure their life, find their identity, give meaning to their existence, and help to build a society in the direction of positive peace. Though nonviolence is often perceived as inaction, passive resistance, avoidance of conflict, submissiveness - turning the other cheek, it is simply the way forward for peaceful co-existence.

Shedrack, cited by Adejimola (2020) opines that: "Communication is a non-adversarial, cheap method of preventing and removing conflict situations, quite within the grip of the parties. Once communication is lost, parties risk getting into a deeper crisis that cannot be easily resolved. Thus, communication is invaluable for conflict prevention in the first instance, and then for conflict resolution" (n.p). Inadequate communication or the lack of communication can create room for conflicts between the parties or individuals in conflict. The exchange and sharing of information can help in a great way to resolve crises and build confidence between the parties in conflicts and bring about peace among the same.

An Overview of Communication and Non-Violent Conflict Resolution in Nigeria

Themes relating to "non-violent struggle," or "non-violent conflict,"

are recurring in the teachings of Christianity and other religions of the world. For example, Jesus Christ and Mahatma Gandhi chose non-violent resistance as a weapon for entrenching equity, peace, and justice in a perverse society. From India, Pakistan, and Nigeria, non-violent resistance by heroic personages demonstrate that sovereign states could employ the same for progress. In terms of communication, it would be recalled that in the 1950s, there were significant successful initiatives at non-violent conflict resolution in Nigeria (Manny).

The founding fathers of our great nation fought for the country's independence through non-violent communication. They didn't have to shed blood to secure our independence from imperial rule. Rather, they chose dialogue and other effective means of communication to make this happen. Little wonder, they are extolled, idolized, and immortalized in various ways like having their images on our currency notes/coins. Airports, institutions, and streets were also named after them (Manny).

At the time the military appeared on the political scene, whatever vestiges that were left of the non-violent approach to conflict resolution became a far cry. However, it was in the hay days of the military juntas of Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha that veteran Nigerians like the maverick attorney-at-law - Gani Fawehinmi, TELL magazine editor - Nosa Igiebor, Nobel laureate and inveterate activist - Wole Soyinka, and the members of the pro-democracy group, NADECO became the voice of the voiceless by speaking truth to power. While some of them went into exile, others were jailed for their non-violent stance on ensuring justice and good governance (Manny). Since 1999 when Nigeria returned to civil rule to date, there have been attempts by both the media and the public to use communication as a means for non-violent conflict resolution. Sadly, attempts by separatist leaders like Nnamdi Okwu Kanu of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Yoruba self-determination activist, Sunday Adeniyi Adeyemo, popularly known as Sunday Igboho have met with resistance. The media has also been gagged on many fronts.

Theatre as a form of Communication in Nonviolent Conflict Resolution

The theatre is an art form that seeks to re-enact an event that could be real or imagined by communicating it to an audience through various

performances. These media could be a manipulation of an audio-visual impression of various forms of art like music, dance, songs, mime, poetry, painting, sculpture, and architecture to impress audiences (Umenyilorah). There is a distinction between Classical Theatre which obtains in developed countries and Popular Theatre otherwise known as Street Theatre, Intervention Theatre, or Theatre for Development (TFD) which is prevalent in developing countries. The latter consists of theatre which employs similar techniques such as forum theatre, interactive theatre, and the theatre debate. With robust social content, Popular Theatre includes the use of local or regional troupes of actors. Usually, troupes travel to the villages to perform to create awareness about ills in the society towards its overall development (Umenyilorah).

Richard Wilbur, cited by Tsaku and Embu (2017), asserts that "theatre is a great medium of correction, and for a majority of people, there is no better reproof than depicting their faults to them The most effective way of attacking vice is to expose it to public ridicule through dramatization" (n.p). Though the thoughts of this chapter are not to reproof or ridicule, the words of Wilbur demonstrate that theatre can be used as a tool for communicating nonviolent conflict resolution. Following this line of thought, Burgoyne et al (2005) pointed out that, the Theatre of the Oppressed (TO), developed by Augusto Boal, constitutes a set of techniques that helps people overcome oppression through acting both in the sense of being actors and being active. Though this statement presents theatre as a therapy for overcoming oppression, it theorizes that problems could be solved through "acting." Noer (2018) supports these arguments when he posits that "Drama text is a portrayal of the life of a society. It contains dialogues of characters ... Communication materializes in dialogue" (p.126).

Theatre can be employed by local or regional troupes to entertain and educate rural dwellers about societal ills for the overall development of society (Umenyilorah). In a similar position, Mailandabe, Ibrahim, Isa, and Shugaba (2021), describe theatre as an interventionist in conflict resolution, and that it employs the democratic method in conflict mediation Creating the desired consciousness, and engendering awareness in identifying the remote causes of the conflict, analyzing their needs and making choices that would best suit

the group. Theatre has been described by many as a useful mechanism and catalyst for conflict resolution in Nigeria. In theatre, especially popular theatre, non-violent resistance could be communicated.

Theoretical Framework: Nonviolent Communication (NVC) and Theatre for Development (TFD)

This part of the chapter explores the theoretical pathways to explaining how nonviolent communication in conflict resolution can be made realistic. Two postulations - The non-violent Communication (NVC) strategy developed by Rosenberg and Theatre for Development (TFD) were advanced as a theoretical framework. In peace and conflict resolution, the Non-violent Communication (NVC) theory is a process that guides disputants in a conflict, on how to reframe the way they express themselves and hear other parties in the conflict by focusing on consciousness about what they are observing, feeling, needing, and requesting towards a peaceful resolution. The theory assumes that conflicts could be resolved and even forestalled if disputants bring empathy to the table of interaction. It considers various extant communicative skills capable of facilitating successful conflict resolution. These skills include empathy, dialogue, listening, anger management, negotiation, mediation and forgiveness, and reconciliation (Okonkwo).

NVC disposes of both parties in a conflict to focus on each other's consciousness as regards what is happening, how each person is feeling, what they need, and what everyone would request at the end of the day. It leads to taking personal responsibility for everyone's actions and choices as well as how to respond to others. NVC provides disputants with the requisite communication skills for resolving conflicts. It leans on the "Do no harm" principle by obliging parties to a conflict to avoid using words that may escalate the conflict (Rosenberg; Okonkwo). It helps one to express himself or herself without criticism or blame by showing appreciation or concern for others (Branscomb); NVC reduces anger and increases self-compassion (Suarez et al) as well as improves communication and relationship with others (Burleson, Martin, and Lewis).

NVC helps people to be responsible for their actions. In conflict

situations, it prepares them to express their needs clearly and avoid projecting their feeling on others. The strategy helps disputants to discuss opposing views by communicating amicably without attacking personalities. This theory facilitates listening to the other side with sincerity and voicing out your opinion maturely even if it differs from that of your opponents. Essential to any successful non-violent conflict resolution are communicative skills such as listening attentively, making assertive statements, and airing your views in a clear manner (Rosenberg; Okonkwo). NVC emphasizes compassion for self and others as well as collaboration with others (Alshughry).

Theatre for Development (TfD) resembles Development Media Theory and the Democratic Participant Theories of the Press. They can be used to communicate the developmental needs of a people. Development Media Theory argues that the developmental needs of society can be attained through the support of the media. It holds that the media should publish information that can bring to light, the areas of need in the society. The Democratic Participant Theory calls for access to the media by the community dwellers. Its major tenets are that: individual citizens and minority groups have a right to access to media and the right to be served by the media according to their own needs, secondly, groups and local communities should own media outfits.

Though these theories are of the press, like TfD, they succeed in theorizing, that a medium could be used to communicate a society's needs. The theories were developed because the four theories of the press – Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility, and Soviet Communist propounded by Siebert et al, did not take into cognizance the developmental needs of society, just as Dandaura (2011) asserts that, TfD emerged as a reaction to the failure of the Modernization Theory of Development in the 1970s. The concept of development is premised on the availability of basic needs for the survival of people. What people need to live a good life, so that they can move forward and attain self-determination and actualization is the focus of development. Peace is one of the basic needs of the people - the absence of it makes it impossible for them to experience development. Conflict engenders societal instability, and in some cases of instability, it is nearly impossible to sue for resolution as the conflict may be too fatal that, even the

process of initiating resolution may be difficult.

In theatre lies the possibility of a community laying bare the causes of conflict and the need to resolve it by nonviolent means. What this means is that a stage can be set to act scenes depicting, resistance to conflict, round-table discussion, and negotiation towards resolving fracas, the need for parties to sheath their swords and embrace each other in peace. Communication through theatrical means has the power to influence the minds of people, elicit positive emotions and induce positive actions entertainingly. Such value is critical to nonviolent actions in resolving conflict. TfD provides the opportunity for people to evoke the causes of conflict, and initiate and engage in discussion of the way forward on a given unfortunate societal experience.

In Kabaso's view, TfD describes modes of theatre whose objective is to disseminate messages, or to conscientize communities about their objective social and political situation (2013). It is a type of community-based or interactive theatre practice that aims to promote civic dialogue and engagement. Mluma (1991), referring to the enterprise as "popular theatre", summarizes its aims as follows: "... to make the people not only aware of but also active participants in the development process by expressing their viewpoints and acting to better their conditions. Popular theatre is intended to empower the common man with a critical consciousness crucial to the struggle against the forces responsible for his poverty" (p.67).

The Development Media Theory (DMT), Democratic Participant Theory (DPT), and TfD share some common values, at least to the extent that, the three are media related, and that, communication is their driving tool is not in doubt, more importantly, their focus is on development. As earlier noted, communication is the working tool of DMT, DPT, and TfD - Communication is also the driving force of every conflict resolution effort, suffice to note that it is also one of the nonviolent methods of conflict resolution, more importantly, it is a means of survival. This is why Agee et al (1985) write that "The need to communicate with our fellow human beings is as fundamental as the physical requirements of food and shelter. This urge for communication is a primal one and, in our contemporary civilization, a necessity for survival" p.18. The principle underlying the theory of development

media, of which TfD is one, is that there can be no development without communication. The proponents of the Four Theories of the Press laid the path through which TfD threads. They note that "the media will reflect basic beliefs and assumptions that the society holds" of course, society believes in development and seeks peace.

The shortcoming of TfD in Communicating Non-violent Conflict Resolution

One major challenge of TfD in communicating nonviolent conflict resolution is that, when there is a performance suing for nonviolent actions, the communication may not reach the other party(ies) in the conflict who also needs to see the need for nonviolence communicated through the performance. This may be partly because performance or staging of topics on NVC is done by one of the parties in the conflict, and within its community except, such performance is replicated for the audience of other communities in the conflict. Similarly, it may be unlikely, unsafe, and impossible for communities seeking conflict resolution through theatre to cross each other's boundaries to carry out performances depicting peaceful coexistence. When this performance is done simultaneously or nearby, in time and space across warring conflict communities, they are more likely to produce the desired effect.

This makes TfD seemingly one-way communication, because the audience of the performing community may be the only one to benefit from the performance, while members of the counterpart community, who must also see the scenes calling for peace are excluded. Successful communication is wide and reaches the relevant stakeholders on an issue of mutual interest. TfD has also been described as having gone through a series of mutations over the years (Dandaura 2011). This means that the way TfD is today is not part of its original concept. The major shortcoming of Development theory and Democratic Participant theory in the context of TfD is that they are press related and rely on the traditional media rather than acted media as do TfD.

Extant Perspectives of Communicative Methods of Non-Violent Conflict Resolution

Experts like Okonkwo have outlined various extant communicative skills which are crucial to successful non-violent conflict resolution.

These are empathy, dialogue, listening, anger management, negotiation, mediation, and forgiveness and reconciliation. We shall highlight them thus:

Empathy

Empathy is a technique that puts us in the shoes of the opponent in a way that we would understand how they feel, the ideas they conceive, and the actions they carry out. This helps people to put the opponent's interest ahead of theirs. As an essential communicative method of non-violent conflict resolution, empathy helps in resolving conflicts peacefully.

Dialogue

Dialoguing has to do with the aspect of either talking and or listening which happens between opposing parties. In this process, all parties in the dispute try to express themselves in truth and honesty. They are expected to avoid anything that would further escalate the conflict. Based on the "Do no harm principle," dialogue does not give room for apportioning blames, pointing fingers, or name-calling. The parties are expected to avoid the scenario of a debate and be defensive. They are expected to obey the rules of engagement. As Akinnawonu (2006) has argued, dialogue must be constructively employed in disputes or conflict situations to impact positively on the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Listening

Listening enables parties in a conflict not to interrupt each other when talking. This entails respecting and or paying attention to what others are saying. Instead of angrily disrupting their points of view by raising our voices, it is important to patiently pay attention to what they are saying. The arrowheads are not expected to use words that will create more conflict. This can be avoided if a person speaks from his or her point of view by simply saying, "I think" or "I suggest." Listening helps parties in a conflict to understand each other/one another better by identifying their faults or mistakes towards making amends. A good mediator displays effective listening skills. He inculcates the habit of

wanting to listen to people more than engaging in talking nineteen to dozen i.e. talking too much. When a mediator becomes an active listener, he or she will be able to identify the fear, suspicion, lies, truths, interests, understanding, doubts, desires, feelings, distrust, misinterpretations, misinformation as well as other pretensions of the parties involved in the conflict situations (Akinawonu 2006).

Anger-Management

Anger often emanates from a pattern of unmet needs (Confer) which causes hatred, anger management comes in handy to calm nerves. It assists in controlling emotions and setting the tone for sincere resolution of conflict. Although anger is human behavior that seems unavoidable, anger management is a key method in achieving better conflict resolution. Parents/guardians should avoid expressing their anger toward their children as this type of behavior could affect the children to act in the same way. The children would grow up to be people who handle responsibilities in society and are expected to act in a manner that would engender peaceful co-existence.

Negotiation

When two individuals or more individuals reach an agreement about conflicting needs or views, negotiation has taken place. As a principle, this is often done without a third party. Those involved in conflict create an enabling environment to reach an agreement on the said conflict. There are two types of negotiation namely, competitive and cooperative. In the former, each person wants his or her needs met. In the latter, each side is listened to and respected. If everyone's needs are considered, it makes for cooperative negotiation. Igwe (2017), writing on conflict resolution in the construction industry, notes that "negotiation is the problem-solving efforts of the parties themselves". This shows that conflict may arise in every aspect of human endeavor, and negotiation could be employed in dealing with it.

Mediation

This is a structured settlement process that involves a neutral expert or mediator. Described as an alternative to dispute resolution, it aims at

assisting two or more disputants to reach a truce. Since agreement may not be reached, in mediation, the mediator does not impose an agreement on those involved, rather, his or her intervention should be seen as the last resort in resolving the conflict. Because this happens when the parties involved are unable to reach an agreement by themselves, mediation, as a communication process is employed to assist in rebuilding trust between the parties. According to Godongs (2006), mediation is a special form of negotiation in which a neutral third party has a role. Such a role is to help the parties in conflict achieve a naturally acceptable settlement. Expressing a similar view, Igwe (2017) posits that mediation or conciliation involves a third-party intervention that does not lead to a binding decision being imposed on the parties.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Described as the mental, emotional or spiritual process of avoiding the feeling of resentment or anger towards others for a perceived offense, difference, or mistake, forgiveness entails giving up demands such as punishment and or restitution. Forgiveness comes after an agreement has been reached. It is an indispensable non-violent method of conflict resolution which obliges a person not to wait for an apology from the disputant. It frees the person mentally, emotionally, and spiritually to move on with his or her life.

Arbitration

Arbitration involves communication, and it is one of the nonviolent approaches to conflict resolution. It is one of the mechanisms of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) also referred to as Appropriate Dispute Resolution which involves the use of neutral persons as facilitators for the settlement of disputes outside state-controlled adjudicatory mechanisms like the regular courts and administrative tribunals (Ladapo, 2017). A third party is invited to settle disputes or conflicts through the communicative process of negotiation, dialogue, and cooperation. The arbiter hears the shreds of evidence from both parties involved in conflicts and may listen to witnesses, interview leaders or representatives of the parties, visit the areas in conflict and assess or evaluate claims, documents, lands, and properties in dispute.

After collecting vital information and facilitating discussion, negotiation, dialogue, listening, and hearing meetings, which are aimed at helping to make a critical decision about who is right or wrong, the arbiter then takes a bold step to ensure fair play and justice to restore peace.

The decision is taken, thereafter, is called an award which is expected to be binding on the parties. The parties in conflicts, however, have to agree and accept the arbiter who sits over their case. Arbitrators are usually people of respected characters, authority, and peace in society. Arbitration has similar properties to mediation and adjudication in the sense that negotiation, dialogue, and communication are used in managing and settling disputes or conflicts (Adejimola, 2020).

Adjudication

Adjudication is another nonviolent means of communication in conflict resolution. Parties in a conflict may choose this method towards resolving their differences. They simply go to the law courts and register litigation. By choosing this nonviolent method, they have agreed that the Courts are created to provide judgment on contending issues, and the decision of the court could lead to resolving conflict. Igwe (2017) supports the above assertion when he noted that an adjudicative process ends with an outcome determined by a third party who imposes a binding decision on the parties.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a form of restoration of peaceful relations between two people or individuals who were hitherto in a conflict. Total reconciliation is a mechanism that helps parties in a conflict to put what has happened between them in the past. If we realize that no one is perfect, it becomes important to ask for forgiveness and reconcile with others (Okonkwo).

Theatrical Evidence in Communicating Non-Violent Methods of Conflict Resolution in Nigeria

In his paper titled "Theatre as tool for development in Nigeria" Umenyilorah (2014) argues favorably for "Theatre for Development"

which he describes as a technique of performance and drama-building which creates awareness and educates the public. He contends that it is weaved around the interaction between people who seek developmental projects on the one hand and agencies who supply such on the other. The scholar clarifies that these theatrical representations are rife in sub-Saharan African countries where festive and communal life meets with nature. Most times, messages are transmitted to either rural or urban local communities (Umenyilorah).

Solving Problems

In the light of Theatre for Development (TFD), the problem-solving matrix makes it possible for performance-oriented forms of art to be employed in educating and conscientizing every member of society toward solving socio-economic, political, environmental, and religious challenges. TFD takes advantage of emotions, feelings, aspirations, and sensibilities and emboldens members of the public to take decisive actions for the overall development of society (Umenyilorah). Theatre techniques are useful in helping people connect with their feelings and needs, and the feelings and needs of others (Alshughry).

Understanding and Overcoming Oppression

A study on Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) by Burgoyne et al demonstrated that after completing theatre classes, the understanding of oppression among participants had changed significantly. Augusto Boal developed the concept of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) as a technique that assists people to overcome oppression by being active actors (Burgoyne et al; Boal). This is because the techniques they learned afforded them various options to take in terms of actions when they face oppressive situations. These classes also exposed them to taking other available possibilities or strategies in the face of oppression (Burgoyne et al).

Liberating and Emancipating Society

In a country where a majority of the masses have been rendered voiceless, socially disadvantaged, psychologically traumatized, and economically disadvantaged by corrupt leaders, the theatre in Nigeria

has played an indispensable role in liberating/emancipating the people from both primitive and debase cultural practices (Umenyilorah).

Correcting Societal Ills

Most times, the theater is alive to the social-political realities of its time. This is done by being a kind of court that outlines, evaluates, and judges the socio-political, economic, and religious issues of society. This is geared toward making society better for theater practitioners and everyone. In Nigeria, theater artists act as vanguards for societal change. This they do by keeping an eye and ear on what happens in society. Actors arouse a strong sense of awareness in the mind of the audience of real or imagined situations of life to change the ills of society. Using drama to address social anomalies is known as "Praxis of Social Utility" (Umenyilorah).

Eliciting Political Participation

As a form of social art that flourishes on collaboration, harmonization, and collective participation between the playwright, actor, and the spectator, drama projects democratic change. An increased level of literacy in the society has improved people's interest in the theater which in turn upholds democratic values. The ideas expressed through theatre are often available to heterogeneous audiences. In the long run, they contribute to the emergence and sustenance of a genuinely democratic Nigeria (Umenyilorah)

Recommendations

Introduction of Theatre Related Laws/Practices:

Considering the politico-cultural heterogeneity of Nigeria, scholars like Umenyilorah believe that there is a need for the introduction of new laws and practices which relate to theatre and non-violent conflict resolution. Given the combustible nature of Nigerian society, appropriate theatre laws would curb performances that criminalize or stereotype a section of the country. This will further bring to justice, those who use Popular Theatre or hide under the cinematic silver screen to undertake hate speech and spread fake news which is capable of rubbishing extant ways of communicating non-violent methods of

conflict resolution.

Encouraging Indigenous Theatrical Performances:

Experts in the entertainment industry should encourage indigenous theatrical performances which highlight, analyze and proffer solutions to contemporary problems. Based on the demands of Popular, Street, and or Intervention Theatre, prevalent in developing countries like Nigeria. Indigenous theatrical performances should create fora for interactive theatre or debates which answer questions about serious social concerns. This could be achieved at the rural level where performers will travel to villages to create awareness (Umenyilorah) about the need for fellow-feeling or embracing the spirit of patriotism by every Nigerian.

Investing in Edutainment/Infotainment:

Scholars and students of Theatre Arts and Communication Studies are increasingly showing more interest in improving the concepts of both Edutainment and Infotainment. This trend in most African countries (Umenyilorah), suggests that industry experts must invest in the entertainment industry. The disclosure by the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy that it generated over N1trn revenue in two years for the country (Olafusi) calls for investment in the entertainment industry.

Transporting Theatre to Cinematic Platforms:

Given the fact that almost every aspect of modern life has been digitized because of the revolution in technology (Premium Times), there is a need to transport theatre to cinematic platforms. The digitization of almost everything demands that Popular Theatre be catapulted to the cinema where Classical Theatre finds expression. With the enabling environment, through Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), the National Orientation Agency (NOA) should conscientize the public about the need to invest in building State of the Art Cinema where those who are busy with work in the city can catch some recreation by going to watch performances on large screens. By the same token, e-accessibility which entails improving digital infrastructure, strengthening digital

platforms, increasing access to digital financial services, improving the policy environment for digital entrepreneurship, and closing the digital skills knowledge gap (The World Bank) should be taken seriously by both the government and industries.

Encouraging Performances that Emphasize Empathy:

Because the study underscored various extant communicative skills which are crucial to successful non-violent conflict resolution, it is expedient for directors of various theatre forms to organize performances that emphasize empathy, dialogue, listening, anger management, negotiation, mediation and forgiveness, and reconciliation (Okonkwo). This would further serve as a recipe for current calls for self-determination by various segments of the Nigerian society towards unity. What is more, it has the potency to become the needed healing balm for a country where citizens are often divided along ethnic and religious fault lines. This is in line with the demands of Nonviolent Communication (NVC) which was adopted as a theoretical framework for this study.

Propagating Theatrical Performances through the Media:

Topics in nonviolent communication that is performed may be widely published across conflicting communities. Only then can we hope that theatrical display of nonviolent communication may have the desired impact. This is why Musarurwa, Akande, Rukuni, Musingafi (2016), citing the works of Sharp (2008) acknowledges that the media plays a vital role in the success of any nonviolent campaign. Media should create programs that preach "No Victor, No Vanquish", "When two Elephants fight, the grass and Trees suffer", "Peace is profitable", etc, as a way of reducing tendencies of choosing violent conflicts as an option, and towing the path of dialogue and other means of nonviolent communication in resolving conflict.

Conclusion

In comparison to militarism, both past and present history has repeatedly provided credible evidence of the success of non-violent methods as catalysts for social change. As such, people need no angel to

convince them to discern and choose this path (Manny). We saw that the theoretical framework namely, Nonviolent Communication (NVC) makes available a plethora of communicative skills which engender a successful non-violent conflict resolution. From the study, it is evident that if policymakers employ the recommendations that were made, communicative skills of NVC found in various theatre forms such as empathy, dialogue, listening, anger management, negotiation, mediation, and forgiveness and reconciliation (Okonkwo) are capable of reducing escalating conflicts in Nigeria and beyond.

This is where theatre for development becomes very relevant. As a theatre intervention which emphasises active participation of the people and utilisation of their indigenous creative energies, peculiar experiences and performance modes to mobilise, entertain, educate and empower the majority, TfD offers itself readily as a tool for driving post-development initiatives and indeed participatory development.

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