



**Obafemi Awolowo University,
Ile Ife, Osun State
Nigeria**

**2019 Faculty of Arts
Distinguished Lecture**

**THE NIGERIAN FILM AND THEATRE INDUSTRY:
A PANACEA FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND YOUTHS' UNEMPLOYMENT**

Delivered by
Dele ODULE

Tuesday, 2nd July, 2019.



PROFESSOR EYITOPÉ OGUNBODEDE
(Vice-Chancellor, OAU, Ile-Ife)



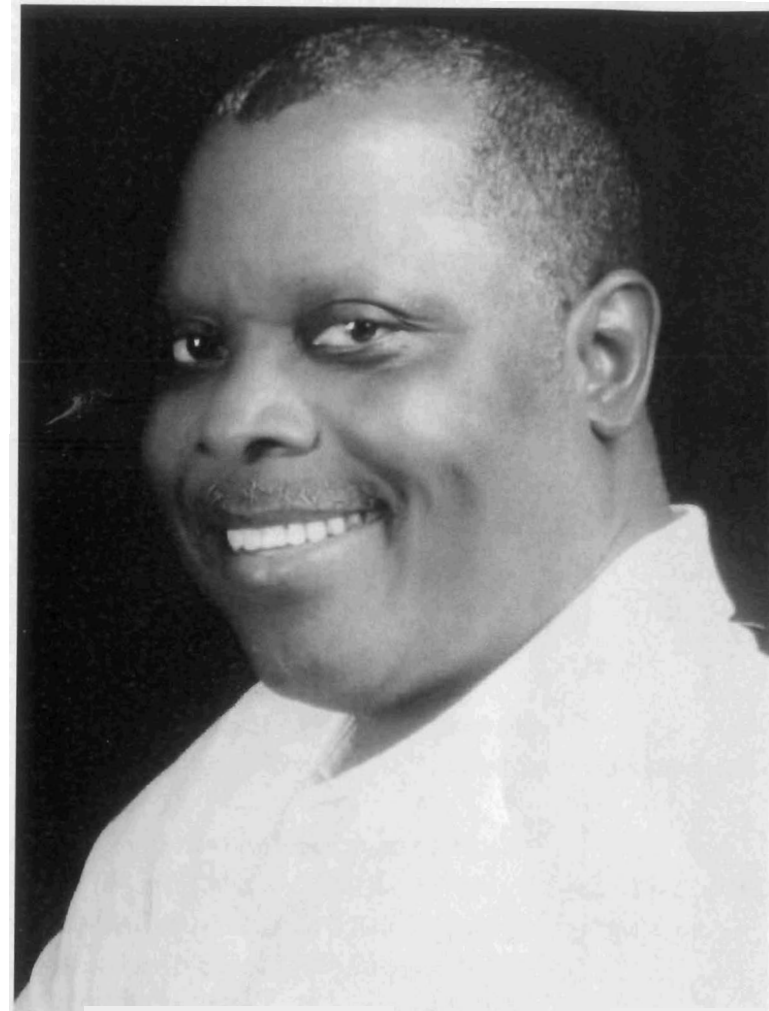
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**OMOBA DAVID ODUBAMIDELE ODULE
Guest Lecturer**



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Protocols...

The Vice Chancellor, Obafemi Awolowo University,

Prof. Eyitayo Ogunbodede,

The Deputy Vice-Chancellors,

The Registrar and other Principal Officers of the University,

The Dean of Faculty of Arts, O.A.U.,

Prof. Gbemisola Remi Adeoti,

Deans of other faculties here present,

Heads of Departments in the Faculty of Arts,

Other Heads of Department here present,

Directors of Institutes and Centres in O.A.U.,

Chairmen of Union bodies within the university,

President and other officers of the Student union Government of
O.A.U.,

My colleagues in the film industry, in particular:

President, Theatre Arts and Motion Pictures Producers Association
of Nigeria (TAMPAN), Otunba Bolaji Amusan and his team,

Representatives of Ibadan Film Circle (IFC),

Gentlemen of the Press,

Students of OAU here present- Greatttt Ife!

Gentlemen of the fourth estate of the realm,

Other invited guests here present,

Ladies and gentlemen.



PREAMBLE

Let me start by thanking the leadership of the Faculty of Arts of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife for deeming it fit to consider me as the guest speaker for this lecture, which I understand to be an annual event. Considering the past lecturers of this series which include High Chief Adebayo Akande, an Ibadan foremost and founder of Splash FM, Ibadan, Governor Rotimi Akeredolu of Ondo State, Governor Seriake Dickson of Bayelsa State and the very eloquent former Honourable Minister for Information, Culture and Tourism, Alhaji Lai Muhammad, my choice as the guest lecturer for this year came to me as an opportunity to make a statement and a rare privilege which I have not taken for granted. It is my sincere hope that at the end of this lecture, all of us must have added in one way or the other to our book of knowledge.

I wish to also crave the indulgence of this august gathering, and in particular the organizers of this event, to forgive me for slightly altering the original title of this lecture (The Nigeria Film Industry and Economic Development: Options for the Youths) which for me, was not a through reflection of what this gathering is all about as it did not capture both aspects of my trade. As a thorough-bred practitioner whose professional sojourn spans over forty years, I am as compassionate to theatre as I am to film productions. So I had no choice than to re-coin the title to include both film and theatre productions and we now have THE NIGERIAN FILM AND THEATRE INDUSTRY: A PANACEA FOR

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND YOUTHS' UNEMPLOYMENT. I believe this will afford me more opportunity to do absolute justice to the lecture which is ultimately aimed at promoting healthy exchange of ideas and smooth interaction between 'the town and the gown', and bring into being a new body of knowledge towards building an economically developed and politically stable nation where all can realize their potentials.

While ruminating on how to make the event of today a memorable one through my lecture, more so that about 80% of this gathering is expected to be seasoned scholars and those who have made their living through their pens, the words of Socrates came to my mind:

"I cannot teach anybody anything, I can only make them think"

I also came to the conclusion that the organizers must have taken a queue from that German theorist, Albert Einstein when he said;

"Any fool can know. The point is to understand".

As I try to take you on this short course which is purportedly coming from an unfamiliar terrain, I urge you all for a moment to put off your toga of statesmanship and assume the temporary congregation under my sacerdotal priesthood. For this period while I stand before you, remember this from ese ifa and Yoruba adage; *"Ologbon kan o ta koko omi seti aso, omooran kan o ka iyepe ile, awon alangba won rin debi ile gbe pekun si, boo gbon titi waa b'ologbon wo n niwaju, boo m'oran titi, waa b'omoran to ju e lo.*



"A kii dagba koja ogbon". (It is never too late to learn)

INTRODUCTION

Before us today is a topic that has unconsciously bound us together as a nation, as a race, as an ethnic group and as a community. It is also a topic that has directly or indirectly provided a veritable alternative for millions of Nigerian job seeking youths for more than two decades. Day in, day out, the influx of Nigerian youths into the film and theatre industry has given a leeway to the protracted "cancer" of joblessness that has bedeviled Nigeria since her independence. The Nigerian film and theatre industry, together with arts in general is the only sector that has provided and that can still provide quick and instant jobs for teeming Nigerian youths including those whose training are in other disciplines like earth sciences, technology, law, education and medical sciences to mention just a few.

As a reference point, my own first post secondary school training was in teaching, and I once made a living from it as a Grade II teacher. My university education was in Mass Communication, and obviously, all I have become today is through the theatre and film industry. In the last 40 years or thereabout, I have earned a living, I have acquired properties, built a house (and I will still build more though), bought cars, trained children in the universities (and still training them), enjoyed fame and goodwill, traveled far and near, and all have been through no other profession than the theatre and film industry.

To go a bit further, in my small dance and drama group which is named *Dele Odule Presentation*, there are vibrant youths who had their original training in other professions and fields which range from mass communication, sciences and the Nigerian Police Force. Many of them do not have any other source of income other than what they earn from their practice of dance and theater in the troupe. Also, in the just concluded African Drums Festival in Abuokuta, I met a group of exhibitionists who have become authorities in the work of arts, and none of them is either a fine artist or a theatre artiste. In fact, one of them is an alumnus of this university with a Bachelors degree in Economics.

Also, among my professional colleagues whose professional training was not in theatre arts but who have not only made a living through this industry but have risen to limelight and stardom, the list is endless; Femi Adebayo is a lawyer, though from the theatre family. Kunle Afolayan was a banker. Omotola Jalade, Nkem Owoh also known as Usofia studied Electronic and Electrical Engineering, Dr. Akin Sofoluwe who is also a veteran studied Agric and many in their class are some of the Nigerian screen gods and goddesses who have had their degrees in different fields other than theatre arts. I therefore make bold say it that with my age and experience in this industry, I have not seen any profession or discipline that is capable of providing jobs or vocation for the teeming Nigerian youths like theatre and film industry has done over the years.



Before I go further, let me quickly call our attention to something that has always bothered me as a member of the town in this profession. This is in regard to the mode of training of students from the theatre arts department across our universities and colleges of education and what becomes of them after graduation. I have noticed that there have not been adequate industrial training for them why they are yet in school, and if there is at all, the duration of such industrial training may not be enough for the students to gather all that they need to, in terms of knowledge. This accounts for the reason many of them become apprentices again even after spending four years (some, six years) in the university. While it is evident that some fields of theatre, like directing, make-up, costuming, acting, set designing, lighting, etc are thought in the university, some specialized fields of film production like editing, scripting, cinematography, sound recording, lighting and even directing for film are not taught in the university and require some special training before you can be grounded in it.

In this topic- (THE NIGERIAN FILM AND THEATRE INDUSTRY: A PANACEA FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND YOUTHS' UNEMPLOYMENT) are three key words: (1) The Nigerian Film and Theatre industry (2) Economic Development, and (3) Youth Unemployment. The no 1 is a proviso to the last 2. Let us break down the key words in the topic as we go deeper into the lecture.

THE NIGERIAN FILM AND THEATRE INDUSTRY

The word film, also called a movie means a recorded sequence of images displayed on a screen at a rate sufficiently fast to create the appearance of motion. Wikipedia defines a film or a motion picture, moving picture, or photoplay, as a series of still images that, when shown on a screen, create the illusion of moving images. This optical illusion causes the audience to perceive continuous motion between separate objects viewed in rapid succession. The process of filmmaking is both an art and an industry.

Theatre on the other hand, has its origins in the Greek word theatron which originally means a place for looking. It has advanced over the years to mean a collaborative form of 'fine art' that uses live performers, typically actors or actresses, to present the experience of a real or imagined event before a live audience in a specific place, often called a stage. The performers may communicate this experience to the audience through combinations of gesture, speech, song, music, and dance. Please take note that some elements of arts are very conspicuous in this definition; from the word 'fine art' to 'performers', to 'stage' (usually constructed by carpenters). Then, to 'speech' (by communicators or orators), to music (by musicians), and lastly to dance. The field of theatre is all encompassing that leaves not profession behind in the world of arts in general

While theatre may be referred to both a place as well as to a



particular form of sense perception (according to its origin, theatron), or a building, an activity ('going to' or 'doing' theatre), an institution and more narrowly, an art form (which can also be regarded as a drama), we will narrow our discussion here down to this last meaning. Often times, theatre is used as synonym for drama or performance as we find in the names of some of our university departments: Like we have in this university O.A.U. and U.N.N. Nsuka- Department of Dramatic Arts, Department of Performing Arts in Unilorin and O.O.U., Department of Theatre and Media Arts in Federal University, Oye (FUOYE) and in some cases, a combination of both theatre and performance like A.B.U. Zaria, had chosen to do (Department of Theatre and Performing Arts). Other notable universities like U.I., UNICAL, UNILAG, UNIABUJA and many others have stuck to the name theatre as the name of their department. Only LASU went a bit further by adding music to theirs and named their department; Department of Theatre Arts and Music. All these are pointers to the fact that theatre is an inextricable and a key aspect of the art and the source from which many other aspects take their tributaries.

However, theatre and the film go together. They are an inseparable duo and trying to separate them is akin to separating a Siamese twins who are conjoined in the brain. It is the modernization of theatre that brought about the film to give a "repeat experience" or "*awotunwo*" (watch and watch again) as the Yorubas will say. Before the advent of film productions, the

experience of theatre can only last in your memory and imagination, except you go back again to the theatre to watch it again, provided it is being performed again.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

By definition, Economic development is the process by which a nation improves the economic, political, and social well-being of its people. Simply put, it is the process whereby simple, low-income national economies are transformed into modern industrial economies. The term has been used frequently by economists, politicians, and others to describe how a country has fared economically. The context of how a primitive economy can evolve into a sophisticated and prosperous one is the reason the issues of economic development are discussed. An online News Magazine, MBN describes economic development as the process by which people in a country become wealthier, healthier, better educated, and enjoy quality housing. What becomes of a country years after her existence depends on her economic development.

Over the years, economic development of any given country is a function of the purchasing power of its citizens measured in GDP per capital. That is, what each citizens lives on per day. And ultimately, what a country's citizen lives on per day depends on the measures put in place by the government to get every citizens employed. Or simply put, the amount of employment



available for the working class (youth). If there are no readily available jobs or vocation for the teeming youths (like the case in Nigeria now), it will be tantamount to low GDP and poor economic growth, or like we were told recently, economic recession. So once youths are employed, the economy of the country will be consequently developed.

As we go further into this lecture, we shall see how the film and theatre industry has helped in developing the economy of Nigeria. This became evident when many other alternatives available through the white collar jobs had failed and theatre and the film industry became the only 'panacea' for economic development and youth unemployment.

THE ERAS OF THE NIGERIA FILM

According to some school of thoughts, the Nigerian motion picture industry is often categorized into four main eras, namely the Colonial Era (the period between early and mid 20th century) Golden Era (1950s to early 1980s), Video Film Era (late 1980s to mid 2010s) and the emerging New Nigeria Cinema (mid 2010s till present). While I am very cautious of the fact that this lecture is not all about the History of Nigerian theatre and film industry, we will zero in our discussion on the last three eras which are only the eras Nigerian practitioners participated and still participate in the practice, production and marketing of the trade themselves.

THE GOLDEN AGE AND THE INITIAL STIGMA

The Golden era or Golden age of the Nigerian film industry was the period theatre and television productions were simultaneously in vogue in Nigeria. That was the period I sincerely see as the beginning of Nigerian theatre and film industry. To start with, whatever we call the film industry today started as theatre, not only in Nigeria, but all over the world. In Nigeria however, the golden era, which was the advent of travelling theatre popularly known as "*alarinjo*" did not go without some form of hostilities and we will not be fair on this present generation if we do not give them a hint of the stigma that was bequeathed on the Nigerian theatre at the very beginning. Or better still, this generation will not be fair on us if all that they care to see now is only the roses in our very admirable and enviable industry, not minding the fact that the bed of roses was with thorns and it was through perseverance and courage that the roses they now see today was plucked from thorns with blood stained fingers. It is important to sing it to their earring like the melody of a folktale, that there is no glory without a story, and that the beautiful picture of the film and theatre industry that they see and admire today was once greeted with stigma. The *Kola Oyewos*, the *Adebayo Salamis*, the *Jide Kosokos*, the *Lanre Hassans*, the *Idowu Philips*, and many others like *Deji Aderemi*, *Samson Eluwole*, *Fausat Balogun* (*Madam Saje*), *Joke Muyiwa*, *Yinka Quadri*, *Kayode Olaiya* (*Aderupoko*), *Taiwo Hassan* (*Ogogo*), *Segun Remi* (*Kanran*), and the *Dele Odules* they see today were once mocked and tagged jobless men.



Early in the life of Nigerian theatre, no child born of noble parenthood (literary meaning "*omo ti won ba bi ire*" in Yoruba) dared not venture into theatre. It was erroneously believed that only children without future would ever attempt to venture into theatre. This accounted for the reason theatre leaders married as many wives as possible since parents never wanted to leave their children willingly. Also, any child whose ambition was uncompromising and who was resolute in his or her desire to join a theatre group would resolve to pick one between his family and the theatre group he/she wished to join. A story was told by my friend, Professor Rasaki Ojo Bakare of how he absconded from home in Aramoko Ekiti and ran to Jimoh Aliu and Hubert Ogunde in order to enable him learn the robes of theatre. His own case was one out of many cases of such incidents. Many others simply went AWOL in pursuit of theatre practice.

Some scholars such as J. A. Adedeji, Biodun Jeyifo, Tunji Azeez and a host of others who have written about the Nigerian theatre postulated that Alarinjo travelling theatre of the Yoruba evolved from egungun cult, and my personal conclusion from this postulation is that, venturing into theatre practice by young men and women of that time was akin to egungun followers and was tantamount to constituting the same social nuisance that egungun followers constituted. You will agree with me that in those days following egungun was one of the most unwelcomed pastimes of young men and women of the time by their parents. Once it was egungun time, children (especially boys), and youths

would stop being useful at home as they would follow masquerades anywhere they went. Parents would have to run errands themselves. Some of us who were privileged to grow up in the rural communities cannot recount the number of lashes we took for following egungun at the time our parents needed us most. The name, '*omo eyin egungun*' did not just mean 'an egungun follower, but it connotes a 'useless child'. It was not a good name for a child to be called by his parents.

So the scenarios of '*omo elere*' and '*omo eyin egungun*' were viewed the same way by the parents of that time, especially the elites among them. Both acts were seen like a monkey at the back of a pick-up vehicle and the result would never bring any benefit, as the general believe is that '*obo kii jere leyin oko*' (meaning the monkey stands to gain nothing from following the pick-up vehicle). It took the grace of God and share providence for the many of us who were rejected at home for venturing into theatre to scale the huddle of hostility and stigma to become authorities that we are today. Like every beginning, it was a rough, challenging, and very tortuous journey to where we are today. In a manner that Nelson Mandela had to sum up his struggle in his autobiography, it was indeed for us, 'a long walk to freedom'.

Now after weathering the storm that raged like 'Stephen King's Storm of the Century', the Nigerian theatre industry became an admirable venture that people stopped looking down on. It was not only a platform to promoting and exporting our rich culture,



but a veritable tool for teaching morality among our young ones and most importantly, a job creating avenue for our teeming youths and young graduates. Veterans like *Chief Dr. Hubert Adedeji Ogunde, Akin Ogungbe, Moses Olaiya Adejumo, Oyin Adejobi, Kola Ogunmola, Duro Ladipo, Segun Olubukun, Ayinla Olumegbon*, and a host of few others dominated the scenes in the 50s, 60s, and 70s, and these are the ones I refer to as the first generation artistes of modern Nigeria. They were not only veteran artistes, but they were group leaders under whom many other professionals rose up. Theatre became commercialized as they performed in schools, colleges, universities and occasions and they made a living from it. That was the time theatre was seen more as a vocation rather than a pastime. Every group member was earning his or her living through the proceeds of theatre shows.

Then came the epoch of television productions and the south west was also the first to hit the ground running. With the birth of Africa's first television station WNTV which was commissioned on October 31, 1959 by the then Premiere of Western Region, *Chief Obafemi Awolowo*. Nigerian artistes started appearing on the television. That was the period the likes of *Adebayo Faleti* (who also obviously belonged to the class of the first generation but was not a prominent face due to his civil service job with WNTV/WNBC) came to the scene. Apart from the fact that he was one of the main harrow heads behind the production of many television plays in the 60s and the 70s, his theatre group, *Egbe*

Alebiosu which was first headed by *Olanrewaju Adepoju* (a foremost poet) and later *Tubosun Odunsi* performed *pari passu* with the existing groups of the time.

After Nigeria's independence in 1960, the cinema business rapidly expanded, and new cinema houses were established. As a result, Nigerian content in theatres increased in the late 1960s into the 1970s, especially productions from Western Nigeria, owing to theatre pioneers mentioned above transitioning into the big screen. That was also the time that recorded mass exodus of managers and prominent group members during many breakaways that shook the theatre industry to its very foundations. It was from this exodus that we had second generation group leaders like *Lere Paimo, Jimoh Aliu, Adeyemi Afolayan (Ade-Love) Tubosun Odunsi, Ojo Ladipo, Ayox Arisekola, Ishola Ogunsola, Ola Omonitan* and a host of many others too numerous to mention. As a matter of fact we cannot exhaust all that we have on the history of Nigerian theatre in this lecture. This will be a topic for another day.

Then with the premier of the first ever Nigerian film 'Kongi Harvest' (written by Wole Soyinka) in Washington D.C. 1972, Nigerian film and theatre industry had come to stay. Each stage of this development came with its benefit of providing jobs and vocations for all that were involved in it. As at early 80s, Nigerian theatre had metamorphosed into a fully fledged theatre and film industry. Several television productions had already adorned



our television screens at the time. This was closely complemented by celluloid films which were in hot competition among theatre leaders of that time. *Ola Balogun, Ade Love, Hubert Ogunde, Baba Sala, Awada Kerikeri* had already produced more than one celluloid film by the middle of 1980.

After several fairly successful films, Wale Adenuga's Papa Ajasco (1984) one of the first Nigerian Blockbusters, reportedly grossing about ₦61,000 (approximately ₦21.5 million in 2017) in three days. A year later, Moses Olaiya's Mosebolatan (1985) also grossed ₦107,000 (approximately ₦44.2 million in 2017) in five days. The 1980s was also the period of major boom in the television industry, with several books from notable authors being adapted into television plays and series. In this wise, *D. O. Fagunwa's Igbo Olodumare*, (adapted into a television play by *Jimoh Aliu*), *Adebayo Faleti's Fere-Bi-Ekun*, *Akinwumi Isola's Efunsetan Aniwura* (adapted into a television play and later, a celluloid film by *Ishola Ogunsola*), *J. F. Odunjo's Kuye* (adapted into a television play by *Oyin Adejobi*) and many others quickly come to mind. Many of these television productions were later released on video and as a result, a small scale informal video trade developed, which led to the emergence of the Video boom in the 1990s as we shall later see in the course of this paper.

You will agree with me that the boom of television plays/series and celluloid films in Nigeria came with some goodwill for not only the Nigerian artistes who were the direct beneficiaries of the

venture, but also for those who were making their quick cash during the recording, post productions and exhibitions of such films. Those high figure proceeds from the blockbusters like Papa Ajasco and Mosebolatan did not translate to fortunes only for the producers but also provided jobs for many teeming unemployed youths; from the artistes, to the cameramen, to the editors, to the cinema hall workers and many other beneficiaries. I recall vividly how box office boys, volunteer sales boys and girls, casual stage workers and even ticket racketeers made money during cinema exhibitions of films at National Theatre Lagos, Cultural Centre Ibadan, Cultural Centre, Abeokuta, Adegbemile hall, Akure and many other cinemas in Nigeria.

THE HOME VIDEO BOOM

At this juncture, it is important to note that during the golden age of the Nigerian film industry, much was not done to sustain theatre anymore. The world had begun to look in the direction of business rather than entertainment. Nigerian practitioners in particular, had practically abandoned stage performances which gave them peanuts for television dramas and films which did not only give quick cash and put foods on their tables, but which also gave them popularity. To me one good thing that the twilight of the golden era gave us that remains outstanding till today, was that for you as an actor to feature in a film or television production, you must belong to a group and have a direct boss. You could never come from the moon and pick up a role.



Later on in the late 1980s, the Golden Age began to face a major gradual decline largely due to many factors. Some of those factors include reduction in the value of Naira, high cost of production of celluloid films (many producers had to sell off their property to produce a film), lack of finance and marketing support, lack of standard film studios and production equipment in Nigeria, among many other factors. As the Nigerian film industry was wallowing in this decline, then came the era of the video boom known as the Home Video Era.

The home video era was a period in Nigerian cinema from the late 1980s to mid 2010s when the Nigerian films were typically produced, using affordable video format. It emerged from the after the downturn and decline of the Golden Era. The word 'home video' emanated from the concept of staying at home to watch films, in contrast to films of the Golden Age which were watched at the movie theatres. Before the advent of this home video era, many of the television productions produced in the 80 often found their ways to VHS through mass reproduction, thus giving birth to small scale informal video mart. It then dawned on the producers and distributors at Alaba and Idumota markets to adopt and improve on this method to invent the film industry which was already facing a major decline at this time. Obviously, production of celluloid films was already put to rest and the big producers like *Hubert Ogunde*, *Ade Love*, *Awada Kerikeri*, *Wale Adenuga* and *Baba Sala* had gone on private sabbatical. Probably,

this was the magic wand the industry needed to thrive again; the method of reinvention into home videos worked and the film industry began to blossom again.

While I am not unaware of the controversy and argument that have trailed the history of the home videos in Nigeria or what we now know as Nollywood, especially between the two leading tribes that have dominated the industry in Nigeria (Yoruba and Igbo), for my status and pedigree, I will not like to join in that spat, but rather put the record straight and leave the rest for scholars and researchers. The idea of the home video was muted by *Babatunde Adelusi* (Adamson) publisher of a now rested photo-play Magazine who said that the production of video films will not only save cost of production but will be a good alternative to Indian and Chinese films. To set the record straight, film industry in Nigeria took a new dimension when Adamson's idea was put to test by *Ade Ajiboye* (Big Abass) with the production of *Soso Meji* into a video in 1988 and this was subsequently followed by *Muiden Alade Aromire's Ekun* in 1989. These were the first and second Nigerian home videos respectively.

But perhaps, what many debaters fail to acknowledge or add into their submission is the fact that the boom experienced in this era was kick-started by Keneth Nnebue's *Living in Bondage* which was produced in 1992. The film was reported to have sold over a million copies and this was a redefining moment for the Nigerian film industry. Prior to the production of his own film *Living in*

Bondage, Kenneth Nnebue's *Nek Video Link* had sponsored a number of Yoruba home videos which include '*Aje Ni Iya Mi*', '*Ija Eleye*', '*Osa Eleye*' and some others. The Igbo film producers seemed to be silent all along. At a point, it was perceived that the investments into home videos by Kenneth Nnebue, *Sulaiman Aweda*, *Oyedele*, *Mut Mokson* and other important distributors and exhibitors at the time were peanuts and that led to the upsurge of different production and marketing companies like Bayowa Films International, Aromire Films, Jide Kosoko Productions, Charles Tete, Corporate Pictures, Alloy Productions, Mustoy, Remdel, Ejide Films, Olasco, Gemini, Toymax and many others. This coupled with the production of the acclaimed first Igbo film *Living in Bondage* which was followed up by others like Dan Oluigbo's *Taboo*, Francis Agwu's *Jezebel* and Amaka Igwe's *Rattlesnake*, films began to be produced in large volumes with film marketers setting up offices and outlets in Idumota Lagos.

With this development, not only were new stars expressly born, but new talents were also discovered. Peradventure the most redefining moment for the Yoruba film industry came when *Tunde Kelani's* Mainframe Productions joined the train with the production of *Kareem Adepoju's Ti Oluwa Ni Ile* (part 1) in 1993, and most certainly, this was also a redefining moment in my own acting career. Tunde Kelani was looking for a young man who could play the role of a young traditional ruler with good command of English language and I was invited by *Alhaji Kareem Adepoju* (Baba Wade) because they found such qualities in me

based on the roles I have played in the past. There and then, I showed up at the location, and the rest, as they say, is history. *Tunde Kelani*, who was a major participant of the Golden era used his dexterity and brilliance as a cinematographer of high repute to make a very strong statement in the Nigerian home videos. He quickly followed it up with *Ti Oluwa Ni Ile* Parts II and III (1994) and *Ayo Ni Mo Fe* (1994).

After these productions, *Kelani* adopted a strategy that made the Golden era a very rewarding period for the producers of the time—that is, adaptation of popular books into novels. This he blended with flawless Yoruba language that his authors were reputed for and this made his films the most sought after Yoruba films in Nigeria. Starting from *Akinwumi Isola's Koseegbe* (play)- 1995, *O 'le Ku* parts I and II (Prose)-1997, *Saworo-Ide* (1999), *Agogo Eewo* (2002) and Adebayo Faleti's *Magun* (prose) which was adapted to *Thunderbolt* in 2001.

However, of utmost importance to us in this gathering today is the goodwill that the film industry has brought to the Nigerian economy and the teeming Nigerian youths and I can tell us emphatically that the Home Video era was the period that gave this goodwill in unlimited dimension. This era marked an all-time peak in the number of Nigerian film productions. As at 2004, at least four to five films were produced every day in Nigeria, and the movies already dominated television screens across the African continent and by extension, the Caribbean and the Diaspora, with



the movies significantly influencing cultures in many African nations, and the film actors becoming household names across the continent. In this era, Nigeria's film industry grew to become a big employer of labour in Nigeria, providing over a million jobs and contributing about 5% of the GDP.

At the peak of the era in the late 2000s, the industry had become the second largest film industry in the world in number of annual film productions, placing it ahead of the United States and behind only India. In 2013, it was rated as the third most valuable film industry in the world after generating a total revenue of NGN1.72 trillion (US\$10 billion) in 2013 alone, placing it behind India and the United States.

As at 2014, the Nigerian film industry is worth NGN853.9 billion (US\$5.1 billion) and produces hundreds of home videos and films per annum. Nigerian cinema is Africa's largest movie industry in terms of value and the number of movies produced per year. Although Nigerian films have been produced since the 1960s, the rise of affordable digital filming and editing technologies has stimulated the country's film and video industry.

The primary beneficiaries of this boom are the young graduates of not only arts discipline, but also of every other discipline you can think of; law, humanities, commercial, medical science, social sciences, engineering, natural sciences and many others. Today, we have more non theatre graduates than graduates of theatre

and performing arts in the industry.

In case you are in doubt, I have done a painstaking job of how thousand of Nigerians earn a living from the proceeds of a film. Take for instance a modest film with the following cast and crew members:

Production and Technical Crew	Cast
Director	10 Grade A
Artistes	
Assistant Director	15 Grade B
Artistes	
Production Manager	50 Other Artistes
Location Manager	
Set Designer	
Assistant Set Designers (2)	
Gaffer	
Soundman	
Costumier	
Assistant Costumiers (2)	
Makeup Artiste	
Assistant Makeup Artistes (2)	
Scriptwriter	
Production Assistants (5)	
Editor	

Now with this list of cast and crew at the production stage, about 97 professionals have been engaged who will earn money for



their services. Perhaps, just about half of this number may be family men and women who are responsible for one or two or more other dependants. Also, do not forget the fact that caterers will be employed to cook for the people on location, packets of sachet and bottled water will be bought from retailers on a daily basis and economy of the community or the village where the location is situated will be boosted, thus providing daily income for more people than can be documented. In addition, you also have to take into account some unofficial casual workers of the production; these will include tailors to sew costumes, carpenters to build sets and even props and bead makers. So, inadvertently, a film production stage has quickly taken care of the GDP per capita of at least 150 to 200 Nigerians at the production stage alone.

Just about that point, the film has just begun its journey into providing more GDP per capita for more Nigerians than it has done during the production stage. After the editing of the film which takes between two weeks to one month, the film is either exhibited at the cinema or mass-dubbed for distribution at Idumota and Alaba markets. If it is for exhibition at the cinemas, some people will make money instantly from the sales of the tickets, cinema hall will get a percentage of the proceeds from which the cinema staff are paid, media houses will get payment for advert slots that run on their stations, printers will be paid for printing posters and handbills, some other boys will be paid for

bill posting round the town and petty traders will make money from the sales of their goods on the exhibition days especially if it is during festivities.

It does not end there yet, if the film eventually makes it to the home video shelves for distribution at Idumota or/and Alaba, that is where the tentacles of giving more GDP per capita will be spread like fire. From there, the marketer will give it to distributors, distributors to retailers, retailers to video rentals and individual buyers, video renters to video club members and so on. Until recently when satellite televisions came on board, I could not count the number of home video clubs in my area alone and I know people who lived on home video business for many years. When home video business was in vogue, every release date in Idumota was like a carnival, as each distributor's shop would be bombarded by wholesalers from all parts of the country. Casual load careers (alabaru), jacket and VHS packers and many others were those who made extra monies on such release dates. Not also forgetting the fact that the marketer's offices, distributors, wholesalers, video clubs all have staff members who are paid salaries from the proceeds of CDs and VHS that pass through their companies. Even now that VHS has been largely replaced by CDs and DVDs, the case is still the same.

With this simple analysis, it is not an exaggeration to say that a movie will conveniently take care of a thousand people or more



and by simple arithmetic, this makes an average of 4000 or 5000 people a day (from our statistics of 4 to 5 films released per day). If you multiply this by 365 days of the years, then the assertion that Nigerian film industry provides job for about a million Nigerian every year is an understatement. In my own postulation, this industry provided direct or indirect jobs for around 1.5million to 2million Nigerian as far back as 2004.

According to the Filmmakers Cooperative of Nigeria, every film in Nigeria had a potential audience of 15 million people in Nigeria and about 5 million outside Nigeria. In no time, the industry became the second largest producer of films in the world. In spite of the several sub-standard films being made in Nigeria due to the invasion of non professionals and core businessmen into the industry at some point, the film industry regardless became a major employer in Nigeria. As at 2007, with a total number of 6,841 registered video parlours and an estimated of about 500,000 unregistered ones, the estimated revenue generated by sales and rentals of movies in Lagos State alone was estimated to be ₦804 million (US\$5 million) per week, which adds up to an estimated ₦33.5 billion (US\$209 million) revenue for Lagos State per annum. Approximately 700,000 discs were sold in Alaba market per day, with the total sales revenue generated by the film industry in Nigeria estimated at ₦522 billion (US\$3 billion) per annum, broadcast content valued at ₦250 billion (US\$1.6 billion)

THE PRESENT ERA

This is the era called The Nigerian Cinema and it is an emerging phase in the Nigerian film industry. This phase became a child of necessity in the twilight of the Home video era when professionalism was pushed aside by the invasion of accountants, economists and capitalists into the film industry as the arrowheads of production, marketing and distribution of films. At the peak of the video era around 2008, the number of films released per month was around 200 and at this time, the industry had practically degenerated into a “visionless” industry with the crux of those people who know nothing about filmmaking as the policy makers of the industry. Piracy was also at its peak and dealing with this menace, amongst other problems was a hard nut to crack. As a result, most investors of the “Alaba cartel”, who control almost about 90 percent stakes in the video industry began to channel their money into other ventures. This together with some other factors like Government's refusal to provide support and funding, increase in the cost of production in Nigeria and emergence of satellite/cable television caused the decline of the Home video era.

There became a major shift in the method of film production, from the video format, back to the cinema method, which constituted the films produced in the Golden era. Few years into the 21st century, Nigeria began to experience the growth of cinemas, which was initially structured for the middle and upper class. The Silverbird Group, led by the “Bruce” family was the first



company to launch a series of modern Cinema houses across major cities in Nigeria, mostly situated in affluent areas and districts. It launched its cinema chains in 2004, starting with the Silverbird Galleria in Victoria Island, Lagos.

The Silverbird Galleria is a large shopping mall, with an upscale cinema facility and various outlets where mercantile activities take place. This provides more reasons to visit the place beyond just watching films, but more of a social activity and a modified sort of entertainment beyond film watching. This trend has given another probable explanation as to the demise of the Nigerian cinema culture in the 1980s, which could not be far from the unfashionable appearance of most cinemas of the Golden era. It is not a hidden fact that Silverbird Galerial set the tone for the sustenance of the cinema era that we enjoy today. This day by a policy of screening Nigerian films with high production quality, as a result, discouraging poor productions.

Now the first new wave film to tap into this new opportunity was *Kunle Afolayan's Yoruba-language film Irapada* (2006) which was screened at the Silverbird Galleria in Lagos. Without any form of sentiment, this history of this era will not be complete without making reference to the young erudite director cum producer. the Silverbird experiment thereafter became very successful, and as a result, the group Lunched more cinema branches in Lagos and other cities in the country. Not long after this, other cinemas began to spring up. They include Genesis Deluxe Cinema and

Ozone Cinema and much later in the 2010s Filmhouse Cinemas were lunched, leading to the availability of more cinemas in the country and creating more healthy competition in the cinema business. Today as we speak there is virtually no state in the country that cannot boast of first class cinemas. There are 3 of such in Ibadan alone and more than 20 in Lagos, yet I believe more are still coming.

One encouraging thing about it all is that the government is gradually waking up to its responsibility of supporting the film industry in this era. Several grants have been launched by the federal government in order to support quality content in Nigerian films. In 2006, "Project Nollywood" was launched by the Nigerian government in conjunction with Ecobank. The project provided ₦100 million (about US\$781,000) to Nigerian filmmakers to produce high quality films and to fund a multimillion Naira distribution network across the country during this period.

In 2010, the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan launched a ₦30 billion (US\$200 million) "Creative and Entertainment Industry" Intervention Fund, financed by Bank of Industry (BOI), in conjunction with Nigerian Export and Import (NEXIM) Bank. This grant, although dubbed as a spin-off of "Project Nollywood", was for the entire Nigerian Creative Arts and Entertainment sector. The vision of the grant was to help more Nigerian filmmakers in training, funding, and also help in



creating necessary infrastructure for the industry. In 2013, a smaller new grant of ₦3 billion (US\$20 million) was awarded once again solely for Nollywood, and specifically for the production of high quality films, and to sponsor filmmakers for formal training in film schools. Also in 2015, Bank of Industry launched another "NollyFund" program for the purpose of giving financial support in form of loans to film producers.

Today as we speak, the story is better than it was in the past eras: Many of our people have been beneficiaries of all these grants and loans and the industry today caters for nothing less than 5 million people both within and outside Nigeria. With this new wave, many of our films can compete side by side with many Hollywood films.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Having chronicled the history of Nigerian theater and film industry and how it has provided jobs for millions of Nigerian Youths, I make bold to say it that there is no other known sector in the country that is capable of giving to Nigerian youths what theatre and film industry has given them. This remains the only hospitable and approachable panacea for millions of unemployed Nigerian youths in the midst of a hostile labour market like Nigeria. The industry has done so much in the past and it is still capable of doing more if the right things are done at the right time.

It is obvious that this industry has recorded so many successes but the truth is that, it has recorded more challenges than its successes. Government of Nigeria still needs to do more than it is doing. I therefore recommend that more grants and loans need to be made assessable for the Nigerian filmmakers not only for producing quality films, but also for training both in Nigeria and abroad. The cancer of piracy should be seen as a collective battle that should not be left to the filmmakers alone.

It is not only the government that owns the industry a responsibility; those of us in the academia also do. More filmmaking courses should be incorporated into the curriculum of theatre arts in our universities so that when our graduates get to the labour market, they will not be total strangers to the trade they learnt for 4 or 5 years. Also, crash programs and refresher courses should be created for our practicing members in order to acquire new knowledge and learn new skills.

On a last note, the role the film industry has played can be likened to the role Orunmila plays among other deities; and that is the role of ultimate food provider. It is *Orunmila* who sits in one place and provides *Ogun, Sango, Esu, Obatala, Oya*, and even the *ajes* with foods through the prescription he gives to his clients, and this is evident in the following *ese ifa* (name)

*Igbo yi o jo igbo ti mo de ri
Odan yi o jo odan ti mo mo*



**THE NIGERIAN FILM AND THEATRE INDUSTRY:
A PANACEA FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND YOUTHS' UNEMPLOYMENT**

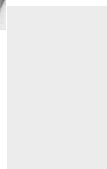
Delivered by **Dele ODULE**

*Ka burin burin ka ba ore pade
A maa yani ju ara ile eni lo
A dia fun ore, a bu f'oluku
Iya eni o'f'ifa han 'ni
Baba eni o'f'ifa han ni
Ore eni nikan lo le fi'fa han ni
Oni ohun ti mo ba ri, ma maa bore mi.*

As I close I leave you with the words of Shakespeare which says:

"If we meet again, fine, if we don't, the departure is well made"

Thank you all for your time. *Ire o!*



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**Omoba David
Odubamidele ODULE**

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