

# Censorship and the Cultural Ambiguities of Singing against Authoritarianism in Zimbabwe: The Case of Winky D’s Popular Music

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In Zimbabwe, popular music, namely the dancehall music genre, has become a cultural site where official forces of political repression and libertarian voices of subalterns desiring independence clash in a relationship plagued with censorship. In this setting, singing against the danger of silence imposed by political authoritarianism develops libertarian tales whose implications go beyond resistance or cultural obedience. The nature and political consequences of the concerns and cultural ambiguities that emerge in Winky D’s musical lyrics in several of his well-known popular songs are examined in this article. The essay shows how official censorship may popularise a musician’s songs in ways that are unforeseen by the artist and create identities defined by cultural ambivalences that may identify the performer as both hero and underdog/villain. This paper uses purposive sampling for textual and content analysis to highlight the symbolic and cultural instability in song narratives. The qualitative technique underpins both textual and content analysis. Its relevance stems from the fact that it emphasises the multiplicity of cultural subjectivities. This viewpoint is informed by postcolonial theory, which recognises the ability of new cultural voices and identities to split the grip imposed by censorship. Alternative or non-officially sanctioned locations for popular music can be used to ventilate its ideals.

## Introduction: Theory in Dance-hall Music

The usage of the word “popular” music in Zimbabwe as a cultural form to reflect on, inspire new arguments to address old issues, and even as a phrase to weaponize new and old songs to achieve certain purposes is as ancient as the country’s original population. The word “popular” music, which I employed in my analysis of Zimbabwean music as an academic field, is rarely utilised. Critics prefer phrases like “old music,” which is spoken of or written about in contrast to “contemporary music”. This dichotomy is deceptive for several reasons. First, such studies do not specify and highlight ‘traditional’ or ‘modern’ in Zimbabwean music in a nuanced manner. Second, in a Zimbabwean context, contrasting traditional music to contemporary music is simple since the ‘modernity’ of ‘traditional’ African music in Zimbabwe may be remembered in the current historical temporality to supplement, criticise, and offer old motifs to deal with new challenges.

Such a relation of dependency and antagonism (Gilroy, 1993) appropriately fits the identity of Zimbabwe's popular music, a cultural condition of hybridity which allows it to assimilate influences from other cultures. Zimbabwe's popular culture, as we shall name it until the end of this essay, is not *sui generis* to any one class, gender or period. What is 'popular' in Zimbabwe's music is not pre-cast, nor is every song 'popular' (Storey, 2001). The popular in Zimbabwe's music is not innate or natural; what is popular is a product of imaginative invention not by a collective, but by an individual artist (Finnegan, 1970). Thereafter, the song is popularised and this happens through a complex process of cultural manipulation of lyrics (words), voice and tone.

Whether colonial, patriarchal, nationalist or postcolonial African tyrants, authoritarian regimes mistrust the ambiguity of popular song meanings derived from combining diverse cultural materials. "Fragmented, nonsensical, and irrelevant to the social and cultural situation of people whose philosophy it is", says Gramsci (1971: 419). Hall agrees, arguing that the people cannot be passive or acquiescent to the ruling elites (1994).

Due to the fact that the rulers, or as Mbembe puts it, "the commandment and its 'subjects' share the same living space" (2001: 104), these historical players may find themselves in a less than convivial relationship; the ruled and the rulers may end up fashioning a limited understanding of the meaning of popular music, resulting in the "mutual zombification of both the dominant and those apparently" (104). This incestuous connection would sap the ruling and the ruled of their vigour, rendering both powerless. On the one hand, imposing one's symbols and rejecting other people's symbols results in various types of cultural censorship, since hegemony is a historical process of seizing the energies of one social group and articulating such energy towards dominating ideals. Amílcar Cabral (1973) promotes this viewpoint, claiming that regular people have an incredible ability to preserve their culture. Fortunately, as John Storey (2001) points out, the cultural ambiguities in ordinary people's lives prevent them from accepting every ideal espoused by those who seek to govern them. While it is true that the masses, from whence many artists originate, may create hidden histories, such histories are not without cultural instabilities. This is why Fanon looks for and finds popular sentiment in the zone of occult instability where people live and give form to the nation's fluctuating truths, which are its realities in the first instance "In this formulation, an artist's life and musical composition are both in flux, defined by multiple identities in the way power is confronted and negotiated to signal one's other selves. Another unstable zone is the artist's connection with power, from which he or she wants to free himself or herself" (1963).

Suppose the meanings of popular music are not pre-determined, as I define the fluxing nature of popular meanings in popular music. In that case, the three questions I hope to address are: (1) How did Winky D's music become stigmatised, prohibiting him from expressing his right to free expression? (2) What is it in Winky D's songs that shook the official view of 'appropriate' and 'approved' Zimbabwean music to the point of invoking and then courting the fury of the "Censorship Entertainment and Control Unit"? (3) What are the ramifications for Winky D's musical creativity in particular, and dancehall music in Zimbabwe in general, in the face of such draconian and reprehensible acts of suppression by a dictatorship that ascended to power?

### **Histories of Cultural Censorship in Zimbabwe**

Hugh Tracey's research identifies distinct musical genres that were popular before to colonisation and that were still sung after colonisation. Some themes and tunes from the

African indigenous granary of African songs were also adopted by Christianity. “Songs that Won the Independence War” (Pongweni, 1982) is still the most important classic site for songs written and popularised during Zimbabwe’s liberation fight. Africans have created rhythms of resistance in the post-colonial period, which spurred Zimbabwe’s land reform initiative, known as the Third Chimurenga (Nyawo, 2012: 53-65). Colonialism, liberation movements, and the Third Chimurenga have all become institutions associated with various types of music that were popular among their makers and were crucial in attaining stated ideological goals (Khan, 2018).

The majority of popular music arose in response to specific millenium political movements and tended to be outspoken in their condemnation of certain cultural and political norms. Authorities tended to respond aggressively to emerging musical traditions, suppressing women’s musical traditions and young musical inventiveness as a result. The manner in which controlling cultural/political institutions of the time deified specific genres of Zimbabwe’s popular music made such oppression feasible. Mbira, religious music, urban rhythms, inane songs written by adults for children, and some forms of Chimurenga songs were all praised (Vambe, 2004). This implies that censorship of music throughout Zimbabwe’s history might be apparent, open, and arbitrary, as well as manifesting itself in self-imposed constraints and the promotion of singing particular topics over others.

Dancehall music’s birth and expansion, as well as its ‘revolutionary’ substance and form, can be linked to 2001. Then-Minister of Information Jonathan Moyo introduced and approved legislation mandating media outlets to produce 75% local content in music aired on all Zimbabwean networks. As the state’s anti-western imperialist ideology gained traction from 2002 onwards, this was increased to 100% (Manase, 2011: 83). The development of “urban youth vernaculars” significantly undermined the cultural emblems of the standardised government permitted hegemonic vernaculars. Due to the “gift of replication” (Spivak, 1990: 146), dancehall music deconstructs prior musical practices, demonstrating how the vocalists, as a new cultural subject, centre themselves inside an almost totally state-approved music discursive space.

Despite promoting Zimdance hall music, state agents tightly regulated youth music to eliminate anything that may undermine the nationalist narrative of war and peace. In Zimbabwe, the government may utilise its own music to promote its political purposes. A state may prohibit dancehall music and penalise its performers. Some vocalists may feel anxiety and self-censor as a result.

According to Guzura and Ndimande (2015), the Zimbabwean state deployed secret police agents, education, the army, and the law to oppose subversive themes in dancehall music. Suppression of music points to a new state-citizen cultural crisis management domain. According to Spivak (1990), authoritarianism in India strongly opposes young cultural music that the state cannot grasp, refuses to accept, or fails to portray the music’s full interpretive potential. “Public Order and Security Act” (POSA), written by Professor Jonathan Moyo, transformed the state’s “progressive” stance on cultural production in Zimbabwe. Even though Zimbabwe was not under assault, its wording aimed to deter insurgency, banditry, sabotage, and terrorism.

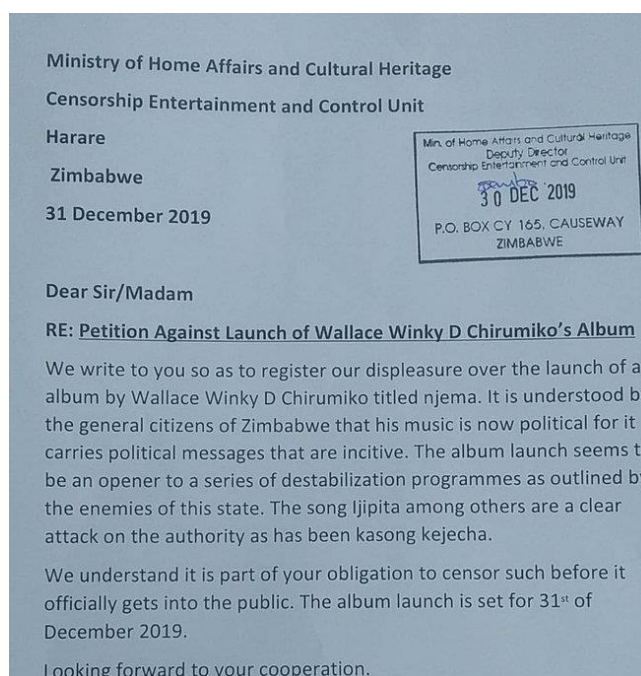
The Mugabe dictatorship enacted and passed the “Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act” (Chapter 10: 27) in 2003. The state agents’ favoured control language is ambiguous, scattered, and meant to terrify artists. Words like “obscene, subversive, indecent, objectionable” (Rwafa, 2016: 21) are established and entrenched as the lexicon of legal

legislation, aiming to make artists like Winky D self-censor. The songs *Njema*, *Ijipita*, and *Kasong Kejecha* are described as subversive, and it is necessary to examine some of Winky D's songs to see if this description fits the official opinion of that music as “incitive.”

### Winky D: Singing against Censorship/Silence

According to Manase (2011: 83), Winky D entered the dancehall club scene in 2002. Since that time, he composed several songs. *Finbu Finbu* depicts a young man who brags about his success and mocks those of his youthful age who badmouth him because they are jealous of the singer's rise to prominence. Albums such as *Vanbu Vakuru* (Big People), *Chatsva* (Fired Up) and *Com 2 Tek Ova* describe experiences that Zimbabweans have experienced. Other songs by Winky D are *Chaputika* (It Has Exploded), *Vanotaura* (They Talk Too Much) that describe the popular entry into the musical industry and how his musical compositions seemed to have been popularly welcomed by the ordinary people. *Moma* celebrates the cultural significance of mothers in society. None of the above songs appear not to have attracted and provoked open fire from Zimbabwe's state agents in the Zimbabwe Ministry of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage that houses the Censorship Entertainment and Control unit. *Njema* and *Ijipita* are mentioned as songs dangerous to the officially supposed peace that the nationalist government credits itself for bringing to the ordinary people.

On December 31, 2019, censorship authorities from the Ministry of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage filed a petition against the release of Wallace Winky D Chirumiko's album. The complete language of this blatant restriction of young culture is captured here (Winky D's Album..., 2019).



The officials wrote to register their “displeasure” on the forthcoming launch on the album titled *Njema*, containing songs such as *Ijipita* and *Kasong Kejecha*. In particular, the officials stated that these songs had become “political”, that the effect of the songs’ “political messages” are

“incitive”. The officials feared that the songs were beginning to act as cultural and narrative vectors “to a series of destabilisation programmes as outlined by the enemies of the state”. The song *Ijipita* (Egypt) was singled out in this censorial letter as a “clear attack on the authority”, as also was *Kasong Kejecha*. The letter concludes with advice to Winky D to exercise his “obligation to censor such [music] before it officially gets into the public”, and the officials expected the singer to cooperate. Rwafa (2016) argues that officials engage in widespread censorship that is most restrictive when officials employ vague or ambiguous language to criticise creative artists. Starting with *Njema* (Handcuffs), only songs picked for this chapter will be studied to determine the veracity of Winky’s music’s critics.

### Lyrics, Voice and Tone in *Njema*

*Njema* was billed to be launched on the 31 December 2019. Most importantly, *Njema*’s lyrics, music voice and tone contained in its verses narrated the popular feelings of anger and frustration that most ordinary Zimbabweans feel at being treated as second-class citizens by a regime that got into power using political muscle. Verse 1 goes as follows:

*Tinoona setakasununguka/ Kubatana kvenyama nemapfupa*  
 [We see like we are free because of the physical unity between flesh and bone]  
*Asi mweya yakasuduruka/ Tava kufamba tiri tega panyama*  
 [But the spirit long departed. We now walk alone with flesh]  
*Tisina anotigeza munyama/ Zvatiri Nhapwa mukurarama*  
 [Without anyone to wash off bad luck. We are now slaves in our lives]  
*Kusadziona dzakachena munana*  
 [Not seeing handcuffs appears a mystery]  
*Njema njema X 3*  
 [Handcuffs, Handcuffs]

The lyrics mourn the loss of surface or denotative freedom. The police’s mental and spiritual manacles resemble handcuffs. The authoritarian mindset of the police and army is so entrenched that not seeing convicts on any given day looks to be an anomaly. In Verse 1, the horrible culture of silence symbolises the suffocation of the people. Handcuffing a restless population legitimately seeking freedom of expression, association, and opinion is a heinous crime, according to the song’s connotative meaning. As a result, ordinary people are victims of an unelected securitocracy. Verse 1 may have been misinterpreted by the Ministry of Home Affairs as a slur against its personnel.

The habit of hurting ordinary Zimbabweans has resulted in shady situations where human body, bones, and soul are now disconnected (verse 2). The squalor of a police state erodes critical thinking. Being silent creates mental manacles that allow the police state to grow. Verse 2 reads:

*Dzokambotanga dzakakaka nyama*  
 [They (handcuffs) used to manacle flesh]  
*Iko zvino dzokakata pfungwa*  
 [Now, they manacle the mind]  
*Mukukura Ndaingoti munyama*  
 [Growing up I was just in the flesh]

*Zvondirwadza pandinozvifunga*  
 [It pains me when I think about it]  
*Ndivo vari muchizarira*  
 [Those in prison]  
*Kusaziva kuti hobho vasungwa*  
 [Do not know that the majority are also prisoners]  
*Vari panze vari kuzvifarira*  
 [Those who are outside the prison]  
*Vachikipa mutongo vari panze*  
 [Judge those in prison while they are outside]  
*Kusungwa kwefungwa hatizvivanze*  
 [I do not shy away from singing about mental slavery]  
*Tobata chipi chingatinyaradze*  
 [What can we use to stop us from crying]  
*Hanzvi kufunga kwedu ngakutiparadze*  
 [They say we must be destroyed by our own thinking]  
*Chiraramo chokundwa pazvibiti vbiti*  
 [Real life is now defeated by pessimism]  
*Akaendepi magungano ataiwonesana chiraramo*  
 [Where did the spirit of collectivity go?]  
*Zvese zvinonofira mupfungwa*  
 [All these things die in the mind]  
*Mupfungwa mune hondo sepa Chimoio*  
 [The mind is a raging war like at Chimoio]

In this stanza of Verse 2, *Njema* depicts the police state imprisoning the majority's thoughts to quiet them. Tens of thousands of regular people have already been incarcerated for expressing their hopes for a brighter future. The imprisoned masses believe the ordinary Zimbabweans are free. The singer's unfreedom is ironically what makes *Njema* a popular musical narrative.

*Njema* refers to Chimoio in Mozambique as a battleground between the Rhodesian Government and the Liberation forces. So ordinary people's thoughts are another Chimoio or alternate location of struggle where possibly new national narratives envisioned by the masses may be formed. As an emblematic picture, the historical Chimoio may help fresh tales of struggle emerge, be assessed, and understood (Young, 1988: 95). *Njema's* musical voices disrupt the police state's planned monological narrative. After colonialism, *Njema* fought precarity (Butler, 2004) and naked living (Agamben, 1998). A fortunate location from which ordinary people's voices may create musical cacophony, according to Winky D. (Depelchin, 2005). According to Attali (1985), musical cacophony discomfits authoritarian ideals. Because music is "birthed chaos and world Music is its antithesis, subversion" (6).

In contrast to the official symbols' bounds, Winky D's aural cacophony articulates a new and alternative space. *Njema's* original tone and voice among a cacophony of official authority decibels is intriguing. According to Attali, music that challenges the *status quo* draws authoritarian governments as well as new musical power sources.

With Winky D, *Njema's* tale reveals an artist whose "place within regular people" (Manase, 2011: 82). These well-known artistic voices may appear like perpetual victims. To show their

life as grievable, suppressed individuals employ grief, says Butler (2010). To the artist's song, the harsh police force has returned the information lost. Winky D's musical voice bemoans a black-ruled government's horrific creative abuse:

*Ndimu mune chigaro chebusungva*  
 [In the mind is where slavery now exists]  
*Chakatirera tachitanangira*  
 [We have forgotten what brought us up]  
*Hatichagone kuti tichiteere*  
 [We cannot listen]  
*Ndamboti ndizame kutsanangura*  
 [I have tried to explain]  
*Ndiri kupa mashoko kumbeveve*

*Njema's* tragedy is that both the people and the police, who serve as the tool, may become insensitive and deaf to the need for social reform. Mbembe (2001) observes that when this occurs, society has reached an inescapable descent down the path of self-immolation. As a result, both the police and the general public may become spiritually depleted. *Njema's* popularity stems from its ability to inform listeners that “the prohibition of certain forms of public grieving itself constitutes the public sphere on the basis of that prohibition” (Butler, 2004: 37), to the point where it is conceivable that “certain losses are not avowed as losses, and violence is de-realized and diffused” in a police state (38).

Winky D investigates and finds archetypal symbols from the Christian Bible through which the experience of liberation for the masses might be realised in his song *Gafa Zvekare*, known by the oppressive Zimbabwe Home Affairs officers as *Ijipita. Ijipita*, a Shona translation of Egypt, reconstructs new popular liberation stories based on the Bible, which most Zimbabweans know. So Winky D uses the Bible's authority and its parables based on tales to re-incarnate the spiritual energies necessary to break free from physical and spiritual enslavement. To project the biblical struggles of Moses and his oppressed flock as analogous to the path that the silenced Zimbabweans would have to take to escape the clutches of a capricious state that sees itself as the law, Winky D could always read the biblical narrative and present it as harmless.

Verse 1 in *Gafa Zvekare* foreshadows positive change, and the musical lyrics demonstrate that nothing stays the same. Existence evolves, bringing with it new degrees of self-awareness that individuals and the collective may employ to combat the fragile nature of life that the ruling classes would want to depict to the masses as natural and immutable. The musical lines of *Gafa Zvekare's* Verse 1 are as follows:

*Pandinomuka mangwanani/ Ndinozvitarisa pagirazi*  
 [When I wake up in the morning, I look myself in the mirror]  
*Hakuna ini arinani/ Mangwana ngaasiyane nanbasi*  
 [No one is better / Tomorrow may be different today]  
*Kutsvaga manake/ Kuti mburi irurame*  
 [Struggling to get good things to keep the family life]  
*Aiwa barisi dambe/ Ndatemba tsoka rega ndifambe*  
 [Its not Funny walk barefooted in search of good life]

*Brisai rima pamberi pangu/ Isai chiedza ndifambe zvangu*

[Remove darkness in front of me and replace it with light, so I continue with my journey]

*Hupenyu ndishande hwangu/ Ndakanda nhanbo ndabvisa shangu*

[Let me work for myself while my body can still allow]

In *Ijipita*, the singer wakes up only to see that life has been made to appear as if it cannot be changed by human agency.

*Ijipita, X 4*

[Egypt]

*Bye bye ndakukanda nhanbo*

[I have defeat poverty and wretchedness]

*Ndakanda Nhanbo Ndabvisa Shangu*

[Because I have moved fast in life]

*Ijipita, X 4*

[Egypt]

*Bye bye ndakukanda nhanbo*

[Bye Bye, I have outwalked, you]

*Canaan tapinda tapinda*

[We are now in Canaan]

*Ijipita, X 4*

[Egypt]

*Canaan tapinda tapinda X 2*

[We are now in Canaan]

*Tavakusiya Musha kufamba mamaira*

[We have moved many kilometres from the homestead]

*Vakomana kuchikaira*

[Boys struggling]

*Tabvunza zviru mberi hakuna adaira*

[None is responding my question on what is in future]

*Totungamirwa nepasi ndipe nbepwe iye*

[Ancestors are looking after us, give me my pouch]

*Zvinodzimba asi rega ndireve/ Ukasadikitira hauseve*

[I will say the painful reality that if you do not sweat you will not make it]

*Tava kusvaga zvakafa zvega/ Kuvhima kweasina uta nemuseve*

[We now scrounge for dead animals like a hunter without a dog]

[Bridge]

*Ndoenda, X 4*

[I am going]

*Ndoenda ndega kusina mbai*

[Going alone where there is no motherly love]

*Ndoenda, X 4*

[I am going]

*Handina mufudzi ndongori hwai*



[I am a sheep without a shepherd]  
*Brisai rima pamberi pangu/ Isai chiedza ndifambe zvangu*  
 [Remove darkness in front of me and replace it with light, so I continue with my  
 journey]  
*Hupenyu ndishande hwangu/ Ndakanda nhanbo ndabvisa shangu*  
 [So, I work for myself, diligently]

[Chorus]  
*Ijipita, X4*  
 [Egypt]  
*Hupenyu makata/ Hausi mutserendende*  
 [Life is an uphill and not a gentle slope]  
*Ukaramba wakavata/ Ndiani achavbara vende?*  
 [Who will close the gap if you keep on sleeping?]  
*Pane vano chimbomira mira/ Ndafunga zano monoteya riva*  
 [There are people who are slow in deciding the course of life]  
*Ndafunga kayambuka ini ndobira dziva*  
 [I have thought of crossing the river]<sup>1</sup>

Desperation for better life is often essential to achieve independence, according to the persona's voice. A lengthy barefoot journey to freedom is desired by the singer/narrator. The song's chorus focuses on fleeing Zimbabwe's political manacles and despotism.

On another level, *Ijipita* may be seen as a single man's attempt to flee the economic tragedies that a military administration has wreaked on the Zimbabwean people. In this example, the word "*dziva*" might relate to South Africa as the end objective, which can only be reached after crossing rivers like the Limpopo, which are infested with voracious crocodiles.

If *Ijipita* was a location of atrocities against the Israelites tormented by Pharaoh in the Bible, then the era following the military takeover in Zimbabwe is represented as a place of bloodshed, bringing darkness into the lives of the people. Police officers are the human vectors of such abuse. In reality, the regime's police and military pose a greater threat to Zimbabweans' rights than an invading foreign army. Music and culture have been militarised in Zimbabwe, as shown in "Songs that Won the Liberation War" (1982).

Mpofu and Tembo warn that the militarization of music has "transferred authority from the actual soldiers to the apparently weak Zimdance-hall artists in Zimbabwe's well-established music business" (2015: 104). However, as witnessed in *Njema*, militarization has resulted in police and troops exploiting the populace on favour of a few rulers wielding unprecedented uncontrollable power. Thus, the "demilitarisation of the public service" has occurred. Rwafa (2019) shows that the actual military personnel has the ability to appropriate this violent symbolical discourse and use it to create chains of mass surveillance in a context where the police state lacks sufficient authority to curb the police's excesses, and the soldiers – whom a regime has manipulated to become its patrons and instruments of torture –, silence and commit atrocities with impunity.

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<sup>1</sup> This song alludes to the Biblical Moses who spent forty years running away from the tyrannical Egyptian Pharaohs with some Israelites, going to Canaan, the promised mythical land of milk, honey and freedom. So, this song seems to be encouraging Zimbabweans to stop the nationalist rulers' tyranny that has settled in Zimbabwe ever since 1980.

According to a review of *Njema* and *Ijipita*, Winky D is not revealed to be part of a network of “enemies of the people”, who want to destabilise government programmes, as the Ministry of Home Affairs considers. Moreover, the two songs include no proof that Winky D utilises careless phrases designed to “incite” a restive public, that does not rely only on popular songs, to make sense of the Zimbabwean police state’s atrocities. Winky D’s *Njema*, on the other side, targets the authoritarian society that terrorises ordinary people. That same Zimbabwe Ministry of Home Affairs describes itself as the authority that distributes cruelty on the population, explaining the song’s appeal.

Intimidation serves many horrible reasons, as stated in the Home Affairs letter to Winky. Artists who promote opinions unacceptable to the police state will not be tolerated (Rwafa<sup>2</sup>, ...: 2). The artist’s song may be sought in musical bazaars, avoiding monetary gain. This is meant to silence prospective listeners who may be unfairly arrested for involvement with the artist’s music’s public atmosphere. Any tool of state violence may re-direct its wrath against those who sent it to execute mass murder as seen in Mapfumo’s prophetic song, *Mapurisa NeMasoja* (Makaudze, 2019). He was deposed by the same police and army that maintained him in power for 37 years.

Winky D did not specify any authority to warrant arrest in *Njema*, and in *Ijipita*, the artist employs a spiritual journey from slavery to liberation as a metaphor for what regular Zimbabweans may achieve. Aside from the creative tactics that allowed the artist to avoid punishment, the songs *Njema* and *Ijipita* rely on a mix of words, voice, and sardonic tone to develop surplus meanings that neither the artist nor the censors could have predicted. Vambe & Vambe notice that some types of creation are popular among society’s underdogs because some songs that demonstrate the ability to elude censorship are marked by:

A combination of the singers’ self-consciousness in deploying words, sounds and voice and the capacity of the listeners to decode music otherwise largely results in subverting official censorship, which in post-independence Zimbabwe attempts to gag musical voices through legislation as well as the selective playing of preferred artists on-air. (2006: 76)

In reality, according to Butler, “what is less certain is whether the sensations of vulnerability and loss have to lead to military aggression and retaliation” (2004: xii).

### **Cultural Ambiguities in Winky’s Songs**

Although I have argued that *Njema* and *Ijipita* present alternate means of changing political moralities in certain progressive dimensions, the possibility of artists being coopted in a musical production cannot be ruled out, especially in art, that strives to portray itself as aesthetics of salvation (Viljoen, 2006: page). Winky D appears to have pandered to the survival of the fittest ethos promoted by strong politicians and those who believe in success at any cost in *PaXimex*, *Madhiri*, for example. The inventive musical voice boasts in the song that its persona does transactions at the Ximex mall. The character enjoys the informalisation of Zimbabwe’s productive sectors. The singer/persona will not invest in the formal economy, which may provide jobs for many people. A talented con artist can trick both other con artists and plain people. This secondary market has distorted the Zimbabwean economy, which is already suffering from a lack of confidence due to botched land reform. A well-regulated economic

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system would create possibilities for individuals to work lives. According to the song's melodic voice, he may deprive many people of the delights of a steady economic life:

*PaXimex, Madhiri*  
[I deal at Ximex (Mall)]  
*Asi handibvume mainvest dbiri*  
[But I do not like formal investment deals]  
*Vanoziva pakuwbara ini ndine zvikiri*  
[They know I am a skilful con man]  
*Ndinotenderedza madinga sevbi*  
[I turn around fools like tyres]  
*Ndakuwbara Mumburo unodzokaChipiri*  
[If I con you on Monday, you will come back on Tuesday]

*Ndikazochinja bhutsu nechikochikari*  
[I conned one in exchange for shoes for a scotch cart]

*Mumbeti akandipa stove ndikamupa hari*  
[I conned a white his/her stove in exchange for a clay pot]  
*Sekuru havachina pekumwa chikari*  
[Grandfather lost his drinking clay pot]  
*Ndokurovera yose pamission kana mari*  
[I am a winner where money is concerned]  
*Ibhi chipo change chakabva kuna Mwari*  
[This my God-given gift]

For example, he swindled an old guy out of his stove by pawning his grandfather's clay pot and boasts about his financial success in the words above. In *Song of Lavino* (1966), Okot P'Bitek captures the battle for a piece of the national pie that is already shrinking due to corruption, bad government, and cronyism. In that song, a powerful clique of individuals benefits from national independence, not the collective. In *Song of Lavino*, *Madhiri* compares independence to a fallen bull buffalo, which is honoured in *PaXimex*.

And the hunters  
Rush to it with drawn knives,  
Sharp shining knives  
For carving the carcass.  
And if your chest  
Is small, bony and weak  
They push you off,  
And if your knife is blunt  
You get the dung on your elbow,  
You come home empty-handed  
And the dogs bark at you.

The bulk of individuals at *PaXimex, Madhiri* are compared to people with “little, bony, and weak” chests, and these people have “blunt” talents, so they receive “dung” on their “elbows,” “leave home empty-handed,” and “dogs growl at them”. The police and troops in *Njema* are deployed to maintain this aggressive language of hostility towards fellow compatriots on behalf of the small class of individuals who profit from stealing national resources.

However, the imagery from *Song of Lawino*, that depicts the stomping of the defenceless, as well as the pictures of a successful, individualistic con artist in *PaXimex, Madhiri*, who deceives many people into believing in a brighter future, might be seen as exaggerated. It is an irony that poor people desire to be like a con artist or a swindler. In my understanding of the song *PaXimex, Madhiri*'s contradictory representation of the con man's agency, the voice and tone of the song do not appear to be wholly concerned with openly denouncing the persona's voice. The song's music and tone allow the audience to understand the persona's sheer perseverance, resourcefulness, and vigour in the face of hardship.

*Vanbu Vakuru* improves Winky D's popularity. The song's culture of self-congratulation is founded on harsh socioeconomic realities. The impact of big people outweighs the impact of little individuals. Winky D appears to be aware of the difficult path musicians must travel to obtain popular recognition. In Zimbabwe, *Vanbu Vakuru*, meaning huge people, denotes ambition. Here are some lyrics:

*Vanbu Vakuru*

*Tiri Vanbu Vakuru*

[We are the big people]

*Tatova vanbu vakuru*

[We are now big people]

*Nzara yacho ndeye vanbu vakuru*

[This is a big man's hunger]

*Usadberere vanbu vakuru*

[Do not underestimate big people]

*Ndovhura maround kicks mhere voridza*

[They cry when I show round kicks and violence]

*Vasikana vanondibonzwa vachindimanikidza*

[Women pull and force themselves on me]

*Hanzwi wakapenga unokwikwidza*

[They say I am a winning competitor]

*Usatambe, nevanbu Vakuru*

[Don't play with big people] (Culture of violence: *Dzvikama*)

While the urge to achieve great things drives even tiny persons to want to succeed in an unequal cultural and economic environment, *Vanbu Vakuru*'s cravings for success are also determined by the rough edges left by certain people's human behaviour. To become a huge person, one must be aggressive. Furthermore, in order to attain the rank of 'munhu mukuru', one must 'other' and stereotype the female gender, which is shown in the song as weak, frail, susceptible, and afar objectified as future prostitutes. Women do not want to be *Vanbu Vakuru*; instead, they are depicted as parasites who struggle over a guy who has evolved into 'munhu mukuru'.

## AIC

Their stories appear to fit numerous inclinations in popular music. Winky D's songs, such as *Com 2 Tek Ora* (2009), mix Shona, slang, and English, appealing to a broad audience. This song captures the diversity of life in Zimbabwean townships and other urban ghettos (Manase, 2010: 86). Diverse life affirmations, challenges, and mocks may motivate the artist. Winky D's songs encourage cultural contamination as a pre-requisite for rich metaphoric content and structure in dancehall. That the Zimbabwean government cannot use intimidation to stifle Winky D's songs is a sign of creative syncretism. Winky D and his songs became heroes, underdogs, and villains in Zimbabwe. It is a relationship of reliance and enmity between singer and music (Gilroy, 1993).

### Conclusion

These songs have been regarded as having popular sensibilities that appeal to the cultural imaginaries of individuals who hear Winky D's lyrics, voice, and tone in music. The paper defined 'popular' as a cultural value derived from combining seemingly opposing tales. The songs *Njema* and *Ijipita* were studied in depth, because the Zimbabwe Ministry of Home Affairs considered the lyrics were a direct attack on the state. According to *Njema's* analysis, the singer or musical voice of the persona lamented the loss of physical, spiritual, and mental freedom to a frantic political regime that continues to abuse police and soldiers by sending them to commit state-sanctioned atrocities against the very citizens that the Mnangagwa regime claims to represent. The two songs portrayed fear hierarchies entrenching themselves at the expense of people's freedom. He criticises the culture of terror in which the populace dread police, who dread the country's leader, who dreads a military coup that would topple him. The vocalist and musical voice of the character indicated in several songs that powerful forces may invade the artists' mind.

Winky D used Shona, urban slang, and English in certain songs to dispute any one language's claim to cultural dominance in popular culture. This linguistic/cultural/ideological contamination is the condition of possibility of the identities of the public sensibility inherent in dancehall music in Zimbabwe, according to Winky D. Simultaneous multiplicity of narrative structures undermines authoritarian certitudes. A single narrative is thus avoided, whereas pluralising narratives imply a preceding criticism of dominant narratives. This is where Winky D's songs' lasting worth of popular resistance lies.

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