

Good humour at the president's expense

By [Philip Amiola](#)

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I have observed with some degree of amusement, the wave of criticism and outrage that greeted the ill-timed ignition of president Goodluck Jonathan's 2015 political campaign machinery. The campaign message - One good term deserves another - is especially humorous.

Although Mr President has dissociated himself from the presidential campaign posters which recently flooded Abuja, a lot of frayed nerves still need to be calmed. Our president seems to have a special knack for rubbing us the wrong way, wittingly or unwittingly, and this unusual trait has no doubt enhanced his "popularity" with Nigerians especially the younger generation. Dr Goodluck Jonathan's popularity is such that he has become the butt of several jokes and unsavoury comments in various circles, especially on social media - and that is very disheartening.

Nigerians are indeed a special breed of people. We have seen so much gloom and doom that we have learnt to see the humour in every situation, regardless of how bad it is. And that is good for us as it has been proven both by ancient philosophy and modern medical science that a happy heart is good medicine and a cheerful mind works healing. It however becomes a problem when we make ourselves happy at the expense of someone else - and that is what we do when we deride our president. It is amazing that some people would actually go to great lengths as to deliberately circulate text, cartoons, animated pictures, videos and internet-based applications for no other reason than to make a joke of the president, and in some cases, his dear wife and other public officials.

Jonathan's reputation has been so battered that his cronies have resorted to Google adverts and other outrageous strategies to redeem his image in public space. I have often found myself assuming the role of an advocate especially on Facebook, when these vituperative statements and jokes become so vitriolic that I simply can't stand them. Now, I know that I'll incur the wrath of some persons by taking this position but I believe that our president and other public officials deserve our honour and respect - and this is not contingent on their performance. We must understand that we live in a world that is governed by universal laws and what goes around comes around.

Contemporary history in our nation has shown that given the opportunity, the most vociferous critics will not necessarily perform better. Am I advocating for passivity? The answer is an emphatic No! I believe that we must hold the government accountable and express our grievances whenever necessary. But what if we explore more constructive means to air our views and vent our opinions? Do we always have to drag someone's name in the mud each time we have to express our dissatisfaction with their actions or inactions?

It will do us a world of good individually and as a nation if each of us recognises that behind the cloak of public office is a human being like ourselves who is as vulnerable as we are, to malicious words and vindictive remarks. We may not like the

president, but that does not detract from the fact that we ought to be civil when addressing him or any human being for that matter. Someone else's action or inaction is no excuse to throw caution to the winds, breaking ourselves against universal laws in the process. Each Nigerian must learn to think, speak and act right even when the other fellow is wrong. If we must have a better Nigeria, we must have better Nigerians.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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