

# Forum

## Active citizen participation is the most important factor in any election

Dear Editor,

MANY political aspirants the world over often misunderstand the enormous influence citizens command during an electoral process.

We saw the reality of this play out in the 2020 American presidential elections where the people took it upon themselves to sensitise their neighbours, parents, children, grandparents, siblings and even their dogs of the presumed danger the American dream was facing in the hands of its immediate past president.

Whether or not the country is better off with its decision post-election is not the more important thing in the context of election; it is whether they are actively owning the responsibility to make that decision.

The Office of the Citizen is the most important - and should be the most powerful office in any society.

For far too long, the political elite have stopped listening to voters and delivering on their primary job: to build consensus, persuade and convince.

Understanding this broken social contract on the part of the politicians and listening whilst creating a more appealing narrative for the candidate is one role that many politicians ignore once they are sworn into office.

Therefore in 2015, many people were aghast about how Nigeria, predominantly a youth population voted for a 70-year-old ex-general. How did this happen?

RED | For Africa, was able to marshal all communication efforts so that the aspirations of the Nigerian people for their leader were reflected in the campaign messaging of President Muhammadu Buhari.

The team understood that citizens deserve more than the elite posture of arrogance and deafness. And if any of the political parties vying for the highest office in Zambia come August are to emerge victorious, this is the approach they need to adopt.

Though the youth demography is important, there are other population segments that could potentially cause a serious shift at the polls. Zambia all has a voting population of which 60 percent are women, so it goes without saying that they are a crucial part of any electoral process.

Take America for example, in 2012, 53 percent of the voters were women which essentially meant that one in every two voters in the country was a woman. And 55 percent of those women cast their vote in favour of Barack Obama.

They did this because they were not only an important segment of Obama's campaign; which made it a point at every to

turn to show how much it cared about their economic survival.

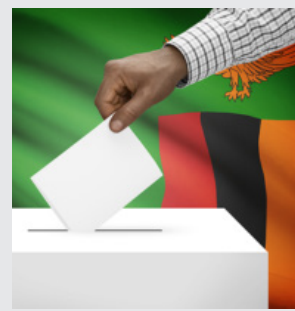
There must be a deliberate attempt to bolster women participation in Zambian politics and I do not mean by simply increasing the number of female cabinet appointees in government and handing them fringe portfolios.

From participating in the voting exercise to local government and parliament offices, women must have critical decision-making roles.

This is why action committees like; the Women's Lobby must be supported in strengthening inclusive growth.

Authenticity also matters. Voters care deeply about a candidate who is honest, truthful, and most importantly, humane. Can they see themselves in you? Do you project an image that stimulates their attention?

Because humans are imperfect beings; they laugh, cry, are frustrated, make mistakes, and are unafraid to own it. This serves as one of the pillars that improve a candidate's chances with the electorate.



Another key issue is the quality of a message. The outcome of an election may lie in the ability of any political party to align their message to the purpose of their candidacy.

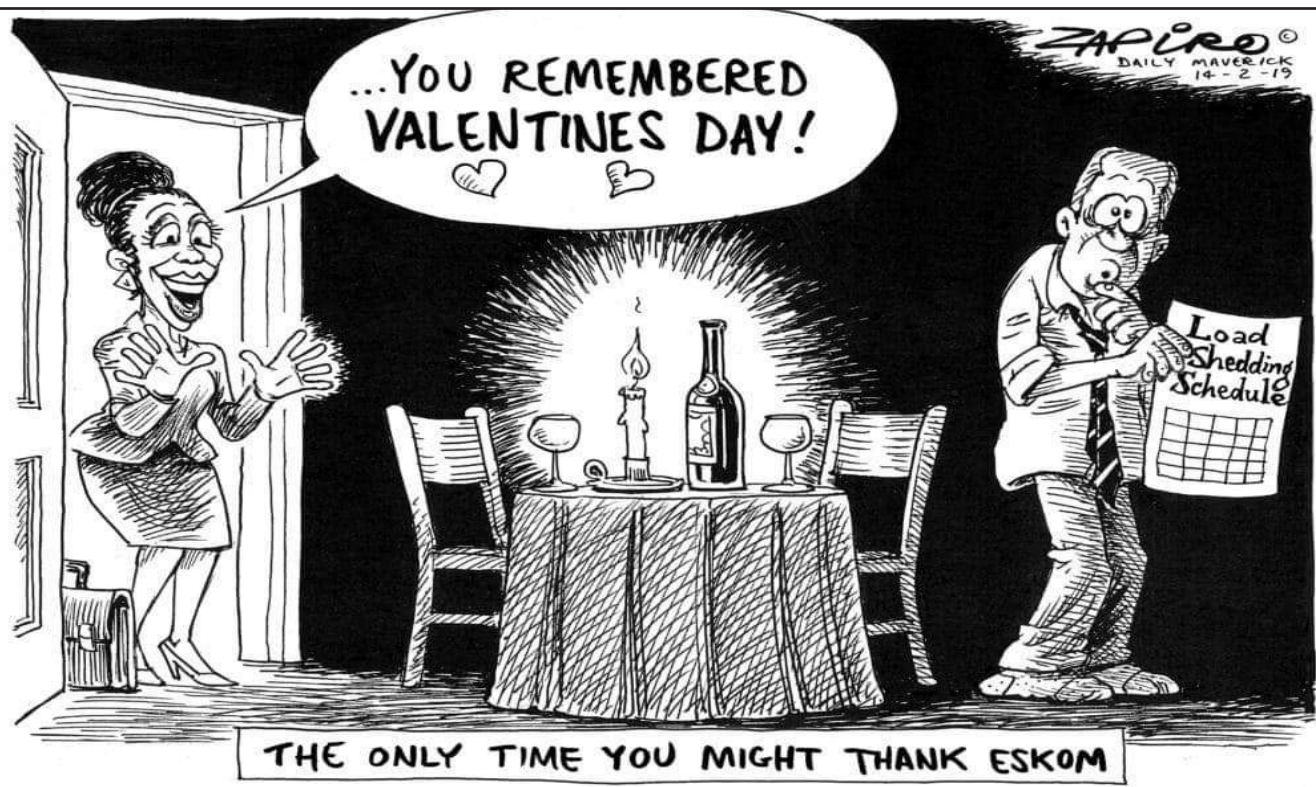
Many candidates confuse or replace their message with a laundry list of issues they believe the electorate cares about.

The electorate desperately want something to believe in that is bigger than themselves. It is now up to the Zambian political aspirants to inspire the people with a message that they can all get behind - a message that encapsulates the plight of the common man and a solution all wrapped up in one.

**ADEBOLA WILLIAMS (AW)** is a pioneer at the intersection of media, democracy and social change. He co-founded and runs RED | For Africa, Africa's largest portfolio of leading youth media brands engaging the continent's youth. He was named as one of Africa's best entrepreneurs under 30 by Forbes and was subsequently profiled by both Forbes and CNN as the man who helped elect a trifecta of Presidents in Africa - including Nigeria's Muhammadu Buhari, Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana and Senegal's, Macky Sall - all current incumbents, with some securing a second term win.

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THE ONLY TIME YOU MIGHT THANK ESKOM

## NEVERS MUMBA SHOULD STOP BEING NERVOUS AND GIVE CREDIT WHERE IT IS DUE

Dear Editor,

MMD President Dr. Nevers Mumba has been quoted by a tabloid publication as saying that the current actions being taken at the Ministry of Health to restore confidence are too minimal compared to the crimes committed against the Zambian people.

He is reported to have said cleaning the rot at the Ministry of Health would take political will to stamp out corruption.

I find the embattled MMD President's remarks absurd, farcical and laughable be-

cause cooperating partners have responded with US\$2 billion into health coffers, and the public is embracing the changes at MoH.

What political will is he imagining?

Is Political will at best only if it's not associated with the PF Government? Changes have been made at the MoH, heads have rolled and confidence is being won back. In all honesty, is Dr. Mumba serious with what he is talking about or he is only blustering?

This is why I usually say that the last genuine opposition leader this great nation had was late President Michael

Chilufya Sata because the current crop of opposition leaders are nothing but political clowns.

We have serial opposers who oppose only for the sake of the word. To them appreciating the good done by Government is a taboo.

Everyone is appreciating what Dr. Jonas Chanda is doing at the Ministry of Health. Dr. Mumba must never play maverick. Giving the Republican President and Minister of Health little pats on the back for the job well done is not a sign of nervousness and it won't hurt anybody.

MARVELLOUS SAKALA.



Dr. Mumba

## Katuka's malicious corruption falsehoods irresponsible

Dear Editor,

IT is laughable that a politician who commands insignificant following in UPND, Secretary General Stephen Katuka could drag the Patriotic Front in the alleged offer to ditch the opposition for the ruling party.

Mr Katuka alleges that he was offered K3 million, a car, a house and a job as gratification to induce him ditch the opposition for the ruling party.

From the outset, we believe that Mr Katuka ought to know that corruption constitutes a criminal offence which compels him to report the same to

appropriate authorities.

It is therefore grossly irresponsible for him to merely give a blanket statement without taking steps to bring it to the attention of the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Other than the continued trend by UPND to maliciously scandalise the PF, we hold the view that the claims by Mr Katuka are unrealistic.

The PF has firmly lived by its commitment to uphold national values and principles thus it is a figment of imagination that resources which are desperately needed can be directed towards enriching Mr Katuka. We challenge Mr Katuka to come out in

open and state whether he is indirectly soliciting for the retirement package comprising K3 million, a car, a house and possibly a job in Government other than making those misguided assumptions. We urge him to make use of the various empowerment programmes that have been initiated by President Edgar Lungu's government other than making malicious hallucinations.

We have no doubt in our mind that Mr Katuka deeply knows from the bottom of his heart that the claims have no stain of truth but he is seeking political relevance by using the PF as a catalyst.

We have also noted that

there is a growing dissent against him by some quarters within UPND thus he might be at the verge of seeking refuge in the PF.

Therefore Mr Katuka should seek the political relevance from the PF in a more responsible manner.

We also wish to remind Mr Katuka that the PF is an all-inclusive organisation that would extend an olive branch to him should he decide to join. We are glad he has seen it as one of the attractive political organisations he is considering to associate himself with.

MARVIN CHANDA MBERI, Lusaka.