

# The History of Use of Recordings of Popular Music in Zambia's Electoral Campaigns

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## Abstract

Since 1991, when Zambia re-transitioned to multi-party politics, recordings of Zambian popular music have been used during electoral campaigns to mobilize publics and disseminate politicians' manifestos. Music was at the center of the struggle that led to the country's independence from Britain on October 24, 1964 (Sardanis, 2003). In this scenario, Zambia's indigenous dance, singing, and chanting were performed live during political rallies and marches as a way of mobilizing and disseminating nationalistic messages to the African population (Namuyamba et al, 2018). However, use of recordings of popular music in Zambia's political campaigns began to gain prominence in the 1990s after the re-introduction of multiparty politics, coinciding with the emergence of home studios. Political parties have since been drawing on recordings of Zambian popular music to popularize their agendas and articulate their manifestos to the usually divided electorate.

Drawing on participant observation, interviews, and published literature on Zambia's socio-economic history and music and politics in Zambia, I trace the history of use of recordings of popular music in Zambia's electoral campaigns. I argue that modes of musical production in home studios on digital audio workstations (DAW) have made it easier for producers to promptly produce music on request to the advantage of politicians who are eager to mobilize the electorate's support amidst contestation. I further examine how recordings of Zambian popular music have been used as a site to engage in political discourse with imagined publics, particularly during Zambia's 2021 general elections that were held during the COVID pandemic.

## Theoretical Framework

An electorate comprises multiple publics. In this essay, I draw on Michael Warner's "Publics," Byron Dueck's "Social Imaginaries" and Anderson's "Imagined Communities" to examine how Zambia's electorate is mobilized using recordings of popular music during electoral campaigns. The term *public* can be defined as a concrete audience witnessing itself in visible space. It can also be used to refer to a space of discourse organized by discourse itself, or a relationship among strangers. *Public* can also be defined as an ongoing space of encounter for discourse.<sup>1</sup> Anderson asserts that the nation is an imagined political community in the sense that "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."<sup>2</sup> He goes on to conclude that, "in fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined." Anderson's "Imagined Communities" aligns with Dueck's "Social Imaginaries." Dueck explains that it [social imaginary] "is a contested space constituted through competing practices, performances and publications. Each effective instance of performance, broadcast, or publication confirms or challenges a state of things supporting currently

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics (Abbreviated Version)," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88, no. 4 (2004): 413–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630209384388>.

<sup>2</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 2006), 6.

dominant practices or advancing alternatives.”<sup>3</sup> This definition of social imaginary sums up Zambia’s electorate, an imagined community, a public, a contested space where politicians’ manifestos are confirmed or challenged.

## Literature Review

Studies on the use of recordings of Zambian popular music in electoral campaigns have received some attention from scholars recently. James Musonda examines the use of music as a tool to understand politicians’ behavior.<sup>4</sup> He does so by analyzing recordings of Zambian popular music that were used by the Patriotic Front (PF) before winning the 2011 elections and the subsequent ones. Kalobwe analyzes the use of popular music in Zambia’s 2016 elections.<sup>5</sup> Elastus Mambwe takes a similar approach as he explores the role popular music played in the PF winning Zambia’s elections in 2011 and retaining power a term later.<sup>6</sup> Mubita Namuyamba et al. examine the role of music in the electoral process in Zambia.<sup>7</sup> In their study, Madalitso K. Banja and Gabriel Walubita analyze the content in recordings of popular music that were used in electoral campaigns leading to the 2016 presidential and general elections.<sup>8</sup> Prince F.M. Lamba evaluates the meaning and influence of music in the political processes on the choices of the electorate.<sup>9</sup> This essay is aimed at bridging the gap that still exists in music and politics scholarship in Zambia by providing a comprehensive historical analysis of the use of recordings of Zambian popular music in electoral campaigns from 1991 to date.

## History of the Use of Music in Zambia’s Electoral Campaigns

Music was at the center of the struggle that led to the country’s independence. The use of music in Zambia’s politics dates back to colonial times. In the 1950s, music became a mobilizing tool used by Africans during the struggle for independence.<sup>10</sup> Mr. Njekwa Anamela, former Vice President of the former ruling United National Independence Party (UNIP), told me in an interview that the *Chachacha* spirit, which can be best understood from the perspective of the African people’s struggles for emancipation, used music as a rallying point around which people could have a common agenda on the ground to deal with the colonial question. The music that was used to communicate messages of the

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<sup>3</sup> Byron Dueck, *Musical Intimacies and Indigenous Imaginaries: Aboriginal Music and Dance in Public Performance* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 59, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199747641.001.0001>.

<sup>4</sup> James Musonda, “Gatekeeping Through Music: A Case of the Patriotic Front in Zambia,” *Africa Spectrum* 58, no. 1 (2023): 21–37, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00020397231158123>.

<sup>5</sup> Lucia Kalobwe, “The Patriotic Front’s Use of Popular Music in the 2016 Elections in Zambia,” *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews* 2, no. 8 (2021): 339–44, <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/wt86k>.

<sup>6</sup> Elastus Mambwe, “The Discursive Role of Music in African Elections: A Perspective from Zambia,” in *Music and Messaging in the African Music Arena*, ed. Uche T. Onyebadi (IGI Global, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-7295-4.ch009>.

<sup>7</sup> Mubita Namuyamba, Wanga Chakanika, Friday Nyimbili, Kabwe Chisenga, Conrad Munkombwe, and Davies Phiri, “Music and Its Role in Electoral Process in Zambia,” *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education* 5, no. 6 (2018): 39–47, <https://doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.0506006>.

<sup>8</sup> Madalitso K. Banja and Gabriel Walubita, “An Exploration of the Content in Political Election Campaign Songs: The Case of 2016 Presidential and General Elections in Zambia,” *ZANGO: Zambian Journal of Contemporary Issues* 34, no. 1 (2022): 69–82.

<sup>9</sup> Prince F.M. Lamba, “*A Search for Meaning in Politically Motivated Music: Rhetoric Versus Pragmatics in the Zambian Political Soundscape*” (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2023).

<sup>10</sup> Musonda, “Gatekeeping Through Music,” 24.

struggle then was called *Chachacha*.<sup>11</sup> The *Chachacha* consciousness saw different songs being composed in different parts of the country to radicalize the African masses.<sup>12</sup> Confirming Anamela's claim, Andrew Sardanis reports:

A lot of property, including government offices and even schools, was damaged. The Chachacha had started. The Chachacha has since been immortalized as Zambia's independence struggle. It took its name from the Congolese Afro-Cuban r[h]umba music<sup>13</sup> song "Chachacha Independence," which in 1960 celebrated the end of Belgian rule in the Congo [now Democratic Republic of Congo]. In typical Zambian folk humor, it portrayed the people of Zambia dancing Chachacha and "shaking" the colonial government out of office.<sup>14</sup>

It is important to note that besides music being used as a tool to mobilize publics during Zambia's independence struggle, it was also used to "evoke morale among patriots, instill a sense of common identity and socio-political cohesion in the communities, and express resistance and disapproval of colonial rule."<sup>15</sup> Considering Zambian popular music was still morphing at the time, indigenous music and dance including *mbeni* and *akalela* played an instrumental role in exposing the ills of colonial rule as well as communicating nationalistic messages.<sup>16</sup>

When Zambia gained its independence on October 24, 1964, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, leader of UNIP, became president. For nine years after he took over power from the colonizers, Kaunda tolerated multi-party politics. However, in 1973 he and his government abolished opposition political parties, replacing the multipartyism with what he referred to as One-Party Participatory Democracy—a *de facto* dictatorship. Elections continued to be held, but only members of UNIP were allowed to participate in the elections. The three time periods, 1964–1972, 1973–1990, and 1991–present, have respectively come to be known as the First, Second, and Third Republics.<sup>17</sup> A republic is a state in which there is separation of powers and an elected political leadership.<sup>18</sup>

Home studios that emerged in the music scene in the late 1980s have since taken over the production of popular music, replacing corporate-sponsored professional studios. This situation has impacted the modes of production of Zambian popular music and its use in national politics, particularly during electoral campaigns. In the section that follows, I examine the impact of Zambia's social economic conditions that necessitated the shift from producing music in professional studios to home studios by self-taught producers.

## The Impact of Zambia's Social and Economy Conditions That Necessitated the Shift

<sup>11</sup> Njekwa Anamela, interview with the author, August 2017.

<sup>12</sup> Njekwa Anamela, interview with the author, August 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Congolese Afro-Cuban rumba, also referred to as soukous, is an up-tempo Congolese genre that is dominated by guitar playing based on rhythmic phrases influenced by indigenous Congolese music styles. The lyrics are sung in Swahili, Lingala, and sometimes French. The best-known exponent of the style is Joseph Kabasele (a.k.a. Le Grand Kallé) and his band African Jazz. One of their many recordings is "Independence Chacha" (Robin Denselow, "Joseph Kabasele: Le Grande Kallé, His Life, His Music—Review," *The Guardian*, October 24, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/oct/24/joseph-kabasele-grand-kalle-review>).

<sup>14</sup> Andrew Sardanis, *Africa: Another Side of the Coin: Northern Rhodesia's Final Years and Zambia's Nationhood* (I.B. Tauris, 2003), 91.

<sup>15</sup> Lamba, "A Search for Meaning in Politically Motivated Music," 6.

<sup>16</sup> Namuyamba et al., "Music and Its Role in Electoral Process in Zambia," 41.

<sup>17</sup> Mambwe, "The Discursive Role of Music in African Elections," 67.

<sup>18</sup> Radim Tobolka, "Political Parties in Contemporary Zambia: A View from Within," *Modern Africa: Politics, History and Society* 1, no. 1 (2013): 15.

## From Producing Popular Music in Professional Studios to Home Studios

The shift from producing Zambian popular music in professional studios to home studios was necessitated by specific social and economic milieus, including the decline of Zambia's economy in the 1980s and 1990s, the mushrooming of disk jockeys (DJs) with their mobile discos in the music scene, the dominance of foreign music on Zambia's radio and television (TV), the demise of many musicians in the 1990s due to HIV/AIDS, and the 1990s economic liberalization of Zambia's economy.<sup>19</sup>

Kenneth Kaunda's fallout with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in 1987 led to a decline in Zambia's economy. By the close of the 1980s, Kaunda's UNIP government believed that these global institutions had a neocolonial agenda in Zambia and in Africa. Based on this assumption, Kaunda broke ties with the IMF on May 1, 1987, disrupting the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) that were underway. The SAPs were intended to open up Zambia's economy to the world.<sup>20</sup> Kaunda's New Economic Recovery Plan (NERP) replaced the IMF-proposed SAPs.<sup>21</sup> The consequences of the move saw most donor and diplomatic ties suffer. Bilateral aid slowed down, leading to non-payment of civil servants, debt crisis, and falling standards in health and education, considering the fact that Zambia's budget mostly depended on aid. Shortages for basic necessities became apparent while inflation remained high.<sup>22</sup> The collapse of copper export earnings in the 1970s and '80s made the situation even worse.<sup>23</sup> The general populace could not afford to spend on recreational activities such as music.

The emergence of mobile discos in night clubs in the 1980s relegated musicians to playing in hotels as cabaret acts.<sup>24</sup> In keeping with the trends, some musical acts attempted to play disco in an effort to draw patrons back to their shows.<sup>25</sup> However, musicians' attempt at disco music did not impress fans, who felt a lack of authenticity in the music. Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC), which housed the only radio and TV stations in the country at the time, also preferred to play American disco, rumba of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and some South African music. Moreover, "between 1982 and 1989 Zambia was robbed of skillful and inspiring expert guitarists" as most of them died of AIDS.<sup>26</sup> Musicians were more at risk of contracting HIV because their lifestyle often involved use of illicit drugs and also considering the spaces such as bars and hotels in which they performed their music were also patronized by sex workers. In Zambia, most sex workers were believed to be carriers of the disease. In the absence of skilled and experienced musicians and consistent patronage, ensemble performances both in concert and studio recording settings dwindled.

The neoliberalization policies adopted by Frederic Chiluba's Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) government after being sworn into office in 1991 encouraged economic reform policies that were concerned with the deregulation of the economy, the liberalization of trade and industry, and the privatization of state-owned industries, policies that further impacted the production of Zambian popular music. Following the neoliberalization model, Zambia's state-controlled businesses were privatized, trade was liberalized, and the economy deregulated. The SAPs reform package proposed by the World Bank in

<sup>19</sup> Leonard Koloko, *Zambian Music Legends* (Lulu.com, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> Margaret Hanson and James J. Hentz, "Neocolonialism and Neoliberalism in South Africa and Zambia," *Political Science Quarterly* 114, no. 3 (1999): 483, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2658207>.

<sup>21</sup> Hanson and Hentz, "Neocolonialism and Neoliberalism," 486.

<sup>22</sup> Hanson and Hentz, "Neocolonialism and Neoliberalism," 491.

<sup>23</sup> Lise Rakner, *Political and Economic Liberalization in Zambia 1991–2001* (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2003).

<sup>24</sup> Eothen Alapatt, *Welcome to Zamrock: How Zambia's Liberation Led to a Rock Revolution* (Now-Again Records, 2017), 37.

<sup>25</sup> Leonard Koloko, *Zambian Music Legends* (Pensulo Publishers, 2022), 79.

<sup>26</sup> Leonard Koloko, *Zambian Music Legends* (Lulu.com, 2012).

1990 that had been rejected by Kaunda's UNIP government was implemented.<sup>27</sup> One of the conditions of the agreement was to reform the civil service and parastatals in order to improve efficiency and performance. The restructuring of the public sector witnessed loss of jobs. "The number of jobs decreased by an average of 2.2 percent per year, such that, while 26 percent of the labor force was in wage employment in 1975, this number had declined to 18.6 percent in 1983. And it further declined to 10 percent in 1991. Between 1991 and 1995, a total of 60,000 workers had been removed from the civil service."<sup>28</sup> In the Copperbelt region where most mining activity took place, several mines were closed and many workers laid off. Furthermore, the MMD government got rid of subsidies on corn meal, the sole ingredient for making Zambia's staple, *nsima*.<sup>29</sup> These social and economic conditions made it extremely difficult for corporate-funded professional studios to stay in business, particularly after record labels Teal and Zambia Music Parlour closed operations in Zambia in the 1990s.

However, the neoliberalization of some of Africa's economy exposed new opportunities in the music economy. For instance, in the Malian music economy, "with a newly elected administration wary of state intervention, a radical informalization of the Malian economy unfolded, a process rooted in the privatization and austerity measures of the 1980s. In the culture sector, this meant a shift from a statist (public) to a marketplace (private) patronage structure in which independent culture brokers [including artists, producers, distributors, and vendors] sought out new means of production."<sup>30</sup> In 1990s Tanzania, the neoliberalization of the country's economy by the government of Ali Hassan Mwinyi significantly expanded the music economy, "particularly through the introduction of independent radio stations and recording studios."<sup>31</sup> Similarly, in Zambia, the neoliberalization policy of free trade encouraged foreign corporations such as South Africa's Game Stores to open outlets in Zambia. Game stores sold a variety of merchandise, including electronics such as computers, hard drives, and other computer accessories that were necessary for setting up a home studio.<sup>32</sup> The computer technology not only facilitated the setting up of home studios but also served as devices on which producers and musicians could access the internet. On the internet, music-makers could download music software and connect with the home studio community beyond their national borders. Although the liberalization of Zambia's economy did not benefit the majority of the population, it granted innovative music enthusiasts access to equipment for setting up home studios and entrepreneurship opportunities in the music sector. This scenario saw the burgeoning of home studios where popular music in Zambia began to be recorded.

## The Production of Zambian Popular Music in Home Studios

Scholars have struggled to define popular music.<sup>33</sup> Gankhanani Moffat Moyo, Lecturer of Literature and Culture at the University of Zambia, defines Zambian popular music as a hybrid of local and foreign

<sup>27</sup> Rakner, *Political and Economic Liberalization*.

<sup>28</sup> Neo Simutanyi, "The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Zambia," *Third World Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (1996): 836, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436599615407>.

<sup>29</sup> Neo Simutanyi, "The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Zambia," *Third World Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (1996): 836.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Ryan Skinner, *Bamako Sounds: The Afropolitan Ethics of Malian Music* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 729, <https://doi.org/10.5749/minnesota/9780816693498.001.0001>.

<sup>31</sup> Alex Perullo, "Politics and Popular Song: Youth, Authority, and Popular Music in East Africa," *African Music: Journal of the International Library of African Music* 9, no. 1 (2011): 95, <https://doi.org/10.21504/amj.v9i1.1759>.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Linyama, interview with the author, 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Charles Lwanga, *Audible Publics: Popular Music and the Politics of Participation in Postcolonial Uganda* (University of Pittsburgh, 2020), 33–34.

musical elements that has mass appeal.<sup>34</sup> Discussing popular music in Uganda, Charles Lwanga argues that the music should not only be perceived as a blend of Ugandan and foreign musical materials produced in recording studios and technologically disseminated to the masses, as Ugandan scholar Sylvia Antonia Nanyonga-Tamusuza suggests, but also that popular music be viewed as an alternative site of expression to historically exclusive ones such as radio and television that are mainly under the watch of the state and as such used exclusively as a platform for an elitist public to express their views.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, in this essay, I approach Zambian popular music as an alternative space where publics are mobilized and engage in political discourse as they express themselves.

During my fieldwork in Zambia (between 2021 and 2024), I observed that musicians did not necessarily show up at the studio with a complete song. Rather, musicians worked with a concept, an idea of what they want the song to be about. This idea could be anything from a *hook*,<sup>36</sup> a few rhyming lines, a proposed song title, or even an already recorded song accompaniment commonly referred to as a *beat*. In most home studios I observed the production of Zambian popular music, improvising lyrics on the spot and recording in parts are common. In the process, artists are guided by the producer, visiting producers, guest artists and others present during studio sessions. Music-making is a participatory endeavor. In recent years, recording technology in home studios has greatly improved, although studio fees remain affordable. In fact, sometimes artists record for free if they are friends with a producer. The more affordable studio fees, advanced recording technology, and the participatory nature of producing Zambian popular music in home studios have empowered artists and producers to be able to respond to clients' needs promptly to the advantage of politicians who draw upon music as a tool for communicating their political messages to the masses.

## Recordings of Zambian Popular Music as a Site for Political Discourse, 1991

In 1991, after persistent demand for democratization by the opposition, Kaunda re-introduced multi-party politics and lost the elections to Frederic Chiluba and his Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD). Zambia has since held nine parliamentary and presidential elections and has had seven presidents.<sup>37</sup> In 1991, recordings of Zambian popular music were used for the first time in electoral campaigns.

### PK Chishala's "Common Man" (1991) as a Site for Political Discourse

Considering that Kaunda and UNIP did not have opposition in the Second Republic, the 1991 elections were crucial to both the ruling party who were determined to stay in power and the opposition led by Chiluba and his MMD party who were passionate about taking over power. Public rallies and campaigns by both parties featured recordings of popular music in their campaigns as each strived to reach

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<sup>34</sup> Gankhanani Moffat Moyo, personal communication to the author, October 22, 2022.

<sup>35</sup> Lwanga, *Audible Publics*, 34.

<sup>36</sup> A *hook* is a catchy melody that is repeated in a song, often after the verses. It is usually harmonized.

<sup>37</sup> Kenneth Kaunda (1964–1991); Frederic Chiluba (1991–2001); Levy Mwanawasa and MMD (2001–2008, died while serving as president); Rupiah Banda and MMD (2008–2011); Michael Sata and Patriotic Front [PF] (2011–2014, died while serving as president); Edgah Lungu and PF (2015–2021); Hakainde Hichilema and United Party for National Development [UPND] (2021–present) (Lyubov Prokopenko, "The Principle 'One Zambia, One Nation': Fifty Years Later," *Social Evolution and History* 17, no. 1 (2018): 60–75, <https://doi.org/10.30884/seh/2018.01.04>.)

out to the electorate and convince them to vote for them.<sup>38</sup> Zambians used music to articulate the harsh living conditions of the 1980s and '90s.<sup>39</sup> Musician Peter Kalumba Chishala (a.k.a. PK Chishala) released "Common Man" in 1991. The song exposed the hardships the citizenry was experiencing at the time. Namuyamba et al. report that "one of the most prominent songs the MMD used in 1991 was PK Chishala's 'Common Man' as a way of expressing the social, economic, and political reality and dissatisfaction towards the United National Independence Party (UNIP)."<sup>40</sup> I would like to mention that "Common Man" was not specifically recorded for use by the MMD party during the campaigns leading to the 1991 elections. The MMD adapted the song as their official campaign song because the message it presented highlighted the declining social and economic realities of life at the time.<sup>41</sup> Sung in the *Chibemba* language,<sup>42</sup> a section of the lyrics go, "tatuleikuta ubwali bulechepa pantu mutengo bwa unga naunina ukuchila malipilo elo nabambi tababomba" (loosely translated, we don't get enough *nsima* because we cannot afford corn meal anymore and unemployment is on the rise). *Nsima*, Zambia's staple, is a thick porridge made out of corn meal eaten with vegetables and meat. MMD appropriated "Common Man" to mobilize the electorate and engage with them in political discourse.

### Dan Simm's "Keep the Flame Burning" (1991) as a Site for Political Discourse

The ruling UNIP funded the production of an extended play (EP), *Keep the Flame Burning*, which was specifically meant to be used to propagate and circulate their agenda to the electorate. Produced by American producer Danny Simms, the EP proved to be a big hit among UNIP sympathizers. The title track "Keep the Flame Burning" was used as a commercial and figured prominently on both national radio and TV. The EP was also replicated on cassette and circulated at rallies as a way of mobilizing publics.<sup>43</sup> Warner theorizes "a public" as an ongoing space of encounter for discourse.<sup>44</sup> The circulation of UNIP's campaign music via cassettes ensured an ongoing space where publics in multiple spaces remained engaged in political discourse. The purpose of circulating the music on cassette was to ensure the mobilization of the electorate in multiple spaces, and sometimes simultaneously. For example, because the music was packaged as a tangible thing in the form of a cassette, it could be reproduced on a radio cassette player in someone's living room or car radio in a sympathizer's car, beside using the music at campaign rallies at soccer fields and other such physical spaces. Lyrics of "Keep the Flame Burning" in English and *Chinyanja*<sup>45</sup> go:

#### Verse

In tune with the nation they know what is right  
Vote for tomorrow, today  
Brothers and sisters let us all unite  
With the party that's leading the way

<sup>38</sup> Musonda, "Gatekeeping Through Music," 24.

<sup>39</sup> Musonda, "Gatekeeping Through Music," 24.

<sup>40</sup> Namuyamba et al., "Music and Its Role in Electoral Process in Zambia," 41.

<sup>41</sup> Lamba, "A Search for Meaning in Politically Motivated Music," 89.

<sup>42</sup> Chibemba is widely spoken in Zambia, particularly in the northern part of the country.

<sup>43</sup> Njekwa Anamela, interview with the author, August 2017.

<sup>44</sup> Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," 19.

<sup>45</sup> *Chinyanja* is the lingua franca spoken in Lusaka and other major cities of Zambia.

**Chorus**

Keep the flame burning  
 Do the right thing  
 The future is in our hands  
*Tiyende pamozi* (Let's walk together)  
 Oh let us work together everyday  
 Vote for UNIP and KK, Zambia the promised land

**Figure 1:** “Keep the Flame Burning ” lyrics [1991]

The accompaniment of “Keep the Flame Burning” involved programmed percussion, bass, strings, and some live guitars. The chorus of the song presents to the listener UNIP’s political philosophy: *Tiyende pamozi* (Let’s walk together). At the center of Kaunda’s philosophy of humanism was working together. The lyrics on the chorus warn the electorate: Do the right thing. The future is in our hands. Let us work together every day. Vote UNIP and KK [Dr. Kenneth Kaunda was fondly called by his initials, KK]. “Keep the Flame Burning” engaged in political discourse with its targeted audience despite KK and UNIP losing the 1991 elections to Frederic Chiluba and the MMD.

The 1991 elections facilitated Zambia’s transition from one-party politics to multi-partyism. Under the leadership of Chiluba, Mwanawasa, and Banda, the MMD stayed in power for two decades, from 1991 to 2011. In the next section, I analyze the use of recordings of Zambian popular music as a site for political discourse in the parliamentary and presidential elections that took place between 2011 and 2021.

## **Recordings of Zambian Popular Music as a Site for Political Discourse, 2011–2021**

The 2011 elections were tightly contested. Political parties that won a seat or more in parliament included: PF, sixty seats; MMD, fifty-five seats; UPND, twenty-eight seats; Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD), one seat; and Alliance for Development and Democracy (ADD), one seat.<sup>46</sup> The Patriotic Front (PF) won the presidential and parliamentary elections for the first time since it was founded in 2001, and music played a big role in propagating the agenda that guaranteed them the win. “In 2011, the opposition PF party used Wesley Chibambo’s “Donchi Kubeba” (Don’t tell them) [2011] to carry its campaign message across.”<sup>47</sup> Wesley Chibambo (a.k.a. Dandy Crazy) was one of the most celebrated *Kopala Dancehall*<sup>48</sup> artists at the time.

### **“Donchi Kubeba” (Don’t Tell Them) [2011] as a Site for Political Discourse**

In 2011, “Donchi Kubeba” was used to mobilize an electorate for the PF party, consequently playing a role in Michael Sata’s 2011 presidential victory, which displaced Rupiah Banda and his MMD party that had been in power for twenty years. “Donchi Kubeba,” produced by Martin Kapesha (a.k.a. Shenky Sugar)

<sup>46</sup> Tobolka, “Political Parties in Contemporary Zambia,” 16.

<sup>47</sup> Namuyamba et al., “Music and Its Role in Electoral Process in Zambia,” 41.

<sup>48</sup> *Kopala Dancehall* is one of the most prominent sub-genres of *Zed Beats* [Zambia’s pop music genre that blends foreign musical influences and indigenous musical elements and is produced in Digital Audio Workstations on computers in home studios], particularly in the Copperbelt region where the style originated.

at Jeraboh Unit Studio, based in Kitwe at the time, is an up-tempo track in the *Du-nka*<sup>49</sup> rhythmic percussion characterized by an ostinato Congolese rumba influenced bassline and synthesized strings.



Figure 2: *Du-nka* drum pattern notation

Figure 2 is an image of the *Du-nka* drum pattern. In *Du-nka*, the kick maintains a steady rhythm of a hit on every beat, the snare hit alternates on the upbeat of the second sub-division of the first quarter note beat and on the down beat of the second sub-division of the second beat, onomatopoeically producing the *Du-nka* sound. *Du* on the kick and *nka* on the snare.<sup>50</sup>

In a baritone, raspy, almost distorted voice locally known as *kubuluma*, characteristic of the *Kopala Dancehall*, Dandy Crazy chants the lyrics in *Kopala Bemba*, a *Chibemba*-influenced lingua franca which is mostly spoken in Kitwe and the surrounding cities. Figure 3 is the transcription of the song. The phrases sung in *Kopala Bemba* are written in italics on the left side of the page. Their English translations appear on the right:

### Chorus

X2 *Don't Kubeba wilalilalila ashiiiiiii*  
X4 *Ah don't kubeba, don't kubeba*  
X2 *Dochi kubeba wilalilalila ashiiiiiii*

Don't tell them. Hush don't cry  
Don't tell them, don't tell them  
Don't tell them. Hush don't cry

### Verse 1

*Chine ngoma somone chadirika*  
*Umushili wasampauka walepuka*  
*Muno chalo twimbamo na copper*  
*Kuikala bwino bonse proper*  
*Nakwatako na bondi Kabulonga*

Come and see the drum has broken  
The earth is shattered and torn  
We mine copper in this country  
All of us would be living a good life  
I could own a house in Kabulonga

*Nokwangala na bana Munda Wanga*

And play with my children at Munda Wanga

*Chalo chalufyengo*  
*Naisanga mu ghetto no ge*

This world is unfair  
Found myself living in a ghetto but it's fine

*Nomsewo twikalamo ulanda*  
*Twalileka nomba nokulanda*

And the road where we live is so poor  
We have even stopped talking

*Chilongoma kuimbamo na copper*

So big are the pot holes that copper can be  
mined there

<sup>49</sup> The *Du-nka* beat pattern is derived from the sound made by the snare or rim shot hit and the kick drum in a 4/4 pattern. It is one of the most common drum patterns used in Zambian popular music.

<sup>50</sup> Tembo, Mathew. *Zed Beats: A Historical Ethnography of Musical Production and Musical Labor in Zambian Popular Music*. 2024, 7.

|                                                                             |                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Kamana kulobamo upale</i>                                                | [Potholes] as big as river, one can even get baptized                                    |
| <i>Nimbokoshi kushikamo nomunthu</i>                                        | It's a casket for one to be buried in                                                    |
| <i>Ni farm kushombola nefipushi</i>                                         | It's a farm where pumpkins can be harvested                                              |
| <i>Donchi kubeba, Donchi kubeba</i>                                         | Don't tell them. Don't tell them                                                         |
| <b>Chorus [as before]</b>                                                   |                                                                                          |
| <b>Verse 2</b>                                                              |                                                                                          |
| <i>John kukalale epo aila</i><br><i>Diploma mu failo yalabola</i>           | John's taken long in the city<br>His diploma in the folder will rot                      |
| <i>Mukufwaye nchito bushiku bwaila</i><br><i>Bamwikata shishita lwalila</i> | It's gotten dark as he was trying to find a job<br>He's been arrested for passing curfew |
| <i>Mayo alalwalilila kumushi</i><br><i>Muchipatala tamwaba nemiti</i>       | Mum is always getting sick in the village<br>There are no drugs in the hospital          |
| <i>Fertilizer yashota twachula</i>                                          | Fertilizer has run out, we have suffered                                                 |
| <i>Pamushi pesu paponensala</i><br><i>Yapalame imyaka</i>                   | Hunger has descended on our village<br>Years have passed                                 |
| <i>Imfumu bailasa na vaka</i>                                               | The chief has been given a car                                                           |
| <i>Headman bamsova ichigayo</i>                                             | The headman has been given a corn grinder                                                |
| <i>Chitenge bapelako na mayo</i>                                            | Women have been given wrap clothes                                                       |
| <i>Ah wikalaba efyo waikala</i>                                             | Never shall you forget how you have been living                                          |
| <i>Ah wikalaba efyo wachula aahh</i>                                        | Never shall you forget how you have suffered                                             |
| <b>Chorus</b>                                                               |                                                                                          |
| <i>Donchi kubeba wilalilalila ashiiii</i><br>Aaaah aaah                     | Don't tell them. Hush don't cry                                                          |
| <i>Donchi kubeba wilalilalila ashiiii</i><br>Aaaah aaah                     | Don't tell them. Hush don't cry                                                          |
| <i>Ah donchi kubeba</i>                                                     | Don't tell them                                                                          |

**Figure 3:** "Donchi Kubeba" (Don't tell them) text [2011]

“Donchi Kubeba” is a lament about life’s everyday struggles among the underprivileged. But Dandy Crazy is not giving up hope. Instead, he is reminding the masses not to forget their suffering. He further advises the electorate that they should not cry because the secret is in their vote. In the first verse, the singer is disappointed that Zambia, with all its resources, including copper, is not able to provide a good life for its citizens. He opens the second verse by highlighting the economic challenges that the country was facing at the time: unemployment, bad roads, and a lack of farming inputs, including fertilizer. The second half of the second verse brings to light the suspicious behavior of politicians who give out clothing, wrappers, food, alcohol, and sometimes cars to selected members of the electorate in the hope of influencing them into coercing the electorate to vote for them.

The song was used in different spaces during PF campaigns. Beside the recording of the song being played at rallies where PF sympathizers danced and sang along to the chorus of the song, the song was also played from public address systems mounted on the roofs of minivans as they were driven around in different neighborhoods by PF supporters with the purpose of getting the message across to the electorate.

In 2015, Zambia held a presidential by-election following the demise of President Michael Sata on October 28, 2014. The election was to determine who would complete Sata’s five-year term. “The results of the election were extremely close with a substantial increase in support for Hakainde Hichilema, fondly referred to as HH and his United Party for National Development (UPND) as compared to the statistics in the previous elections. High turnout in UPND areas, combined with low turnout in much of the rest of the country, saw the UPND increase its share of the vote from 18.17 percent to 46.67 percent and the PF retain power by just over 27,000 votes.”<sup>51</sup>

Although music featured in the 2015 elections, its popularity failed to match that of Dandy Crazy’s “Donchi Kubeba.”<sup>52</sup> The presidential by-election was followed by general elections on August 11, 2016. The months leading to the general elections witnessed “Dununa Reverse” (Kick it back) [2016] dominate the political arena.

### “Dununa Rivesi” (Kick It Back) [2016] as a Site for Political Discourse

The most popular Zambian recording in the history of Zambia’s politics hitherto is “Dununa Rivesi,” also spelt “Dununa Rverse.” The word *rivesi* is borrowed from the English word, reverse. As Benedict Tembo observes, “one thing is true, this election campaign will go down in history as one where musicians stole the show. JK et al.’s ‘Dununa Reverse’ has been at the peak of the Patriotic Front (PF) campaigns.”<sup>53</sup> The PF’s women’s choir, founded exclusively to compose and perform campaign songs composed “Dununa Rivesi.” The PF Entertainment Committee, which was entrusted with facilitating the production and circulation of a campaign song for the 2016 elections paid for studio time at Shenky Sugar Studios, which had moved from Kitwe to Lusaka by then. The committee sub-contracted singers Jordan Katembula (a.k.a. JK), Happy Kayombo (a.k.a. Kayombo), Felix Phiri (a.k.a. Feligo), and Wilson Lungu (a.k.a. Wile) to reproduce a pop rendition of the song. Shenky composed the accompaniment for the song at his studio before JK and his colleagues went to record vocals on it.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, Bertelsmann Stiftung. *BTI Country Report—Zambia*. 2020. [https://bti-project.org/fileadmin/api/content/en/downloads/reports/country\\_report\\_2020\\_ZMB.pdf](https://bti-project.org/fileadmin/api/content/en/downloads/reports/country_report_2020_ZMB.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> Mambwe, “The Discursive Role of Music in African Elections,” 174.

<sup>53</sup> Benedict Tembo, “About ‘Dununa Reverse,’ Power of Music in Politics,” *Zambia Daily Mail*, August 10, 2016.

<sup>54</sup> Christopher Linenga, personal communication, 2017.

“Dununa Rivesi” featured prominently during the campaigns that led to the 2016 general elections in Zambia. Newspapers and other print media published numerous articles about the song. The ruling PF government took advantage of its dominant position and got Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) to air “Dununa Rivesi” as often as was possible. ZNBC houses state-owned Radios 1, 2 and 4, and Television Channels TV1, TV2 and TV3. Within a few days of its release, the song became ubiquitous in most Zambian residents’ milieu, especially in the urban regions where most people have access to radio and TV coverage. Radio stations blasted the song on the airwaves, and kids and grown-ups, regardless of their political affiliation, danced and sang along to the song in a variety of spaces. In addition to being performed at PF campaigns, “Dununa Rivesi” was also heard at parties and in nightclubs. On YouTube, choreographed versions of the song performed by Zambians in the United States and Poland, among other locations in the West, were published. No other single song has had such massive appeal in the history of Zambian popular music.<sup>55</sup>

The appeal of “Dununa Rivesi” was enhanced by several factors, including the use of familiar musical elements, some of the most famous Zambian musicians, and local dialects. For example, rhythm played a role in having “Dununa Rivesi” appeal to a broader audience. Most Zambians easily related to the familiar rhythm section of the song, a 4/4 generic *Du-nka* drum pattern. As is the case with many African performance practices, the use of call and answer is a common feature in Zambian folk music from which Zambian popular music borrows. English is the official language of communication in Zambia, and one would expect political songs to be sung in the Queen’s language, as was the case with UNIP’s “Keep the Flame Burning.” However, the PF always claimed that it is the party for the marginalized lower-middle class. Therefore, the use of local languages in the song was a deliberate effort to engage in political dialogue with the lower strata of society that is mostly semi-illiterate and as such, primarily communicates in local dialects including *Chibemba*, *Chinyanja*, and *Chilamba*.<sup>56</sup> The collaboration of JK, Wile, and Kayombo enhanced the appeal of “Dununa Rivesi” to Zambia’s electorate. Figure 4 is the transcription of the lyrics to the song. Lyrics in local languages are written in italics on the left side of the page. Their English translations appear on the right:

#### Pre chorus by JK

*Adada munalemba Edgar Chagwa Lungu*  
*Apitalize ulamulilo wa m’Zambia*  
*Adada munalemba Edgar Chagwa Lungu*  
*Apitalize ulamulilo wa m’Zambia*

God you had Edgar Chagwa Lungu assigned  
 To continue leading Zambia  
 God you had Edgar Chagwa Lungu assigned  
 To continue leading Zambia

#### Chorus by JK

*Dununa dununa iyeee*  
*Ayee dununa iyeee dununa rivesi*

Kick it back, kick it back iyeee  
 Ayee kick it, iyeee kick it back

#### Verse 1 by JK

*Aba bambi bali muchibe*  
*Aba bambi bola naikosa*  
*Lo lo lo, lololololo*  
*Lo lo lo, lololololo*

These others must be sweating  
 The game is hard for the rest

<sup>55</sup> Tembo, Mathew. “Dununa Rivesi” (“Kick Back”): Dancing for Zambia. *Ethnomusicological Review*, March 2, 2018.

<sup>56</sup> Tembo, “Dununa Rivesi” (“Kick Back”).

**Verse 2 by Feligo**

*Nakwela bus zina lake* Double Decker  
*Kalusa sangaikwele*  
*Ba Lungu baikwela kale*  
*Lololololo lololololo*

I am on a bus called Double Decker  
 The loser cannot get on it  
 Lungu is already on it

**Verse 3 by Wile**

*Batila ati chidunu webo chilalisha*  
*Baneke tabasangwapo*  
*Ilyashi lyamutulo webo*  
 Under five politics *nebo*  
*Nshitita fyamusangoyo*  
*Webo chimo namwana wandi Saulos webo*  
*Wapona Grade 7 seventeen times per hour*  
 Five times *ulepona chabe*  
*Chita retirement webo*  
*Nshitita fyamsangoyo*  
*Aikona kulechita masangalaton*

They say playing chidunu can make one cry  
 Children choose not to participate  
 That's a story in your dreams  
 Under five politics  
 I don't do such  
 You are not different from my son Saulos  
 Who failed his Grade 7 seventeen times  
 Five times you failed  
 You should retire [from politics]  
 I don't do such  
 Don't play tricks

**Verse 4 by Kayombo**

As a king of the dancehall  
 I say *ndaikilina*  
 I say *ndaipukuta*  
 I say *ndaiwamya*  
*Ka opposition nakagaya*

I say I clean myself  
 I say I dust off myself  
 I say I clean up after myself  
 I have crushed all opposition

**Chorus [as before]**

**Figure 4:** “Dununa Reverse” (Kick it back) [2016] text

The pre chorus and chorus of the song demand that the electorate kick back Lungu into power. The first two lines of the first verse in the song, “Adada munalemba Edgar Chagwa Lungu” (Father, you had Edgar Chagwa Lungu written down) and “apitilize ulamulilo wa M’Zambia” (to continue the rule of Zambia) declare that the PF presidential candidate, Edgar Chagwa Lungu, was appointed by God to continue leading the country [after the demise of Michael Sata], a belief that convinced the majority of the electorate to vote Lungu back into office as the sixth Republican President of Zambia.

In the third verse, Wile makes fun of the opposition when he raps in *Chilamba*: “...under five politics *nebo nshitite fyamusangoyo*” (“I don’t do under-five politics”). “In Zambia, infants and children under the age of five are routinely immunized against polio and measles among other diseases... It is assumed that children five years and older have a stronger immunity against disease and their lives are not as fragile as the infants’ and under fives.”<sup>57</sup> In “Dununa Rivesi,” Wile claims that Lungu, is a more formidable candidate than his rivals in the opposition. Confirming Wile’s claims, Kayombo in Verse 4 declares that PF candidate Lungu will crash the opposition in the 2016 elections.

<sup>57</sup> Tembo, “Dununa Rivesi” (“Kick Back”).

Although the PF government addressed some of the issues it hoped could improve people's livelihood, the majority of Zambians still lived in deplorable conditions and the public's perception was that the PF government was too tolerant of the widespread corruption on its watch. Furthermore, unemployment and cadrism among the youthful population was one of the biggest challenges under the PF government. Cadres had a reputation of harassing members of the public, particularly those who were thought to be supporting the opposition. In an interview I had at Kitwe's Chalila Studio, an emerging artist Evans Mbewe complained that he and many others did not benefit from Zambia's PF government, citing unemployment, corruption, and the high cost of living as indicators of bad governance. Mbewe's song, "Ni Bally Tulefwaya" (It's Bally we want) was in its initial stages of production as producer Jay Swagg was orchestrating an accompaniment for the song in Chalila Studio. My interview with Mbewe went as follows:

Author: What's the title of this song?

EM: The title of this song . . . "Bally Tulefwaya."

Author: Can you say more about what the song is all about?

EM: Okay, the song really is talking about the . . . situation which is currently prevailing in Zambia. We are talking about the challenges that we are facing in our country. . . .

Author: So Bally is HH right? *Mulefwaya* HH *abwelepo*? (So, you want HH [Hakainde Hichilema] to become president?)

EM: Yes. We want HH this time.

Fly Pack, one of Mbewe's colleagues, explains in the *Chibemba* language, "ulwimbo lwakayena lulandafye pali infitu eflyo tulepitamo. Fintu nafikosa shani" (the song ["Bally Tulefwaya"] talks about our experiences. Life is hard).

Leading to the 2021 general elections, work stoppages in some sectors also became common. For example, in October 2020, fuel tanker drivers went on strike demanding better pay.<sup>58</sup> Their strike led to a national shortage of fuel disrupting productivity and transportation. In May 2021, resident doctors went on strike demanding to be paid their salary arrears and gratuity accrued from 2015. At the time of the strike, over five hundred newly graduated doctors had not been employed by the government.<sup>59</sup> On October 14, 2020, Zambia became Africa's first economy to default on a \$42 million repayment toward its Eurobond liabilities.<sup>60</sup> In search of a better livelihood, the electorate was looking forward to the August 2021 elections as they hoped for change.

## Recordings of Zambian Popular Music as a Site for Political Discourse During 2021 General Elections

<sup>58</sup> Ulande Nkomesha, "Fuel Shortage Hit C/Belt as Transporters Strike," *Diggers*, October 21, 2020.

<https://diggers.news/business/2020/10/21/fuel-shortage-hits-c-belt-as-transporters-strike/>.

<sup>59</sup> Lusaka Times, "Doctors to Stage Go Slow on Monday," May 21, 2021, <https://www.lusakatimes.com/2021/05/21/doctors-to-stage-go-slow-on-monday/>.

<sup>60</sup> Danielle Resnick, "How Zambia's Opposition Won," *Journal of Democracy* 33, no. 1 (2022): 70–84, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2022.0005>.

The 2021 Zambian presidential and parliamentary elections took place in the thick of the COVID pandemic. In-person political campaigns were not encouraged and were deemed unsafe because of COVID. Therefore, recordings of popular music became safer spaces in which political discourses could be had. The songs were produced quickly in home studios and shared on social media. The quintet Knack Unity, based in Samfya, a small town in the northern region of Zambia, released “Babufi” (They are liars) [2021] three months before the country's elections. Sung in *Chibemba* and English, “Babufi” became an instant hit. On social media, the song went viral. Figure 5 is the text for the chorus of the song. The *Chibemba* text is aligned to the left and the English translations to the right:

|                                            |                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Ala ba bufi</i>                         | They are liars                                         |
| <i>Yesu atile pokeni mulye</i>             | Jesus said receive and eat                             |
| <i>Ngabamipela ulukombwe pokani munwe</i>  | If they give you a drink, receive and drink            |
| <i>Nesho bashanina shesu</i>               | Even what they spend on partying is yours              |
| <i>Wileka batwishimye ala tebanesu abo</i> | Those are not our friends so don't let them silence us |

**Figure 5:** “Babufi” (They are liars) chorus, text

Here, the group claims that the politicians in government are liars who have failed to govern. The quintet also highlights the economic challenges that the country was experiencing as well as the rampant corruption and unemployment. Similar to Dandy Crazy's “Donchi Kubeba,” the quintet goes on to warn the electorate against voting on the basis of bribes and gifts that the politicians give them. They encourage the electorate to vote based on the issues that directly concern their well-being. Knack Unity appealed to a wider audience because they did not align themselves with a particular political party although some of their songs were eventually adopted by the opposition UPND during campaigns.

UPND also had its own campaign songs produced. “Uyo Uyo Remix” (“That One Remix”) [2021] by Wise- D featuring Chiky Niggah was a response to “Solly Alebwelelapo” (Sorry, he is coming back) [I discuss the song in more detail in the next section]. “Uyo Uyo Remix” became one of UPND's most popular campaign songs leading to the 2021 elections. The song consists of programmed percussive-dominated rhythms, bass, synthesized brass, and strings and the chorus melody is an appropriation of “Solly Alebwelelapo,” the more reason the song is referred to as the remix. Figure 6 is the transcription of the song. The *Chibemba* text in italics is aligned to the left and their English translations on the right. The lines sung in English are indented on the right:

### Chorus

|                                              |                                          |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <i>Uyo, uyo, uyo teti ateke nakambi bufi</i> | That one cannot rule again, that's a lie |
| <i>Tapali efyo mungechita mwebo sorry</i>    | Sorry but there is nothing you can do    |
| <i>Teti ateke nakambi bufi</i>               | He cannot rule again, that's a lie       |
| <i>Tapali efyo mungechita mweo sorry</i>     | Sorry but there is nothing you can do    |

### Verse 1

|                             |                        |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Apa nomba ni forward</i> | This time it's forward |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|

*Apa nomba ni forward*  
*Watermelon ku manja forward*  
*Voteleni Hakainde*

This time it's forward  
 Watermelon in your hands forward  
 Vote for Hakainde

## Verse 2

It shall come to pass

*Fyalapita banga watermelon*

It will pass like a watermelon

*Don't kubeba tabebwa ni felony*

Do not tell them as that would be  
 tantamount to felony

*Ni green kunse red mukati*

It's green outside and red inside

*Kulya mukati pakuvota mukati*

You eat the inside (of a watermelon) and so  
 vote for the inside

*Top and down pali HH*  
*Apo nishi chimo wasala HH*

Top and down on HH  
 That's the same as voting for HH

*Chalo balionaula*

They destroyed the country

Allow Bally to fix it

**Figure 6:** “Uyo Uyo Remix” (“That One Remix”) [2021] text

The watermelon became a common reference point for both PF and UPND. The color codes for PF and UPND are green and red respectively. During the campaign period, videos of PF and UPND sympathizers emerged on social media. The PF supporters claimed that you only eat the inside of the watermelon leaving the green, implying that the red (UPND) will be eaten [consumed] and the green (PF) shall remain to symbolize PF coming out victorious. The opposition UPND declared that one eats the red juicy inside and throws away the green part of the watermelon. Voting for red [UPND] meant more juice. More prosperity. Gankhanani Moyo, lecturer of culture and intangible heritage at the University of Zambia, reported to me in a phone interview that “there was another argument regarding the watermelon that it may seem all green to the public when in reality it was red. The implication was that green was a façade as deep inside people were in support of the red, the UPND.”<sup>61</sup> Since PF cadres were notorious for harassing individuals who wore regalia that bore images or color associated with opposition parties, particularly UPND, some people wore green PF clothing although they supported the opposition for fear of being harassed. In “Teti Ateke Nakambi,” Wise D claims that the PF government mismanaged the country's economy but Bally (HH) will fix it. “Bally will fix it” became the theme for the 2021 UPND campaign.

More than ten PF campaign songs were produced in 2021. Songs “Alebwelelapo Pampando” (He is coming back to sit on the throne) by Rich Chilufya (a.k.a. Rich Bizzy), Dandy Crazy, Moses Ng'andwe (a.k.a. Chester), Shenky and Kadaffi, “Dununa Nafuti” (Kick again) by JK, Wile, Kayombo, and Felix, and “Solly Alebwelelapo” (Sorry, he is coming back) by Mulaza Kaira (a.k.a. Macky II), Elton Mulenga (a.k.a.

<sup>61</sup> Gankhanani Moyo, personal communication with the author, October 23, 2023.

Yo Maps) and Mirriam Mukape (a.k.a. Mampi) all advocated for Lungu's continuity in power. "Solly Alebwelelapo" became PF's main theme leading to the 2021 elections. Written in C Sharp Major, the song employs an I-IV-I-V chord progression on the *Du-nka* drum pattern accompanying synthesized strings in some sections, arpeggiated guitars, and a bass sample. Producers Stanely Mwaba (a.k.a. Mr. Stash) and Bright Mofya (a.k.a. Jazz Boy) are credited for producing the song sung in *Chibemba*. Figure 7 is the transcription of the song. The *Chibemba* phrases are written in italics on the left side of the page. Their English translations appear on the right side:

|                                                           |                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Uyo uyo uyo, alebwelelapo sorry</i>                    | That one, that one, that one, he is coming back sorry          |
| A harmonized response led by Mampi follows:               |                                                                |
| <i>Uyo uyo uyo, ni Lesa wasalile sorry</i>                | That one, that one, that one, it's God who chose him sorry     |
| <i>Tapali efyo twingechita fwebo sorry</i>                | Sorry but there is nothing we can do.                          |
| Yo Maps performs yet another call to conclude the chorus: |                                                                |
| <i>Chombo cha Noah</i>                                    | Noah's Ark)                                                    |
| <i>Twaba mu bwato wa Noah</i>                             | We are in Noah's Ark                                           |
| <i>Nokubomba natubombe sova</i>                           | And let's work hard                                            |
| <i>Tatwakaleke sorry</i>                                  | We are sorry but we won't stop                                 |
| The choir sings in response:                              |                                                                |
| <i>Alebwelelapo, alebwelelapo, alebwelelapo</i>           | He will return, he will return, he will return, he will return |
| Mark II responds to the choir:                            |                                                                |
| <i>Nafutinafuti</i> 2021 (Again and again 2021)           |                                                                |

Figure 7: "Solly Alebwelelapo" (Sorry, he is coming back) [2021] text excerpts

### "Solly Alebwelelapo" (Sorry, he is coming back) [2021] text excerpts

The lyrics here declare that it is God who chose Lungu to be president and therefore he will return to the office no matter what. "We are in Noah's boat," Yo Maps sings. The "sorry" at the end of every line of the chorus is meant as an apology to the opposition who wanted Lungu out of office. The PF party symbol is a boat that symbolizes sailing off to a better Zambia. When Yo Maps sings "we are in Noah's boat," he means we are in safe hands as the boat is sailing to a better place, just like Noah's boat in the Bible sailed to safety. A better Zambia is coming. The visuals in the video to the song highlight the projects Lungu undertook while in office. Between 0:30–0:41 seconds the images in the video highlight the construction of flyover bridges and roads in the capital Lusaka, projects that Lungu and the PF government

undertook going into the 2021 elections. Between 1:19 and 1:26 minutes, and 1:40 and 1:45 minutes, the video further highlights newly commissioned police stations and newly built police houses. These images are repeated throughout the video interpolating the artists' performances.

On August 12, 2021, Zambia went to the polls. The electorate, dominated by the youth, turned up in numbers to vote. Three days later, HH of the UPND party was declared the winner of the presidential election, defeating the incumbent Edgar Chagwa Lungu after securing 2,810,757 votes (59 percent) against Lungu's 1,814,201 votes. His UPND party won eighty-two seats of the 156 in the National Assembly.<sup>62</sup> "Dununa Nafuti" failed the PF government and Lungu and the PF were *dununa* reversed.

## Conclusion

On social media platforms, I counted sixty-two recordings of Zambian popular songs produced by the UPND and PF that were released for the purpose of being used as sites for political discourse leading to the 2021 presidential and parliamentary elections in Zambia. Such a large number of recordings produced within a space of three months is attributed to more affordable, easier, and quicker modes of producing music on DAWs. In this essay, I traced the use of recordings of Zambian popular music in electoral campaigns from 1991 to date. I demonstrated, through use of these recordings, how music has been used as a site for political discourse, particularly during electoral campaigns. In 1991, UNIP's "Keep the Flame Burning" and PK Chishala's "Common Man," appropriated by the MMD party, were used to mobilize publics as the politicians engaged them in political discourse. In 2011, Dandy Crazy's "Donchi Kubeba" (Don't tell them) was adopted by the PF and the song became a space in which to challenge the incumbent government at the time. In 2016, the song "Dununa Reverse" (Kick it back) was used by the PF government to mobilize publics for that year's presidential and parliamentary elections. In 2021, recordings of Zambian popular music including "Solly Alebwelelapo," (Sorry, he is coming back) [2021], "Alebwelelapo Remix" [2021] and "Babufi" (They are liars) [2021] became sites through which politicians presented their manifestos to the electorate in the midst of contestation.

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<sup>62</sup> Resnick, "How Zambia's Opposition Won," 71.

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