Suburbia: Conceptualising Ethnography in Nigerian Stand-up Comedy

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Abstract

The paper is an ethnographic reading of Nigerian stand-up comedy from the prism offered by suburbia as a socio-literary concept. Suburbia is here developed as the framework to account for the way Nigerian stand-up performances, since the turn of the millennium, have turned out to be insightful articulations of cultural kinship, geographical classism and geopolitics, regional socio-rhetoric on its stereotypes, and strategic identity laundering. The study posits 'suburbia' as the poetics to engage the manner and reason stand-up in Nigeria, juxtaposes different regional social behaviours, as well as the disparities between urban life and rural or suburban realities. It is here posited, that Nigerian stand-up owes much of its material to comparing centric and marginal sociologies on regional, ethnic and even biological levels. It is also discussed that the artistic evolution of the subgenre in the country is traceable to the economic and cultural urban-suburban traffic that implicate for instance, Northern Nigeria, Warri, Benin City, Lagos Island and Mainland, Calabar, and even the developed West, in discourses of language and accents, civility, religion, food, environment, childhood, worldviews, and so on. The paper conceptualises through suburbia, Nigerian stand-up comedy's fascination with the nation's postcolonial ethnography, by using jokes to document, critique and satirise cultural provenances, provincialism and diversity, while realising the anthropological triggers by which laughter, otherness and kinship are exercised between comics and audiences during the performance of socially aware material.

Keywords: suburbia, suburban, urbanity, ethnography, stand-up comedy, Nigeria.

Introduction

What is intended here is to critique stand-up comedy as an artistic articulation from the margins unto the dominant culture, through jokes that systematically comment on, or react to the class difference and ethnographic plurality of the Nigerian nation. What is proposed here is to develop a concept that takes into account how Nigerian stand-up comedy performances are expressed from a foundational basis of regional, ethnic, (auto)biographical and behavioural backgrounds, usually to audiences from similar structures, but with an incongruous juxtaposition at the heart of the play. The logic here is to underscore how and why Nigerian stand-up comics customarily seek out a kinship with portions of the audience on shared experiences, cultural orientations, beliefs, upbringing norms, ethnic behaviour, and even identity. Suburbia is thus proposed to conceptualise the modern performance of stand-up comedy in Nigeria, as a non-divisive reinforcement of ethnic and regional stereotypes, a parody of social and class disparities, and a celebratory fetishism of minoritarian (not minority) identity. The minoritarian differs from the minority, in the sense that while the minority implies a dominated margin, the minoritarian represents an influential minority that maintains tangible cultural primacy within the general populace, and holds its own well vis-à-vis the majority. 'Minoritarianism' is more or less a neologism for a political and cultural process, structure or clout, where minority interests are taken into special consideration, in fact almost disproportionately, in appeasement, or as a pandering towards, in respect of fairness and socio-cultural equity. As a political concept, minoritarianism differs from the minority, in the sense that the dominance of the majority is upturned, in order to

secure and enforce 'quota primacy' in decision-making, for a minority that is outnumbered but significant, for the demographic balance of a given society (Ramachandran, 2013). The present study pursues through suburbia, a conceptual path towards the organisation of the rhetorical logic of Nigerian stand-up comedians, and strategies and motivations of humour usually adopted to highlight minority groups above the majority, to create juxtapositions and playful agonistic portraitures of, or between majoritarian and minoritarian orientations.

Suburbia: Reading the Ethnography of Nigerian Stand-up

In the construction of the humorous, Nigerian stand-up comedians have a habit of sampling groups within their audiences, that share affinities with themselves (as suburban ambassadors), or with outskirt or non-elite geographies or backgrounds. Double (2005) in fact renders this as an expectation, an operational tactic, where the comic seeks an ethnic, linguistic or cultural kinship with the audience, by impressing on them local references they can immediately find intimate first, before they find funny – or in order to find funny. Raj (2021) already establishes in this regard, that comedy is constructed within "specific cultural assumptions", and thus "what and why things are funny is influenced by culture" (p. 34). If comedy is "very culture specific", it follows then that commonplace jokes about other people or groups, are relevant "in defining ourselves in relation to others, constructing the us and them, and for the creation of a sense of identity". It follows also that in order to understand and appreciate jokes, ridicule or the humorous, there has to be a mutual pre-knowledge of local information between comedian and audience. Without this, a joke cannot be successful (Popović, 2018, p. 597). There have appeared to be catchphrases that signature Nigerian stand-up performances, so much so they help secure that much-needed bridge between comedian and audience. Such catchphrases are uttered by the comedian to identify and establish a kinship with portions of the audience, such that the joke becomes a verifiable tale to those conversant with the local zeitgeist or cultural orientation, and a wondrous reportage to those shunted to the cynosure of a semi-dramatic irony. In such dramatic irony, the suburban I-can-relate amongst the audience, laugh because the jokes are a harmlessly embarrassing memoir, or a proud hilarious nostalgia; while the others who are just realising there and then a bit of the suburban culture in review, also laugh, but a different kind of laughter, one of pleasurable learning.

Over the past two decades, Nigerian stand-up comics have successfully effected a very famed call-and-response at events. This call-and-response signifies a direct kinship between comic and audience over a business and cultural hub of Delta State: "*Area!*" – "*Eh!*". The oil-rich Warri, central to the Niger-Delta region has a reputation for youth restiveness and picaro streetism energised especially by a special sociolinguistic signature: Nigerian pidgin English. Another rhetorical strategy of kinship plays out when comedians want to establish an affinity with audiences from Benin City, as implicated in their jokes. "*Ọba gha tọkpẹ e!*" is sounded out to the audience, and portions who immediately recognise it as the clarion reverence for the ancient monarchy of the city, gleefully respond, "*Isẹ!*". Warri and Benin City are themselves urban areas, cities in their own rights with a national reckoning. But suburbia as conceptualised here does not derive its postulation necessarily from cityness, but in the way certain locations have been stereotyped as purveyors of behaviours and norms worth laughing about, or at. According to Blumberg (2010), representations of suburbia invoke extreme familiarity, and at the heart of such suburban portraiture is usually a "class-specific dilemma". It was a convention for the better part of two decades to have Nigerian stand-up comedians tick off the *ajẹ-butter* versus *ajẹ-kpako* comedy of manners between people raised in ghetto and lack, and those raised in serenity and privilege. This juxtaposition-convention for example helped energise (and still energises), mainland-island geographic genteelisms in Lagos, and high-low class disparities in Nigerian stand-up. Given that the conception of suburbia, particularly to those who do not live in the suburbs anymore, or who have never lived there, is that not much changes

through the years (Evers, 2009), comics continue to utilise suburban clarions and material, to claim and maintain a portraiture of the suburbs for newer generations.

Suburbia is a historical participant in urbanity; without it, urbanity is incomplete (McManus & Ethington, 2007). But the suburban is not fully urbanity, neither is it by consequence, rurality. It is betwixt and between. It etymologically denotes an understated urbanity, and culturally connotes a deviant urbaneness. The characteristics of life in the suburbs, existing in the peripheries or on the outskirts of a larger city or urban area, describe a different cultural superstructure of mentality, language, personality and comportment, from urban values. For Sies (2001), geography and economic circumstances are some of the many factors that make distinct, urban from suburban. However, such is the complexity of the suburb that these factors do not suffice to arm stereotypes. Theodoropoulou (2010) on the other hand, reviews suburbia anthropogeographically as a continuum or an encompassment of urban and countryside culture, from whence clear stereotypes can be derived and discoursed to account for its urban-rural paradigm. This entirely spicier superstructure or order of sociality and being, pockmarked by slums, poverty, infrastructural incapacities and government marginalisation, nomenclaturally imply suburbia, both as a location and a manifest orientation. The suburb shadowboxes the metropolis, mirrors it, realises it cannot be same with it, and ironises the differences in Warri, Lagos Mainland-Island, and Ajegunle jokes. Suburbia also accounts for the way Nigerian stand-up comedy prefigures a hyperbolic provincialism that pitches tribal accents against centric articulation. This is usually manifest in the mimicry of Northern Nigerian, Yoruba, Igbo and Calabar accents, as well as sophisticated American and British ones.

Ekpang and Bassey (2014) undertook a study of how Nigerian stand-up, sources material from the accents of Calabar natives, and how this comic representation satirically foreground a Calabarian linguistic, social and cultural stereotype. It must be noted however, that this phenomenon is not exclusive to the geographical area the study covered, since indigenes of Akwa Ibom and Cross River states share the same phonological characteristics. Bridging humour and metaphor, Ekpang and Bassey realise a four-way discourse on Calabar humaphors in Nigerian stand-up: phonological humour, behavioural traits, sexual allusions and names. The phonological humour being the most engaged, manifest the mother tongue interference at both segmental and supra segmental levels of Calabarian phonology. As regional accents are "a popular ingredient for jokes in stand-up comedy in Nigeria as every tribe is marked by some Mother Tongue interference", merely mentioning "a particular interference or speech style", invokes a superiority humour, "directed at a particular ethnic group or tribe" (pp. 179-80). From sample jokes, the study captured some mispronunciations from the Calabarian accent thus: /k/ in "uka" as a replacement for /g/ in "Oga"; /r/ in "rook" as a replacement for /l/ in "look"; /t/ in "tinse" as a replacement for /s/ in "since"; /j/ in "yop" as a replacement for /t/ "chop" (p. 180). Calabarian names have also been portrayed as cacophonous, winding in syllables, and having orally inarticulate consonant clusters, in the "accentual performance" of Nigerian stand-up (p. 182). Calabar has thus been exoticised in stand-up rhetoric as not just a historical location in the Nigerian nationhood, but a cultural connotation for sexual prowess (derived from their consumption of dog meat, and canine stamina thereof), and great culinary skills (derived from fattening room practices, and appraisals of cuisines like *ekpangkukwo*, *afang*, and *edikanikong*). This exoticism extends to the peculiar English of the Calabarians, derived from the mock-difficult "Efik phonetics as captured in the consonant clustering and clapping" and in "complicated sounds resulting from phonological reduction and onomatopoeic sounds in the local names" (p. 183). For Ekpang and Bassey, the extreme portraiture of the typical Calabarian as somewhere between a clownish not-very-smart and downright stupid individual, has been most embarrassing – a flat never-evolving characterisation that has crystallised for decades, in Nigerian television soaps and home videos.

As the suburb has become an archetype for servicing jokes in Nigerian stand-up comedy, it must be noted that 'suburb' in the concept of its use here, is differently derived from its possible linguistic marker of residential exclusion by wealth and the pastoral. Possible, because the suburb is a confusing label: in another denotation, especially to Nigerian English speakers, it could imply residential underprivilege vis-à-vis the urban centre where white and blue-collar labour abound (Kperogi, 2017). Take the distances commuted by workers daily in Lagos for example, who get the best paying jobs nearer to, or on the Island, or in the highbrow areas of the Mainland, but who live deep in the bowels of the Mainland. Take as another example, those who work in the federal capital, Abuja, but cannot reside there because of the explosion in real estate valuation and rent prices, and so live in the urban zone of Karu Local Government Area, in a conurbation of towns stretching to the federal capital, such as New Nyanya and Mararaba. Not all Lagos may be Lagos enough; or the oft-maligned axes may arguably be more Lagosian in character than highbrow areas where the civic tenor is cleaned-up. A core of the working-class labour and skills that sustain Abuja as a federal capital, do not (in fact, cannot) reside in its metropolis. Are they the suburb, or the real Abuja inevitably not-at-home? Suburbia can sway both ways. Urbanity in this instance can be seen as a melting pot of migrating proletariat suburbanites – suburbia in mobility to metropolia. The context of suburb in this Nigerian proletarian and lower-middle class context, illuminates a completely opposite denotation from linguistic markers and even scholarship on the subject in the Global North, where suburb is a safe, therapeutic, if not classist distance from perceived urban disorder (Banash & Enns, 2003; Evers, 2009; Goldsmith, 2000; McCann, 1998, p. ix; Nall, 2018, p. 1). It is instructive to establish, that suburb as a spatial and class delineation, brutally differ in the Global North from Global South – the former marked by an educated middle-class demographic, and the latter by a poorer, less literate population (Kugler, 2019, p. 9). Suburbia is therefore not a universal parable.

Suburbia in this context, is conceived as a praxis that energises ontology, locale or the autochthonous, as a source of pride or purveyor of derision, for stand-up performance. Suburbia encompasses a theoretic that in the rhetoric of stand-up, comics would employ a geographic genteelism to account for how locale and/or indigeneity conditions and influences the superstructure of a person's universe or identity complex – how a person behaves, thinks, how they react or respond to situations, what their passions and preferences are, and even how they walk, talk, eat and dress. Suburbia in Nigerian stand-up, here contextualises the praxis of extracting individual experience, cultural heritage, locational circumstance, domestic norm, and even institutional nuance (church, school, police station, hospital), as material for narratives tenderable as jokes. More implicative for this concept, is that these jokes emphasise more than anything else, the disparity between two ways of life, of being, of citizenship. This splits the audience into those who recognise the imagery and ironies due to their suburban roots, and those who do not; yet are unified in a class humour, be it a case of laughing to (incongruity), or laughing at (superiority). At the heart of suburbia is an especial ambivalence that makes it at once a consequence of, and deviation from urban sprawl, such that it parades urbanity and rurality, but technically betrays both; offers the apprehensible but withholds outright familiarity; evinces a secure ubiquity, yet maintains a fragile invisibility; while conjoining desirability with revilement (Coon, 2014, p. 9; Silverstone, 1997, p. 4).

It would make clearer sense at this point to consider the discourse of 'suburb', 'suburban' and 'suburbia', from primary definitions, while insisting on their points of divergence for conceptual implication in the present study. Kugler (2019), offers a thorough basis:

> According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word 'suburb' originates from the Old French term 'suburbe' or the Latin term 'suburbium', meaning 'near to' (sub-) 'city' (urbs). It is further defined as "an outlying district of a city, especially a residential one" (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2018: suburb). Similarly, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a suburb as "an

> outlying part of a city or town" or "the residential area on the outskirts of a city or large town" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, 2018: suburb). Apart from these two definitions, that clearly refer to the spatial aspects, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary also specifies the suburb as "a smaller community adjacent to or within commuting distance of a city" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, 2018: suburb), providing a broader sense by including the people living in a suburban area. An even wider interpretation can be found in the Cambridge Dictionary, where suburbia is defined as "the way of life of people who live in the outer parts of a town" (Cambridge Dictionary Online, 2018: suburbia). Interestingly, the Cambridge Dictionary also includes the addition "mainly disapproving", indicating that the term suburbia is often used in a pejorative, disfavoring way (p. 8).

The aforementioned, though denotatively appropriate, do not represent what suburbia as a framework means in this context for the analysis of Nigerian stand-up comedy. The present study sides instead with Corcoran's (2018) submission that the suburb is more associated with thriving civic culture and social affiliation, than alienation and the disintegrative. Suburbia transcends the tangibility of territory, to accommodate the discursive and the experiential, inherent in its socio-spatiality. As suburbia pursues this transcendence by embodying and elevating the everyday to a viable "object of cognition", and to "the status of theoretic concept as a result of the entry of capital into lifestyles", it militates against all anti-suburbanism as elitism. This militancy is because suburbia is inevitably perpetually juxtaposed against urbanity, in socio-literary narratives of otherness on levels of culture and geography, at the very least (McCann, 1998, p. viii). This recognition of class-geography, corroborates Goldsmith's (2000) attestation that performing stand-up in the suburbs and in the city are very different realities, because of the difference in the tenor of cultural experiences and subsequently, references, which would be at play in the jokes. Furthermore, suburbia puts into illuminating context, the fact that entire cities could be suburbs in comparative contexts to bigger cities, or that entire cities could be characterised in such a way that they become a closed convention for certain possibilities of human socio-cultural behaviour. Nigerian stand-up comedy in the past decade has seen the animation of characters like Akpos, the archetypal Warri boy, the ultimate picaro who in his own right, has become a modern folk hero, a graduation from the Tortoise, capable of just about anything from awe-inspiring genius to downright inanity. Stereotypes like that have helped condition in the minds of audiences, Warri as a town where poshness and genteel civility cannot thrive, and where instead the witty, streetwise and mouthy dominate.

Back to the minoritarian, When Nigerian stand-up comics emphasise affinity to locale or indigeneity as ways to rev up audiences, they do so knowing they actually attend to a minority, but they succeed because that minority sits atop a very sellable and viable identity necessary for the composition and reception of humour. By pandering towards this minority within or amongst audiences, stand-up comics seek to establish an existing affinity. But the interesting thing is that very regularly, this search for minority affinity usually rev up both those who truly share that affinity with Warri, with Ajegunle, with Benin, with *aję-kpako*, with Lagos mainland, with *Pitakwa* (Port Harcourt), and those who really do not. Minority affinity is emphasised here upon the understanding that the most commercially rewarding stand-up events in Nigeria, hold in the heart of the metropolis, or at least capital cities. Lagos as a hotbed for Nigerian stand-up, has never been able to condition suburban stand-up material away from Warri or Benin content. Comics from South-South and South-East extraction have performed regional and suburban experiences that otherwise should be alien to Lagosians, but these materials have become a mainstay in the city. Suburbia construes for Nigerian stand-up, a talking-back (in the same vein as Ashcroft et al.'s title on postcolonial studies, *The*

Empire Writes Back (2002)), from comics who represent the experiential backwaters of urban sprawl, to the urban centre, and in the language of the suburbs. Affiliation with the suburbs, in fact, has become a tested and trusted route to securing instantaneous legitimacy with urban audiences, who seem to almost immediately believe a comic would be funny, because he has showed he comes from underprivilege. The comic secures this audience trust and consequently, their suspension of sobriety (implied in the same tenor as Coleridge's "suspension of disbelief" in *Biographia Literaria*), necessary for the ordinance of jokes as successful. Such has the importance of suburban affinity or affiliation been to Nigerian stand-up culture, that it has become a staple for opening routines.

This is minoritarianism: pandering towards a minority clout for balance, in spite of, or even right at the heart of an extant majority threshold. Suburbia in stand-up is minoritarianism, where an appeasement to a regional or suburban bloc is pivotal to the ignition of experiential affinity and the sustenance of humorous wonder. Nwankwọ's (2019) passage puts in thorough context the minoritarian politics of performing suburban stand-up in Nigeria:

> Identification with poverty is one tool that comedians use to create the kind of friendliness they need with the audience in order to have a perfect atmosphere for humour exchange [...] I Go Dye intersperses his acts with shouts of "Area!", something that has become a kind of trademark for most comedians from Warri [...] Warri and Ajegunle share a lot of similarities. It is instructive that together, Warri and Ajegunle, have produced more comedians in Nigeria than any other city. One common feature to these sites is their cosmopolitan outlook, being that their inhabitants are from different ethnic backgrounds. In Warri, it is Itsekiri, Urhobo, and Ijaw, while Ajegunle boasts of having a sizeable representation from all ethnicities in the country. Due to their mix-culture residents, Pidgin English, which is also the lingua franca of Nigerias stand-up art, is the primary language of communication [...] It is usual for one Warri person to call another by this salutation. It indicates that the person being hailed is a true child of the soil; an authentic member of the Area (locality) (p. 107)

Setting therefore, is the ultimate trope in Nigerian stand-up rhetoric. Where a joke is set, or where a character in the joke was raised, is conceptually brought to the surface in suburbia as a hitherto unheralded site of creative cultural narration, and as a critical deficit in stand-up scholarship. Suburbia imagines itself as a space, or as spaces, of cultural identity both on the individualistic and communal level, that has (or have) remained largely unexplored. Suburbia also services a literary nationalism (surely, stand-up comedy is literature), a movement of diversity announcement and (re)cognition in which comedians attempt to compose, celebrate and appraise distinct place-based conventions frame-worked by the nation-state. Aguoru (2022) rationalises suburbia's national identity-formation, thus:

> Stand-up comedy in Nigeria has transcended the distinct divides typical of the Nigerian multi-cultural space. Unlike other brands of art, which essentially depict specific ethnic leanings, stand-up comedy, in Nigeria, has negotiated a detribalised status. As a result, the genre accommodates an overlap of cultural paradigms through the extensive use of multi-culture (Mary Sengstock, 2009:244) without any group claiming ownership. Thus, the emergent stand-up comedy in Nigeria is immune from the puritan and structural narrative of ethnic slice in such a way that all cultures identify with but no culture appropriates the genre to itself. This is archetypical neo-culturalism, which refers to the alteration of the multiple traditions to evolve

> a post-modern new-tradition of wider claim [...] The presence of numerous, yet unique, universal patterns in diverse cultures enables the melding of idea(l)s, which are modified or reinvented deliberately or fortuitously. Stand-up comedy in Nigeria is largely indebted to this syncretic form of sub-cultures; and within this context, neo-culturalism is a platform of unification that enables a country with complex and diverse ethnic, cultural, religious and political identities to endorse a mixed-matched variety of Stand-up comedy as its new popular theatre [...] Thus, while this paper makes the claim that Nigerian Stand-up comedy has been largely influenced by professional Yoruba performances and comical forms, it does not impose the Yoruba culture on contemporary Stand-up comedy. Rather, it insists that a middle-ground has been achieved by a neo-cultural blend of features to produce the cultural cocktail now known as Nigeria's brand of Stand-up comedy (pp. 20-21).

Aguoru's article summates that the history of Nigerian stand-up comedy is in fact a compilation of different suburban contributions, such that as the genre has evolved through the years aesthetically and formally, it has blended together various regional and ethnic traditions of performance and rhetoric. Such has been the thoroughness of this blend, that it eliminates all traces of exclusive ethno-cultural signatures, and posits a national, neo-cultural and postmodern ensemble, where the boundaries of possible tribal or regional ownership and authorship are smoothened out. Nigerian stand-up as a performance and theatrical event, packaged for commercial audience-ship was an evolution from pre-industrial orality evident in many oratorical cultures, but first modernised as troupe-forms by the Yoruba Alarinjo in the 1980s. South-South Nigeria's development of the art as a lucrative vaudevillian show, especially through the pioneering entrepreneurship of Ali Baba, and Opa Williams' *Nite of a Thousand Laughs* in the late 1990s and 2000s, is also worth mentioning. But Nigerian stand-up today is a seamless ethnographic and regional syncretism, when in essence, its history and aesthetic evolution has always been at the behest of suburbia.

Conclusion

While suburbia seems problematic in its "confluence of the real and the imagined", it is even more of a challenge to negotiate its discourse while avoiding "a position in which suburbia itself becomes one more vanishing referent which evades direct comment". Extant scholarship on the suburbs, have towed the cue of poststrucuralist discursivity, to focus more on how the suburbs have been represented, than the actual suburbs themselves; even when what renders the suburb "tangible and intelligible" reside in the recognition of its precise experiential conditions. Suburbia reminds of the need to be disentangled and deciphered from the polemics of the "cognitive maps of the world" that literature has helped construct (McCann, 1998, p. ix). Suburbia is thus inherently more diffused with urbanity, than it is contrarian. Suburbia as a conceptual framework can help curate the ways in which stand-up comedy has been taken up by Nigerian comics of suburban birth and/or upbringing in Warri (as is the case with Ali Baba, I Go Dye, I Go Save, Gandoki, Gordons and Akpororo), Benin (Bovi and Maleke), Port Harcourt (Julius Agwu), and Ajegunle (Basketmouth). The appropriation of pidgin as the operational language of stand-up is an important sociolinguistic fact of the genre's prioritisation of open access and its conscious desire to be as inclusive as possible of Nigeria's multiculturalism. As Nigerian stand-up rhetoric is constructed through the suburban trope, and received with glee and non-clannish impartiality by hitherto non-ratified audiences, pidgin simultaneously helps align with suburban identity, yet disalign from, or transcend multiple regional or tribal tendencies. Suburbia conceptualises how stand-up has been usurped by comics of suburban

affiliation, as a fertile space of visibility and assertion, and as a site for the institutionalisation of cultural diversity through a populist concentering of Nigeria's sociolinguistic galaxies.

In suburbia as a conceptual framework, Nigerian stand-up realises its generic expectation intimately connected to socio-cultural practices within the critical ecology where it is performed and appraised. As stand-up suburbia reifies the subaltern, resits dominant positions and enthrones marginality through the performance of underprivilege, it simultaneously consolidates socio-cultural stereotypes and linguistic hierarchies. Through suburbia, the present study realises how cultural attributes are strategically narrated on a national platform; and how over time, national identities come to be shaped by conditions of collective expectation, as enabled by approbatory mirth and comic-audience suburban affiliation.

END NOTES

[1] Alleluya Atuyota Akporobomerere (Ali Baba) was born on June 24, 1965, in Warri, Delta State, where he spent his first eight years. He had secondary education at Command Secondary School, Ipaja, Lagos, and Ibru College Agbarha-Otor, Delta State; and attended Bendel State University (now Ambrose Alli University), Ekpoma, Edo State. He is Urhobo by tribe, and Deltan.

[2] Francis Agoda (I Go Dye) was born on April 4, 1979, in Abraka; was raised at Okpara Waterside; and had his elementary and secondary education at Ighogbadu Primary School, and College of Commerce, Warri, Delta State. He is Urhobo by tribe, and Deltan.

[3] Otaghware Otas Onodjayeke (I Go Save) was born on May 20, 1979, in Warri, Delta State, where he was raised, and had his elementary and secondary education – Aileru Primary School and Essi Secondary School. He got a tertiary degree from Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo State. He is Urhobo by tribe, and Deltan.

[4] Tony Mofe-Reeku (Gandoki) was born in Warri, where he was raised and had his primary and secondary education. He set a Guinness World Record for the longest individual stand-up comedy performance, beating the American David Scott's (The Midnight Swinger) record of 40 hours, 8 minutes non-stop, set at the Diamond Jo Casino in Dubuque, Iowa, United States, from April 29 to 30, 2013. Gandoki had promised to prepare 600 topics to make jokes on, to attack the previous record. He performed from September 29 to 12:34pm October 1, 2016, at The Exclusive Mansion Hotel, Oniru, Victoria Island, Lagos, setting a new record of 42 hours, 10 minutes (Adesanya, 2016; Chima, 2016; Star Connect Media, 2016). He is Itsekiri by tribe, and Deltan.

[5] Godwin Komone (Gordons) was born in Warri, and spent most of his formative years there, raised by his grandmother since his parents' separation when he was three months old. He attended Ighogbadu Primary School, and then Nana College, Warri. He obtained a Bachelor's degree in Integrated Science from Delta State University, Abraka. He is Urhobo by tribe, and Deltan.

[6] Bowoto Jephthah Oluwatiseyifumi Tanimola (Akpororo) was born on October 3, 1989 in Warri, where he was raised, through primary and secondary education. He relocated to Lagos in 2009 after winning the Calabar zone of the Opa Williams-organised National Comedy Challenge; and contested twice in the *AY Open Mic Challenge*, placing second at first attempt, and first at second attempt. He rose to fame after his 2013 performance at Basketmouth's Laff n' Jamz show, opening the route to performing in other comedy shows. He later obtained a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from Lagos State University. He is a native of Ilaje, Ondo State.

[7] Bovi Ugboma was born on September 25, 1979 in Benin City, the capital of Edo State, attending University of Benin Staff School for his primary education. He was shuttled around three secondary schools in Delta and Edo State by his civil servant parents, due to disciplinary infractions: Government College, Ughelli; Edokpolor Grammar School, Benin City; and Boys Model Secondary School, Onicha Olona. He obtained a Bachelor's degree in Theatre Arts from Delta State University, Abraka. He is Isoko by tribe, and Deltan.

[8] Maleke Moye Idowu was born on February 14, 1979, in Benin City, Edo State, and had his primary and secondary education there, attending Oguola Primary School and Edokpolor Grammar School. He proceeded to obtain a degree in Business Administration from Auchi Polytechnic, Edo State.

[9] Julius Agwu was born April 7, 1973, in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, where he hails from. He attended Elementary State School and later UBE Primary School both in Choba, Port Harcourt, for his primary education. He got his secondary education from Government Secondary School, Borokiri; and Akpor Grammar School, Ozoba, both in Port Harcourt. He secured a Diploma, and later a Bachelor's degree in Theatre Arts, from University of Port Harcourt. He is Ikwerre by tribe.

[10] Bright Okpocha (Basketmouth) was born on September 14, 1978, in Ajegunle, and had his primary and secondary education in Apapa, Lagos, before getting a degree in Sociology and Anthropology from University of Benin. He is Igbo by tribe, and hails from from Abia State.

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