



## Socialist Workers & Youth League

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## BEYOND THE DIVERSIONARY ANTHEM SWAP

The highlight of the first anniversary of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's All Progressive Congress (APC) government on 20 May, was the swapping of Nigeria's national anthem. The anthem foisted on the country by a military government in 1978 was replaced with the anthem that the colonial state put in place when it handed the *flag independence* over to a "native" ruling class in 1960.

There has been a lot of hue and cry on this swap over the last few days. On one side are those who echo the government's assertion that the renewed anthem is more meaningful than the one it replaced. On the other are those who argue against the swap based on several reasons. These include the colonial origins of the "new" anthem, as well as words in it that are derogatory and sexist.

We share the view that reference to Nigerian peoples as "tribes" is derogatory. It reflects the Eurocentric perspective that African societies are primitive. We also consider the assertion of standing in "brotherhood" sexist. However, the most fundamental point for working people and youths to note in this absurd drama is that it is a diversionary tactic of the exploiter class. The aim of those in power is to make us set aside the more leprous questions of their failure for debate on the scabies of anthems.

There is mass hunger in the land. Workers, poor farmers, traders, artisans and even middle-class professionals can hardly feed themselves and their families. The trade unions have called for a living wage as the new national minimum wage. The federal and state governments continue to stall the process of negotiations, making useless offers of take home pay that will not be able to take the worker home. And insecurity stalks the land; kidnapping has become an industry and banditry has made the lives of people in rural areas brutish and short, particularly in northwest and northeast geopolitical zones.

These are the issues of concern to us. Haven failed to find solutions to them, the federal government has thrown us the bone of an anthem swap. We must not allow ourselves to be carried away with this devious stratagem. We must also see beyond the trickery of nationalism which is essentially meant to present our exploiters and we, the exploited working masses, as being one. We are not. Irrespective of which national anthem we have, the ruling class in Nigeria have more in common with capitalists everywhere than with us, the working people in Nigeria. And we as working people in Nigeria, have much more in common with other exploited working-class people in other countries, than with "our own" oppressors in government and big business. Workers of all lands must unite and fight to break the chains of capitalism, liberate ourselves and build a better, socialist, society.

We thus urge working-class people in Nigeria to see beyond the diversionary aim of the anthem swap and the politics of nationalism for the incorporation of working people into the agenda of our oppressors.

Sgd

*Kunle Wizeman Ajayi*

**National Chairperson**

Sgd

*Amara Nwosu*

**National Secretary**