

HOW TO BE A POLITICIAN

The biggest mistake any person interested in politics can make is to apply rules generally applicable to regular human beings to Nigeria. Often, Nigerians in the diaspora wishing to return home to enter politics assume that just because they are black or have a green passport, they can fit right in. This is a manual for persons hoping to avoid embarrassment as they enter politics in Nigeria.

God

This is the first and most important thing. A Nigerian politician must understand how to tap into and use God, both in times of peace and times of trouble. This is because with God, all things are possible – from the relocation of funds from public coffers into your private accounts to making sure that you get more votes from a polling unit than the number of human beings who are registered to vote. The latter is not strange. Do not let anyone make you feel bad about it. Did Jesus not take five loaves of bread and two fish and multiply it until it could feed five thousand people in Bethsaida?

A good Nigerian politician knows how to use God for protection. So, for example when you want the people not to revolt against you, remind people that you were sent by God. Declare that you could never have entered office without God leading you by the hand and personally giving you the seat.

Those who voted – including those who adjusted figures and thumb-printed on ballots – are nothing but biros in the hand of God. They should know that no one gets power unless by God’s permission. This will make anyone afraid of questioning the authority of God.

God is also important when you have just won an election and you need to blackmail the out-rigged opponent. Give an acceptance speech saying that you thank God for giving you the victory; say that you cannot question God who decided that you were the only person fit for that office. Your opponent will feel bad and let it go. God is great.

However, you need to know when not to use God. If you have a task that you doubt you will be able to perform, say, ‘I will do everything humanly possible’, to remind them that although God is personally involved in giving you power, they should not be disappointed if you fail. Because you are only human.

Branding

Your hustle as a politician involves a lot of branding. Forget the elitist social media people who make fun of politicians who brand bags of rice. Those people do not vote. They sit in Abuja, Lagos and Port Harcourt with their iPads and expensive smartphones, making noise. Some of them do not even live in Nigeria. The real Nigerians who vote, not only do not mind, they expect it. They expect to receive items like mint sweets, coffee mugs, t-shirts, small bags of rice, beans, flour, sugar or salt, exercise books, pens, phones, bottled water (or sachet water depending on how poor your constituents are) and rechargeable lanterns branded with your name and/or photo.

The Godfather

Unless you ARE the godfather, you always NEED to have a godfather. If you do not realise this then you are standing on slippery ground. The identification of an appropriate godfather is the beginning of political wisdom. Show your loyalty by donating money at events organised by your godfather or his children and close relatives. If your godfather's child is getting married, you must make sure your large donation is seen and acknowledged. If your godfather is running for office you must sponsor billboards with his large photo and your small one in the corner where it says "Courtesy: Someone-whose-loyalty-needs-to-be-noticed."

If you ever meet your godfather's wife or child at a shop, whether in Nigeria or abroad, make sure you pay for whatever they buy. Even if they say no, insist. Beg if you must. Tell them if they do not let you pay, you will kill yourself.

Pay for full page colour ads in newspapers on their birthdays and call them a blessing to all of humankind.

A godfather can be the blessing to your hustle or the tool of your downfall. Never ever allow anyone to print your photo in the same size as that of your godfather on the same billboard or newspaper ad. Your photo must always be smaller and beneath that of the godfather.

Social Media

Now I know I have said those people on social media are good-for-nothing. I insist that in real voting terms, they are useless. But it is important to have people who fight for you in the media. In Nigeria there is no good or evil. There is only for and against. An evil person is one that has no one fighting for

them. There is poverty and unemployment in the land, so getting people to post tweets and Facebook posts for you is not very expensive. Many will even do it for free. Avoid those hustlers who call themselves social media consultants. They just know how to blow grammar. All you need are motivated guys who have internet connection and the hope that when their oga's hustle is blessed, it will reach them. It is these ones who will identify any bad thing said about you and attack appropriately.

Scandals

When a real scandal happens, like say, foreign police catch you with stolen money, or people identify you as a sponsor of terrorism, the best thing to do is nothing. It does not matter how bad it is. Those who support you do not need your explanation, and those who demand an explanation will never support you. Plus, Nigerians have the shortest memories among human beings worldwide. Just be patient, and they will forget everything. It is more important to forget than to forgive. Of what good is forgiveness if people can remember the wrong that was done? That is why Nigeria is such a great place for politics. Yesterday's murderer can become tomorrow's statesman.

Catch Phrases

There are phrases that every Nigerian politician must use. I will give you a list which is by no means exhaustive:

Dastardly act

Campaign of calumny

Nascent democracy

Gratitude to God Almighty

All hands are on deck

I have set up a committee

I remain committed

God (As in God-sent, God-willing, God's grace etc)

Shame

Do you sometimes feel shame when you are caught doing something wrong? If the answer is yes, then you are not ready for Nigerian politics. Can you look at a crowd when you are caught with your fingers in a pot of soup, and tell them, while licking your fingers, that in fact, you have never entered a kitchen in your life, talk less of a pot of soup? No? Then you are not ready for Nigerian politics. A good Nigerian politician who is caught on camera stuffing wads of dollar notes into his cap, knows how to say 'it wasn't me' without blinking. Nigerian supporters, especially those of your tribe or religion, do not need evidence of your innocence. Once they support you, they themselves will come up with reasons why you cannot be guilty.

Religion

Do you have doubts about the existence of God? Keep it to yourself. If you have a Christian background, find a few churches and start attending. Go to Jerusalem. Take a photo there and hang it in your office. If you have a Muslim background, then make sure you are visible at least once a week at Friday prayers. Go for the Hajj. It does not matter that when you are on holiday in London or America you enjoy bacon and lots of alcohol. Appearance is everything. Nigerians would rather a fornicating, lying, thieving Christian or Muslim, than a clean atheist. Keep your other beliefs to yourself but claim one of the two foreign religions.

It is important to always have a good friend of the other acceptable religion. That friend will come in handy when people accuse you of favouring only people of your own religion or of being a fanatic. If you can't find a friend, then have employees of the other religion, like a cook or driver. Otherwise, sleep with women of the other religion. That way, if someone says you are a fanatic, just say, if I hated the other religion, would I have slept with their women?

Caps/Hats

You may take this for granted, but close your eyes for a minute and think of a successful Nigerian politician who doesn't wear a cap? When was the last time you saw the bare head of a Nigerian president? I don't know what it is about a cap, but it cannot be a coincidence that everyone, from our founding fathers to the current destructive fathers, wears a cap/hat. Better to be safe than sorry. Find a cap or hat and wear it often.

Fitness

Especially if you plan to be a legislator at the state or federal level, it is important to be fit and strong for the occasional fights that will break out. You don't want to be the one who ends up in hospital after a fight in a House of Assembly. Everyone has a phone with a camera these days and it would be a tragedy if you were caught on camera unable to fight back. Sometimes also our democracy means that you may need to break maces or climb over parliamentary gates. If you are currently unfit, register in a gym or start doing yoga.

Follow these tips and I assure you, you will be properly positioned for God to bless your political hustle.