Defining the effects of political party symbols on ballots in Kenya and its impact on Kenya's electoral process

Machel Yubu Kazungu

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DEFINING THE EFFECTS OF POLITICAL PARTY SYMBOLS ON BALLOTS IN KENYA 
AND ITS IMPACT ON KENYA'S ELECTORAL PROCESS

by

Machel Yubu Kazungu

A Thesis

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Master of Fine Arts

Major: Art

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all the Kenyan families that lost loved ones during the 2007/08 post-election violence. To those that were displaced and received no aid or support from the government. Every citizen has the right to have their voice heard. They deserve it. The fight for equality and human rights should always continue especially when there are leaders who misuse their time in office.
Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my thesis committee chair Dr. Michael Schmidt, who helped to get me started on this graduate degree journey when I was emailing him all the way from Kenya. His experience in graphic design, public health, and education has been a tremendous gift to my academic growth. Thanks to his example, I have a lot to aspire to in terms of achieving my full potential. My other committee members, Professors Lucas Charles and Gary Golightly, have always been supportive and shared positive energy with me at all times. My dad and my mom have always taught me that media is a powerful tool of communication. Their inspiration and support have been invaluable. Lastly, to my siblings, who have always encouraged me to continue my drive to help those who have a passion for design in my country.
Abstract

Design is a huge part of any functional democracy. Many of the most essential forms and documents that connect the government with the citizen are crafted by designers. Good design helps bridge the gap between citizen and government interactions—making them effective and pleasant. Poor design can create a barrier to exercising one’s rights as a citizen. Ballots are one of those official documents; however, they are more essential because they are the only way that the voter can have their voice heard in an election. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the importance of ballot design, the limitations of adjusting ballot design, and ultimately ways in which voter education can overcome poor/inappropriate ballot design. Reviewing case studies in the United States and Kenya reveals different challenges that highlight democracy as an ongoing design problem. As the evolution of ballot design continues, the most efficient way to adjust to changes as a voter is to empower yourself with voter education.
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# Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KANU</td>
<td>Kenya African National Union</td>
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<td>KADU</td>
<td>Kenya African Democratic Union</td>
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<td>KPU</td>
<td>Kenya People’s Union</td>
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<td>CCU</td>
<td>Chama Cha Uma Party</td>
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<td>KPTP</td>
<td>Kenya Patriotic Trust Party</td>
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<td>NFK</td>
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<td>KPCP</td>
<td>Kenya People's Convention Party</td>
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<td>PPP-K</td>
<td>People's Patriotic Party of Kenya</td>
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<td>KASC</td>
<td>Kenya Social Congress</td>
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<td>ACP</td>
<td>Agape Coalition Party</td>
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<td>NARC</td>
<td>National Rainbow Coalition</td>
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<td>PNU</td>
<td>Party of National Unity</td>
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<td>ODM</td>
<td>Orange Democratic Movement</td>
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<td>LDP</td>
<td>Liberal Democratic Party</td>
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<td>NAK</td>
<td>National Alliance Party of Kenya</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<td>GNU</td>
<td>Government of National Unity</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECK</td>
<td>Electoral Commission of Kenya</td>
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<tr>
<td>IEBC</td>
<td>Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDP-K</td>
<td>Community Development Party of Kenya</td>
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<tr>
<td>ORPP</td>
<td>Office of the Registrar of Political Parties</td>
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Chapter 1: Introduction

One of the most important interactions people have with their government is the ballot paper. A ballot paper, or election paper, is a form that voters fill out to exercise their right to vote. A ballot paper lists the candidates running for an election, and the voter can mark their preferences accordingly. Therefore, ballot papers can be considered official documents (Polyas, 2012).

The design of a ballot paper is essential. A voter's cast ballot conveys their political choices and intentions. Good design presents understandable options and reduces the chances of errors made by voters. Symbolically, ballots also act as a visual representation of the compact between citizen and state (Therese Pearce, 2021).

Ballot design impacts two important aspects of the election process. One is the ability of the voter to understand the choices of candidates or parties running in the election and select their choices validly. Elements found on the ballot, like party symbols, candidate photos, brief descriptions of the party, and candidate goals, help voters correctly mark their chosen candidate. The other aspect is accuracy in counting the votes. Poorly designed ballots with, for example, small and closely aligned preference squares, can lead to voters’ marks overlapping more than one square. This overlap can lead to a consequent dispute about whether the vote is valid and which party or candidate the voter selected (The Electoral Knowledge Network, 2007). An election’s outcome can potentially flip because of bad ballot design—not just by the misalignment of preference squares but also by choices as minor as the order of candidates' names (Miller & Krosnick, 1998).
Importance of Ballots

Ballots should serve as a means to have voters' voices heard, but ballots can sometimes be barriers to exercising people's right to vote. In many countries, like Kenya, the voting process can be difficult. There are many hoops to get through, such as having a voter Identification Card (I.D.), registering to vote, getting to the polling station, and more. Even after overcoming these challenges, many voters do not know what will be on the ballot until election day; therefore, ballots must be designed to effectively communicate to the average voter. This involves various design decisions (style of type, rulings, and spacings) and constraints catered to serve the jurisdiction members best (Cheng, 2020).

This study explores the importance of ballot design and its effect on how people vote, the limitations of adjusting ballot design, and ultimately ways in which voter education can overcome poor/inappropriate ballot design. Reviewing case studies in the United States and Kenya reveals different challenges that highlight democracy as an ongoing design problem even in advanced democracies.

Party Symbols in Kenya

Kenya's political history reveals that party symbols have a rich history tied to tribalism. A case study of Kenya's 2005 referendum and 2007 national election proves that party symbols in ballot design can directly influence the vote of Kenya's electorate and therefore affect an election outcome. This response to party symbols on ballots causes a trend that has drastically undermined the electoral process in Kenya. Attention to policies and agendas of individual candidates has been minimized and so has their accountability during their terms (Oloo, 2007).
The benefits of having party symbols on ballots make it impractical to have a version of a design devoid of them. Party symbols allow for illiterate voters to identify the candidate they are voting for, they create a ballot design that is easy to parse, and they create an opportunity for candidates to include their party slogans in the ballot. However, educating the Kenyan voters on the negative influence of party symbols could empower them to be more equipped to respond to their inclusion on the ballot.

It is evident from the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) voter education training curricula that party symbol education is not key to Kenya's voter education process (IEBC, 2013). While a curricular unit focuses on political parties, adding party symbol education would significantly enhance that unit and educate voters on a much-needed lesson on the influence of party symbols in Kenya's electoral process.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Evolution of Ballots in the United States

As shown in figure 1, ballots from different periods can, in some ways, document the history of the United States' journey in democracy. From flamboyant designs cast in public to the "secret ballot era," where voter-fatigue-inspired designs (ballots that had over 500 names on a 14ft long list) were reformed by the short ballot movement (Cheng, 2020). The obstacles, failures, and triumphs of America's democracy are reflected in the path to better ballot design. For example, American ingenuity and enthusiasm led to the creation of the successful "war ballot" in 1944, which was shipped out to service people and soldiers around the globe during the Second World War (Bassetti, 2020).

Despite service members’ concerns and pressures in battle and their immediate need for supplies and materiel, 4.4 million votes were cast, displaying how important an inclusive democratic government was to the American people and the benefits of a functional ballot (Cheng, 2020). On the other hand, some ballots mark a time in America’s history when anxieties about elections and presidential candidates have caused violence, escalated political tensions, and led to the collapse and subsequent reconstruction of electoral systems, such as Rutherford vs Tilden in 1876 (Brennan Center for Justice, 2020).

Figure 1 below demonstrates the evolution of the changing state of American ballots over time. The images of the ballots are from graphic designer and author, Alicia Yin Cheng’s book, This Is What Democracy Looked Like: A Visual History of the Printed Ballot.
Figure 1. Evolution of Ballots in the United States, by the author (Images sourced from This Is What Democracy Looked Like: A Visual History of the Printed Ballot).
“Butterfly” Ballot

Even though every state continues to adjust and evolve its voting systems, ballot design continues to be a significant obstacle to address in the voting process. As recently as 2000, there was a highly contested election in the United States pitting incumbent Republican President George W. Bush and his Democratic Party challenger, Al Gore. That election was too close to call. It came down to Florida, where two recounts were done, and a third one had to be stopped by the Supreme Court to declare Bush the winner.

The recounts were triggered by spoiled ballots and confusion among voters. Voters marked and canceled the options on the ballot, reportedly being uncertain of whom they voted for based on the design of the ballot. The infamous "butterfly" ballot design presented a misaligned space between the columns where voters marked and the row where the candidate's name was (see figure 2). After reviewing the number of spoiled ballots in comparison to Bush's 537-win vote margin, Palm Beach Post concluded the "butterfly" ballot design as having cost Al Gore the presidency (Mestel, 2019). The butterfly ballot was designed with all good intentions, but its shortcomings led to the realization that ballot design can change an election outcome.
Figure 2. Butterfly Ballot, *How bad ballot design can sway the result of an election* (Mestel, 2019).

**Making Voting Easy**

The ballot paper form and content need to be easily understandable. Simplicity adds speed to voter flow and assists all voters—not only those less literate—to feel confident in their choice after casting their vote (The Electoral Knowledge Network, 2007). Aspects of ballot design have continued to improve since the year 2000. Technological advances and non-for-profit organizations like the Center for Civic Design have played a significant role in bridging the gap between citizen and government interactions—making these interactions as effective and pleasant as possible (Mestel, 2019). A continual shift has also been made to have professional designers work on ballots rather than assigning any available election official. This has been a significant change in addressing ballot design concerns in the USA.
**Ballot Design in Kenya**

On Kenya’s, ballots, candidates are presented in rows, including a photo of their likeness, their name, and their party symbol (see figure 3). At the end of the row is a check box, where one marks which candidate they are voting for. However, within the simple design of ballots in Kenya lies a significant flaw, the inclusion of party symbols.

![Ballot Design](image)

**Figure 3.** The *Standard* and the *Nation* newspapers, Ballot Paper, 2017

Including party symbols on ballots has led to a trend that largely influences election outcomes. A vast majority of voters (predominantly illiterate voters) select most candidates solely on the visual cue of the party symbols (Orvis, 2001). This response is caused by numerous associations between party symbols, party leaders, and tribes during election season. When voters get to the polls, they complete the ballot based on the most popular party symbol in their tribe (Nyongesa, 2018). In effect, this trend has drastically undermined the electoral process in Kenya by minimizing the importance of the policies and agendas of individual candidates and their accountability during their terms (Oloo, 2007).

Political party symbols in Kenya are mandated by law. Parties design their preferred symbols and submit them to the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) for approval. The symbols and colors identify one political party from the other. They are chosen to be easily
understood, remembered, and recognized by the average voter (Nyongesa, 2018). The use of party symbols in ballots is advantageous in at least two ways. First, they help make the ballot design easy to parse and categorize, and second, they help illiterate voters quickly identify candidates of their choice (Gĩthĩnji, 2021).

There are also disadvantages to the application of party symbols on ballots. Ultimately party symbols are designed to serve the political party's purpose; therefore, over the years since independence, party symbols have amassed a rich and layered history tied to the evolution of political parties. A significant part of that evolution includes colonial humiliations/limitations, corruption, cronyism, and tribalism. Unfortunately, political figures today leverage these challenges to form ethnic coalitions, gain votes and manipulate voters (Oloo, 2007). Political parties have become the vessels by which voter manipulation is orchestrated, and one of the primary tools used is party symbols.

**Design of Kenyan Party Symbols**

There are many techniques by which politicians craft the perception of party symbols, the foremost being the design. Party symbols implement instruments used by local households to relate more to the day-to-day citizen in Kenya (MALANDE, 2018). For example:

- Chama Cha Uma Party (CCU) uses a pot
- Kenya Patriotic Trust Party (KPTP) uses a plate
- New Ford Kenya (NFK) uses a cup
- Kenya People's Convention Party (KPCP) uses a gourd, and
- People's Patriotic Party of Kenya (PPP-K) uses a calabash.
Due to the heavy influence of Christianity and religion in the country, some parties opt for more religious imagery that evokes elements of the Bible. This strategy creates an advantage for candidates who want to associate themselves with the church and religious figures in the country (Malande, 2018). Examples include

- Kenya Social Congress (KASC), which uses a dove
- Agape Coalition Party (ACP) uses a ram, and
- Community Development Party of Kenya (CDP-K) uses two doves.

There is also party design that involves using symbols with rhetorical devices such as metaphor to manipulate Kenyans into supporting an ethnic-based political system (see figure 4). On the surface, politicians use these symbols to campaign for a unified Kenya, but on a deeper level, they serve as ways to leverage votes by fueling ethnic-based rivalries in the country (Malande, 2018).

Historically, therefore, party symbols are part and parcel of Kenya's electoral process. In every five-year electoral cycle, parties, old and new, endeavor to persuade voters that their symbol truly represent the best future for Kenya. These powerful symbols continue to be a prominent feature in ballots, inevitably influencing the Kenyan vote (Orvis, 2001). Below are some examples of party symbols that appear harmless at first glance but were used to leverage votes from certain tribes and communities in the country.
In 2007, the orange symbol was used to garner votes from all non-Kikuyu tribes. Reinforcing a tribal division that reared its head in a 2005 referendum vote. The ODM party ended up winning a majority of seats in parliament. (Roberts, 2009)

In 2002, NARC used this symbol of a rainbow to represent an inclusive Kenya. The party won 62% of the national vote leading to the largest win in a multiparty Kenya. However, only 2 years after winning the presidency, all members of the cabinet were removed (Nunley, 2006).

In 2017, TNA used this party symbol along with its slogan "tuko pamoja" (we are together) to leverage votes from the Kikuyu and Kalenjin tribes. Two years after their victory, the party experienced political infighting based on who would be the next party leader. This led to a halt in many government initiatives for the country. (Nyongesa, 2018)

Figure 4. Examples of Powerful Party Symbols in Kenya, by the author

**Parties, Elections, Symbols, and Kenya’s Politics of Ethnicity**

Associating political parties and, subsequently, political party symbols with tribalism/ethnicity evolved from Kenya’s history of inward politics. Inward politics is a behavior that involves people voting for and supporting leaders from their tribe only. It is a sheltered approach to politics specifically based on tribe. This behavior was learned and passed down from the colonial days (Orvis, 2001). After the British intrusion in Kenya in 1900, the forceful implementation of many restrictive laws and regulations favored the colonial rulers.

One included restricting local, Kenyan-led political organizations from operating on a national level. Such organizations could only operate at the district level, or tribal level.
Initially, the idea behind this form of political organization was to institute a mechanism for political containment against the emergence of a countrywide nationalist movement or organization (divide and conquer). However, through district and ethnic-oriented political parties, the African population would enter an era of continued political compartmentalization based on emotional ethnic nationalism (Nick G Wanjoji, 1997). The seeds of hostile ethnic sentiments, or tribalism, planted in the 1950s have become a massive problem for Kenya (Nick G Wanjoji, 1997; Orvis, 2001). Politicians today continue to use compartmentalized politics and emotional ethnic nationalism, especially during election season, and party symbols have become an essential tool to boost one's popularity in tribal politics (Malande, 2018). Political figures continue to use their parties and party symbols to leverage ethnic-based votes and manipulate Kenyans into a cycle of poor leadership.

**Political Choices Since Independence.**

British colonial policy in Kenya restricted the earliest African political associations within the borders of ethnically defined administrative districts. Thus, ethnicity marked the earliest African political activism. In Kenya, the pattern gave rise to the opposition of Kenya African National Union (KANU) and Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) in the immediate post-independence period (Cliffe, 2003). KANU was associated with the two most populous tribes in the country, the Kikuyu and the Luo. Kenya's first President, Jomo Kenyatta, represented the Kikuyu, while Jaramogi Oginga Odinga represented the Luo. The opposition KADU party was a coalition of smaller tribes attempting to advocate for their interests. KANU ended up winning and absolving the KADU party, giving rise to KANU’s 39-year reign (Mutua, 2008; Oloo, 2007).
The Rooster, or "Jogoo" in Swahili, was KANU's party symbol representing "the harbinger of a new life" and "the call of a new dawn." The reign of KANU is known for achieving independence and the land-grabbing legacy of the first President, Jomo Kenyatta (Good, 1968). It is also known for the second President, Daniel Arap Moi, who made Kenya a single-party state and had many of his political opponents/critics detained (Adar & Munyae, 2001). While multi-party elections were re-introduced in 1991, KANU managed to win the 1992 and 1997 elections under questionable circumstances.

It was not until 2002 that KANU lost an election in Kenya. The major opposition party, the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), consisted of the Kikuyu leader Mwai Kibaki and his Luo counterpart, Raila Odinga. The duo amassed enough support from their two more populous tribes to win the 2002 general election (Karume, 2003).

The 2002 election victory was reminiscent of the initial KANU coalition between Kenyatta (Kikuyu) and Oginga Odinga (Luo). The difference was that NARC's party symbol and ideology were inclusive. The symbol included a rainbow and a torch, representing a collective vision for the future (Karume, 2003). The slogan, "Haki Yetu Sasa/Inawezekana" (Our rights/It is now achievable/possible), reinforced the message of an inclusive government with a collective movement beneficial to all Kenyans. NARC's defeat of KANU was the largest election victory in Kenya's history (Nunley, 2006). However, the legacy of the NARC government is reflected by Kenya's 2007 presidential election, which can be characterized as the political clash of the titans. The election pitted Kibaki (Kikuyu), incumbent President and leader of the Party of National Unity (PNU), and Raila, a Luo and leader of the Orange Democratic Movement ODM).

The 2007 election was by far the most intense in Kenya's history, partly because it resurfaced past tribal conflicts, perpetuated tribal stereotypes, and led to post-election violence
(Roberts, 2009). This election also showcased how powerful the party symbol in Kenya had become and how much of an influence it had on election outcomes. To break down the 2007 election outcomes and the impact of political party symbols that year, we must look at what sparked the emergence of the most famous party symbol in Kenya: the 2005 constitutional review.

'Banana' vs. 'Orange'

The impact of symbols in Kenya can be explained in the circumstances surrounding the 2005 constitutional referendum that preceded the 2007 elections. The referendum pitted two key partners in the ruling NARC government that won the 2002 presidential election. These were the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) of Raila Odinga and President Mwai Kibaki’s National Alliance Party of Kenya (NAK). In the pre-election Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), NARC had agreed, among other things, that it would give Kenyans a new constitution within one hundred days of its coming to power. However, the NAK wing of the coalition abandoned the idea once NARC was in power (Wanyande et al., 2007).

The strain between LDP and NAK reached its peak in the run-up to the referendum on the draft constitution. The pro-Government NAK delegates preferred a system of government with a president who would be the head of state and government and would appoint a prime minister and, in consultation with the prime minister, would also appoint the cabinet (Lumumba, 2008). Conversely, the LDP of Raila Odinga preferred a system of government where there would be a president with a prime minister drawn from the party with the largest majority in Parliament and be confirmed in Parliament. Such a prime minister would be the head of government and appoint a cabinet in consultation with the president (Lumumba, 2008).
The referendum debate had two different schools of thought. The symbol of an orange, or "chungwa" in Swahili, represented a parliamentary system based heavily on devolution. In this system, there would be the distribution of resources across all local governments in the nation. Banana, or "ndizi" in Swahili, represented a more traditional parliament where the decisions were made on the national level (Anyang’Nyong’o, 2007). When the Constitution Draft was subjected to a referendum on November 21, 2005, it was rejected with 152 constituencies out of 212 voting “no,” a total of just over three million votes out of five million cast votes, delivering victory to the 'Orange' side; a vote of 57 percent to 42 percent (Mutua, 2005).

In this referendum, the trend of voting for symbols manifested itself. Voters at the polls would associate both symbols with catchphrases from different political figures and even use tribal expressions to identify them. Across the nation, “oranges” and “bananas” took on a whole new meaning and defined who you were as a Kenyan. The referendum outcome divided the country ethnically down the line. The “banana” group got overwhelming support from the Kikuyu ethnic group, and the “orange” group amassed support from a majority of the non-Kikuyu communities. Whatever the outcome, there was little doubt that the country would be deeply divided after the referendum. The fate of the new constitution became a contest between tribes (Mutua, 2005).

The impact of the referendum split up the NARC government. NAK transformed itself into a new coalition called the Government of National Unity (GNU), thereby debunking once and for all the idea of a coalition government under NARC. LDP and other “orange” supporters, on the other hand, transformed themselves into the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) party. Soon after, Raila's partner in ODM, Kalonzo Musyoka, abandoned the party to form the splinter ODM-Kenya (ODM-K) party. Raila's ODM and Kalonzo's ODM-K would both face President
Kibaki in the 2007 presidential election (Mutua, 2009; Nyong'o, 1997). Here we can see how new parties were adopting the “orange” party name and symbol because of how popular it had become.

The 2007 elections continued to reinforce division in the country using the tribal associations of the “orange” party symbol, which were manifested during the 2005 referendum (Mutua, 2005). Raila hoped to replicate the victory of the 2005 referendum using the now powerful “orange” symbol. Most non-Kikuyu tribes identified with that symbol and ended up voting for the ODM party (Jonyo, 2012). Voters did not know what was on the ballot apart from the familiar "chungwa" or “orange” symbol (which they had encountered at the polls in their last 2005 visit).

The trend of voting for the most familiar symbol continued to manifest itself. Unfortunately for Raila, due to tampered presidential results, he did not secure a presidential victory, but it was evident that the symbol was effective, in part, because the ODM party won most of the seats in the National Assembly. The peculiarities surrounding the presidential vote were serious enough to cause a 59-day conflict, which involved the death of about 1,500 Kenyans, the raping of 3,000 women, and the displacement of 300,000 people (Roberts, 2009).

Post-Election Aftermath

Following the post-election violence of 2007/08, Kenya scrambled to put together systems to avoid a repeat of the horrific tragedy. In 2010, a new Constitution was promulgated partially decentralizing presidential powers. The Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK), which had failed to serve as a non-partisan entity that observed and monitored a fair and peaceful
elections process, was disbanded and replaced by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) (Hope, 2015).

Among other things, IEBC was to put in place a new, more effective voter education curriculum that would empower the Kenyan public to be more aware of their voting rights and civic responsibilities. Some of the main challenges to IEBC included what the content of their new voter education curriculum would include and how to disseminate information in a practical, cost-efficient way (Hope, 2015). IEBC is equally tasked with addressing problems arising on election day and post-election to prepare Kenyans and equip them with the knowledge that can avert possible violent situations.

**Voter education**

Voter education means providing citizens with information about participating in elections. The state provides these resources via a non-partisan national electoral commission. Government departments that are involved in voter education are scrutinized by a third party. They are also supported by a number of private institutions that strive to strengthen democracies through voter education. The goal of voter education is to teach how to vote rather than whom to vote for (Polyas, 2012).

Key beneficiaries of voter/civic education work include school-going children, youth, community-based organizations, media practitioners, the general public, people with disabilities, women, sports clubs, religious groups, low-income communities, indigenous groups, schools, rural communities, the whole nation, grassroots communities and political leaders (Kibwana, 1996; Kioko et al., 2002). Most voter civic education tends to be non-formal as opposed to
formal education. The principal forms of voter/civic education in Kenya include workshops, public meetings, theatre, lectures, and print or electronic media (Citizen TV Kenya, 2017).

In Kenya, the constitutional body charged with voter education is the IEBC, even though private entities, including local non-governmental organizations, have played a similar role principally with funding from donor countries and entities (Kenya, 2013). Voter education focuses on offering basic information about election participation. There is a voter education week, an exercise facilitated throughout the country in the different counties. There are exhibition centers that citizens can go to and get registered and discuss electoral processes. Voters learn the different responsibilities of the entities involved in and during elections and their responsibility as voters (IEBC, 2013).

There are three main topics in voter education week: voter registration, ICT infrastructure employed during elections, and the importance of citizens' peaceful participation in the electoral process. Additional topics include how to be a candidate, how to get into a party list, and how to participate directly in political party activities (IEBC, 2013). IEBC's voter education mandate also involves disseminating information materials and programs. These pamphlets and flyers are designed to inform voters and give specifics on the mechanics of the process of voting during an election. Figure 5 outlines the current voter education curriculum in Kenya. Empowering Kenya through voter education is to make all this information available and accessible to as many constituencies as possible. The principal forms by which voter/civic education is disseminated in Kenya include workshops, seminars, public meetings, lectures, and media. The voter education curriculum strives to reach every electorate in the country. This means prioritizing disadvantaged voters in remote areas just as much as mainstream voters in the capital city. Any marginalized
communities are targeted and encouraged to participate in a healthy democratic process (Citizen TV Kenya, 2017).

Key beneficiaries of IEBC’s voter/civic education work have included school-going children, youth, community-based organizations, media practitioners, the general public, sports clubs, and religious groups (IEBC, 2013). This still leaves out people with disabilities, women, low-income communities, indigenous groups, and rural communities. Voter civic education tends to be non-formal as opposed to formal education.

IEBC’S Training Curricula (next page)
Figure 5. IEBC Voter Education Curriculum in Kenya (IEBC, 2013), graphic by the author
Media, Music, and Arts in Kenya’s Voter Education Process

In addition to the formal structure in the IEBC's training curriculum for the public, media, music, and arts have played informal but effective roles in encouraging Kenyans to vote. Media, theatre, art, music, dance, and song have been used to attract the Kenyan voter (Citizen TV Kenya, 2017). While the combination of satire and comic relief has succeeded in educating voters and criticizing the government, more candid commentary on the government has not been successful in terms of reaching the Kenyan public. In fact, during the Moi regime, which was filled with political detentions, journalists such as Bedan Mbugua, editor of a weekly Christian publication, *Beyond*, as well as a couple, Pius and Loise Nyamora, who established and edited *Society Magazine*, found their candid publications on President Moi's Government banned. Pius and Loise were later exiled to the United States (Pirouet, 1995). Satirist writer Wahome Mutahi of the *Standard* newspapers was jailed for five years after his contributing column was falsely associated with *Mwakenya*, a clandestine movement that sought to overthrow President Moi (Branch, 2012).

In effect Kenyan’s have been accustomed to receiving information effectively through comic relief, music, and over the top digital media. In fact, it has been noted that some of the most popular politicians use humor to constitute 60% of their speeches when addressing crowds during campaign season (Sidney, 2022). The mastery of combining educational content with entertainment has been the bread and butter of effectively communicating to the Kenyan public. For the youth, theatre, has played a major role in providing civic/voter education to Kenyans. In the 1980s through 1990s, young people in national politics have been regularly represented at the annual Kenya National Schools and College Drama Festivals (KNSCDF), part of the national school calendar since its inception in the early fifties. Students have taken advantage of the
platform provided through the festivals to articulate their concerns on national issues, such as voter education (Mwangola, 2007). In a village theatre drama extracted from his book *I Will Marry When I Want*, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, then professor of literature at the University of Nairobi, sought a revolutionary way of speaking to the peasants through a village theater at Kiamirithu near his home area in Limuru. Here, villagers intermingled with university students and lecturers as they enjoyed political satire and caricaturing of political leaders (Amutabi, 2007; Cliffe, 2003).

In the 1990s, cartoonists, like Godfrey Mwampembwa, alias Gado, made their careers in local newspapers creating political caricatures, humorously poking fun at Moi and many other elected officials, without political repercussions from the Government. The juxtaposition of these caricatures with the more somber daily news offers a summarized version of the day's issues, laced with comic relief (Nyairo, 2021). This makes them informative and entertaining at the same time. Some of the rhetorical devices that artists like Gado have used are irony, metaphor, and sarcasm (see figure 6).
Figure 6. Caricatures. Gado (Godfrey Mwapembwa) (2014, 2008, 2019 respectively)
In figure 6 (Gado, 2019), Gado's work showcases how music and musicians contribute to the education of Kenyans. The caricature illustrates a politician, Anne Waiguru, who was accused of corruption in two different scandals, blaming the musician King Kaka for pointing out the issue of corruption in his famous song, "Wajinga Nyinyi." In this song, Kaka criticizes Kenyan voters and politicians for repeating the same mistakes in and around election season. Musicians have penetrated Kenyan culture in two significant ways: having their music played in public transportation and accumulating significant social media followers (Nyairo & Ogude, 2005).

In the 1990s, the Moi government moved against owners of public transporters on suspicion that some of their vehicles were playing seditious music for the passengers' listening pleasure and political education. Songs protesting the razing of shanty towns in Nairobi, some of Kenyatta's early speeches, and several tunes commemorate the deeds of opposition figures. For example, Kenneth Matiba, a wealthy businessman who had led a public bid for multi-party rule and was detained, and J.M. Kariuki, a defender of populist interests, was assassinated during Kenyatta's reign. Many of the tapes were released and played in advance of the multi-party demonstrations and riots of the mid-1990s (Adar & Munyae, 2001). The President's office moved quickly to de-register the offending vehicles, making it difficult for the sector to organize to influence policy (Widner, 1992).

The song Unbwogable by musical group Gidi Gidi Maji Maji became an anthem for the NARC coalition of Kibaki and Raila. NARC politicians played the song at every one of their campaign rallies and eventually at the inauguration of Kibaki as President in 2003. This was a demonstration of how music could be used to empower Kenyans and galvanize them for a common cause (Nyairo & Ogude, 2005). Eric Wainaina, a Kenyan graduate from Berkley
College of Music in the U.S., is a musician and political activist. His songs aim at politicians in Kenya. Some of the songs have been banned on state-run radio but remain popular with the people. His song, Kenya Nchi ya Kitu Kidogo (Swahili for “Kenya is a corrupted country”), disapproves of Kenya's authoritarian and corrupt political culture (Poon, 2014).

Artists and musicians have not just been on-lookers or voter educators; they have also participated in elections and won. Charles Kanyi, alias "Jaguar," vied in the 2017 elections and was elected to represent Nairobi's Starehe Constituency. Jaguar's 2005 hit song Kigeugeu may have propelled him to stardom and elective politics. In 2007, Peter Kaimenyi, alias Kajairo, of the television fame Redykyulass, unsuccessfully vied for Nairobi's Embakasi Constituency. Kajairo used to do humorous mixes to famous songs. Also, DNA and P-Unit's group hit song Una, dominated the 2007 presidential election.

One cannot discuss the combination of education and entertainment in Kenya without discussing the role of television in a sensational but humorous show Redykyulass, aired on Nation Newspapers Group’s NTV in the waning days of Moi's regime. This show consisted of a trio of performers who portrayed various Kenyan politicians in skits. The show's goal was to make general social commentary and educate, inspire, and inform Kenyans. The show was famous in the late 1990s and early 2000s at the height of political change in the country from the KANU regime to NARC regime. Redykyulass was performed and recorded in front of a live audience and always ended with a Lingala music dance style ndombolo from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which was then popular with Kenyan audiences. Watching the imitation of Moi dancing to ndombolo was a sensation that made for a light-hearted and yet well-thought-out commentary. Even Moi watched the show as it marked a milestone toward Kenya's eventual re-introduction to plural politics.
Inspiration from Literature

The butterfly ballot design of 2000 was a huge source of inspiration. It showed that design has many implications in modern democracies. The cause of the unsuccessful design of the 2000 butterfly ballot was based on a design decision that was meant to benefit the older voters in Palm Beach County, making the type bigger. The effect was a staggered arrangement of columns on the ballot that confused many voters (Chisnell, 2016). In fact, the confusion led to a large number of votes for anti-Semite Pat Buchanan in a county with one of the largest Jewish populations. A review of U.S. literature that documents the evolution of ballot design throughout its history, reveals that democracy is an ongoing design problem.

In Kenya, research on defining the effects of political party symbols on ballots led to the constitutional referendum held in November 2005. Many people campaigned for a "yes" vote, including President Kibaki and several government officials. However, 58% of voters rejected the proposed constitution and voted "no."

Interestingly, ballots from the 2005 referendum had “yes” represented as a “banana” and “no” represented as an “orange.” Even though Kenya's electorate is 74% literate, this visual approach to the ballot was made (Andreassen et al., 2006). The emphasis on these two symbols in the 2005 referendum ballot paper began a trend of voting for party symbols instead of policies and agendas.

Kenya's response to the “banana” and “orange” symbols leveraged tribal politics and divided the country along ethnic lines. Ultimately, the 2007 elections and 2007/08 post elections violence highlighted and confirmed this vital revelation (Roberts, 2009). The re-use of the "orange" party symbol by the opposition party ODM rallied non-Kikuyu tribes to a huge ODM
victory; most of the seats in the National Assembly were won by the ODM party. Due to irregularities in the presidential election results, Raila Odinga did not win. However, it was evident that the “orange” party symbol had played a part in the election outcome.

Following the adoption of a new constitution in 2010, a new electoral commission was put in place to serve the Kenyan electorate better. An updated voter education curriculum was needed to empower Kenyans against all the tactics used to manipulate voters into the tribal politics that led to post-election violence (Hope, 2015). A review of IEBC's curriculum would help to discover what potential gaps there might be. It is evident from the IEBC voter education training curricula that party symbol education is not key to Kenya's voter education process (see figure 5). While Unit 4 focuses on political parties, adding party symbol education would significantly enhance the unit and educate voters on a much-needed lesson on the influence of party symbols in Kenya's electoral process. This way, Kenyan voters will be equipped to encounter any future changes to the design of the ballot, specifically regarding the inclusion of political party symbols.
Chapter 3: Methods

The design process for this voter education intervention was informed by examining cases studies from the US and Kenya. For example, by examining the "butterfly" ballot design of the 2000 Presidential election in the United States, the 2005 constitution referendum in Kenya, and the 2007 presidential election in Kenya, lessons from the literature formed a set of design objectives:

- Produce effective call to action media that will encourage citizens to think critically about candidates on the ballot, and what their policies are.
- Encourage voter education in media.
- Make media free, accessible, and easy to share online, especially on social media.
- Limit content to less than three minutes.
- Use modern slang (sheng) as a communication tool for media.

Design Process

I created a series of posters and a short video for this study. The posters were created using collage technique in Photoshop. This technique enabled me to experiment with different sources of photos, angles, and tones. Juxtaposing different photos together allowed me to assign new meanings and associations to the original photos. For example, in figure7, juxtaposing a photo of President Kenyatta at his inauguration speech with a photo of a British colonial officer policing Kenyans, creates layers of meaning. It shows his triumph as the first president of Kenya, but it also shows a continued presence of colonialism in independent Kenya.

I masked and cropped the photos using the marquee tool and the layer mask tool. Color edits were made using the camera raw filter, where grain, exposure, texture, and saturation were
combined for the desired effect. The brush tool was also helpful in stylizing the photos with certain overlays (lumetri and color burn). For example, in figure 9, a spiral effect was created on the top left section of the poster. The text used in the posters was also important to the overall tone of the posters. They were derived from famous Kenyan songs that played a part in empowering Kenyans to think more critically about the leadership in the country. Some of the text was imported to photoshop from recognizable lyric videos and promotional posters for the song.

The video was created in AfterEffects, using motion graphics to depict the story of Kenya’s Presidential political history. Multiple effects and overlays were used here, including but not limited to grain, texture, 3D mapping, and keyframing visual fragments. The desired effect was a vintage-style video that walked the viewer through the history of Kenya’s presidents.

The study’s design process focused on triggering a conversation among Kenyans before they get to the ballot. It is meant to reach out to voters via design-oriented education. This design-inspired approach is informed by researching the most effective ways to educate Kenyans. By showing Kenyans visual documentation of the country's history in presidents, the study offers a conversation on accountability among citizens, giving them more incentive to receive voter education. The design process is based on the review of each Kenyan President and their terms in office in a poster series and video presentation. I chose to do four posters because Kenya has had four presidents in its history so far (2022). I used the name mount Rushmore to ironically reference the United States sculpture that represents freedom and democracy and is a tribute to George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln.
Using posters allowed me to employ the collage technique, which offers possibilities to create multiple meanings through juxtaposition of different images and photos. Posters are easily sharable on social media platforms mainly because of file size, also they could potentially serve as memes. Memes spread rapidly through internet users, which would be the desired effect of this design. My choice of video allowed me to combine audio and imagery. The audio in the video is from the famous Kenyan song, Tujiangalie by Sauti Sol (Sol ft. Nyashinski, 2018). This choice was inspired by the history of musicians penetrating Kenyan culture by accumulating significant social media followers (Nyairo & Ogude, 2005). The video includes dynamic graphic animations and narration of each president’s tenure. It’s length of three minutes makes it easily digestible and interesting to look at. The dissemination objective is for the video to circulate on social media.
**Chapter 4: Results**

**Kenya’s Mount Rushmore Poster Series**

This series of posters examines all four presidents in Kenya's history. The posters highlight the legacies of the presidents, their accomplishments, and their failures. The series also uses lyrics from famous Kenyan songs that have offered a critique of Kenya's culture of corruption and absent-minded voting. The two main goals of the poster series are to get Kenyan voters to think critically about their choice of leaders and hold themselves accountable for voting for the people they put into office. The posters provoke viewers to ask, “Are we proud of our Mount Rushmore?” The other goal is to encourage Kenyan voters to empower themselves through voter education and learn how to navigate the election season—which is filled with political manipulation—while still making informed choices at the polls.

**President Jomo Kenyatta**

Kenya's first president (Jomo Kenyatta) (shown in figure 7) is juxtaposed with some colonial figures. The poster shows that he overcame colonialism and led Kenya to independence. In this context, the song's lyrics celebrate a triumphant President Kenyatta, comparing his achievement to the leadership we have today, therefore calling upon Kenyan leaders and citizens to do better to honor his legacy. A deeper review of the poster reveals more. The British colonial figure on the right is a sample from a famous photo that shows the forceful policing of a crowd of Kenyans. The figure is positioned behind President Kenyatta as he gives his inauguration speech. (Is he policing the president behind the scenes?) The colonial figure also steps on the "free" Kenyans celebrating during the parade, creating a visual depiction of continued oppression even after independence.
At the bottom, President Kenyatta is riding with the Duke during his inauguration parade. This image is juxtaposed with the lyric that says, "freedom does not come for free" (Sol ft. Nyashinski, 2018). President Kenyatta agreed to preserve British land in Kenya. He also disowned and vilified the freedom fighter movement known as the Mau Mau, denying them the land they were promised.

This image of President Kenyatta riding with the Duke critiques Jomo Kenyatta's land-grabbing legacy, a continuation of a system of oppression that he learned/adopted from the colonial masters before his presidency. Finally, the other lyrics in the background translate directly to "let us look at ourselves." However, they really mean "let us reflect on our actions as citizens and leaders of Kenya," and let us take some accountability.
Figure 7. Kenya’s Mount Rushmore Poster Series (Jomo Kenyatta), by the author.
President Daniel Arap Moi

Kenya's second president is shown in Figure 8. Regarding his mannerisms, he was known as a disciplinarian with a history in academia before politics. Despite his humble beginnings, President Moi went on to stay in power for 24 years. This poster reflects his iron fist presidency. His ubiquitous stick represents his iconic one-person rule, which led to multiple political detentions and torturing of anyone who publicly criticized his government. The poster also showcases the journalists and artists who persisted in the fight for human rights and free expression during his regime.

The song featured here, Unbwogable, by the group Gidi Gidi Maji Maji, is a song that rallied Kenyans against President Moi's hand-picked successor and contributed to propelling the opposition party NARC into more popularity, especially in the eyes of young Kenyan voters. The defiant lyric, "Who the hell do you think you are," is a powerful statement in the song. Such a statement could not be uttered in President Moi's prime, but it was part of a rebellious song that championed the campaign that succeeded his term. This lyric serves as a reminder that politicians are public servants, not tyrants (Maji Maji, 2000).
Figure 8. Kenya’s Mount Rushmore Poster Series (Daniel Arap Moi), by the author.
President Mwai Kibaki

Kenya's third president (shown in figure 9) worked diligently to better the economy, start a free primary school education program, and build upon Kenya's infrastructure. However, after his first term in office, a hotly contested 2007 election campaign against Raila Odinga led to a rigging scandal and the infamous post-election violence tragedy in the country. President Kibaki's achievements in office have remained in the shadows as his legacy was stained by the loss of at least 1,500 innocent Kenyans, the raping of 3,000 women, and the displacement of 300,000 people (Roberts, 2009).

This poster shows his successes in office cast in a monochromatic shadow while the ever-present election scandal continues to haunt his legacy, like a black hole sucking the life out of his achievements in office. The song featured here, "Nchi Ya Kitu Kidogo" by Eric Wainaina, critiques how a corrupt country is a country of small (inadequate) citizens and leaders.
Figure 9. Kenya’s Mount Rushmore Poster Series (Mwai Kibaki), by the author.
President Uhuru Kenyatta

This poster highlights the legacy of Kenya's fourth president, Uhuru Kenyatta (shown in Figure 10), as being a "political chameleon" like his father, Jomo Kenyatta. A political chameleon means that he builds political relationships based on the convenience of his agendas. We see a love triangle of handshakes between President Uhuru, opposition leader Raila Odinga, and Vice President William Ruto in the poster. The handshake with Raila in 2018 was meant to calm political tensions in the country, and the other handshake, with his vice president Ruto, was the inspiration behind their political party symbol. In a strange turn of events, President Uhuru is endorsing Raila Odinga to take the presidency in 2022, while his vice president of 10 years, William Ruto, is also running for the presidential office.

Finally, we see the relationship between President Uhuru and the Chinese leader Xi Jinping, reflecting all the Kenyan government's debt today. All these relationships are juxtaposed/framed with the life of average Kenyan citizens who are directly affected by the country's failing economy. The song highlighted here is "Wajinga Nyinyi" (You fools) by King Kaka. He criticizes Kenyans for making the same mistakes during every election season in the song. He also criticizes Kenyan leaders, asking, "Who's fooling who?"
KARIBU TO THE KENYA REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Mbona akili zenu time ya kura zinajaa shonde

SEVERAL LOCAL MUSICIANS ACCOMPANY RAPPER TO DCI HQs

‘WAJINGA’: WHO’S FOOLING WHO?

Laptop ni multi billion project na watumiaji odhago baharini.

2022 already, si huu ajulani nani ni Prezzi?

Plan to steal Sh3.5bn from NYS expos.

Chinese-built modern railway in Kenya celebrates 1,500 days of safe operation.
Kenya’s Mount Rushmore Short Video

In the short video, there is a call to action to the Kenyan youth, to engage more in politics and actively vote for leaders who represent their best interests. The video uses photomontage and narration to tell the story of Kenya’s political history.

With each president there is a question as to how and why the Kenyan electorate voted for the leader shown. For example, figure 11 shows a scene from the video which evaluates the actions of Kenya’s first president, Jomo Kenyatta in regard to the Mau Mau freedom fighters. Kenyatta promised to give Kenyan land to the warriors in the Mau Mau before he got into power. The land was meant to be a reward for their rebellion against colonial rule, but after Kenyatta won the presidential seat, he labelled the Mau Mau as radicals and ended up preserving British owned land as a sign of good faith to continue receiving financial aid from Britain (Angelo, 2019).

The language used is a modern lingo in Kenya called sheng, which combines Swahili with melting pot of different languages including multiple Kenyan and Nigerian tribal languages and English. This decision was inspired by the use of sheng by the Kenyan youth. The video highlights the highs and lows of each president’s legacy. Are we proud of our Commanders in Chief so far?
Figure 11. Kenya’s Mount Rushmore Video (Jomo Kenyatta), by the author.

Figure 12. Kenya’s Mount Rushmore Video (Jomo Kenyatta), by the author.
Figure 11. Kenya’s Mount Rushmore Video (Uhuru Kenyatta), by the author.
Chapter 5: Discussion

The completed design materials satisfied the design objectives in terms of producing call to action media that encourages citizens to think critically about candidates and what their policies are. The media is freely accessible and easy to share online. The content is under three minutes, broken into segments that make it easy to digest, and customizable into even shorter reels that can be shared on social media. The narration uses modern slang (sheng) as a communication tool for media.

This thesis has highlighted how important it is to encourage Kenyan voters to empower themselves through voter education and learn how to navigate the election season. Political figures continue to use symbols to leverage votes and reinforce an ethnic-based political tradition in Kenya. The fact that they appear on ballots has led to a trend that has undermined the Kenyan democratic process. If empowered and educated on these facts, voters can curb the trend of choosing leaders based on the visual cue of the symbols. They can instead build a culture of taking into account the policies of individual candidates.

Finding ways to encourage Kenyan voters to receive voter education and empower themselves is essential in a modern democracy. Political tactics will continue to evolve; therefore, among many things, voter education curricula need to stay on pace with how to best empower voters. Ballots, voter education pamphlets, party symbols, and many other essential election materials that constitute a functional democracy are design’s contributions to voter education.

Disseminating this information to the public can be done using some successful means of educating and empowering Kenyans about the past. The use of edutainment (education and
entertainment), print, video and music can be combined to make a series of campaigns that will attract the attention of Kenyan voters to engage more with voter education programs. This type of call-to-action campaign can be very cost-effective in terms of dissemination in the current social media generation.

**Limitations**

This study has not been tested by voters or voter education experts. The suggested addition to the voter education curriculum for the IEBC has not been detailed and does not have a full implementation plan in terms of how to teach the content. More research could be done on the influence that political party symbols have on voters. This could be through questionnaires pertaining to the 2005 referendum and the 2007 elections, but also through more observation of voter behavior at the polls.

**Conclusion**

Kenyan voters need voter education, and that they need to hold themselves accountable for their vote and the person they put in office. Bringing awareness to their personal accountability as voters, through motivational messages and engaging use of media, is key to bettering the democratic process in the country.
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