

Celebrity Politicians:  
Does Their Voice Have Any Democratic Legitimacy?

Anfernee Young, ajy349  
IRG 378  
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The University of Texas at Austin  
College of Liberal Arts  
International Relations and Global Studies

## Celebrity Politicians: Does Their Voice Have Any Democratic Legitimacy?

### *Introduction*

In 2003, readers of British newspapers were treated to two front page stories, the first pictured the prime minister strumming an electric guitar and a week later, the second story announced that British pop stars had blasted Tony Blair over his policy towards Iraq. The politicians were playing at being pop stars while the musicians were playing at being politicians. In the US, they are doing it for real. Donald Trump, host of *The Apprentice*, an American game show that judges the business skills of a group of contestants on NBC from 2004 to 2015, was elected President. Meanwhile, as if to confirm the message that politics and popular culture were being ever more intimately linked, elections themselves were being franchised to the makers of reality television game shows. In 2002, an Argentinian television channel launched a program called *The People's Candidate*, which is modeled on the successful *Big Brother* and *Pop Idol* TV formats, involve the weekly elimination of contestants, who are subjected to the critical scrutiny of a judging panel and the decision of an audience vote. The prize was not, however, a mountain of cash or a recording contract. It was, instead, to be a nomination to run for Congress, the cost of the campaign being borne by the television company. A US cable company also organized a similar competition, *The American Candidate*, where the winner in this case was to run for US president. The station chief expressed the hope that they might find "a Detroit plumber who tells it like it is" (quoted in the Drudge Report, 8 January 2003). Such incidents can be seen to mark the rise of a new term dubbed "Celebrity Politician", and, in so doing, raise profound concerns about what is happening to the democratic process (Street, 2004, Pg. 435).

This research paper looks at how world politics and popular culture challenges and influence the boundaries of international relations. Countries from Italy to Egypt have all been

involved in the adaption and utilization of their celebrities in order to generate democratic involvement. The study of popular culture in political affairs became in discourse around the 1990s as there became a growing number of scholars engaged in the image and identity of contemporary political communications on issues relating to the discipline of international relations. Additionally, the interest in popular culture has contributed to international relations moving away from stagnant macro-political analyses and focusing on systemic relations between actors that find power in media. A focus on the complex relations between world politics and popular culture answers the call by many international relations scholars to pay attention to micro-politics, the private alongside the public, the personal together with the political, and the relationship between these two terms (Caso & Hamilton, 2015, Pg. 9).

I argue that popular culture does in fact change political affairs around the world by the use of Celebrity Politicians. These politicians are or were celebrities that in term use their status and expertise at generating a fan base to influence political policy through areas such as engagement in politics, diplomacy, and new media technologies. This is just a sub-genre in the entire study of international relations but has a specific argument that will be discussed.

### *Celebrity Politicians*

To understand the term “Celebrity Politician” we need to first define the word “celebrity” and the role that entails. David P. Marshall, a scholar in the study of celebrity culture defines a celebrity as a person who, via mass media, enjoys a greater presence and wider scope of activity and agency than those who make up the rest of the population. They are able express themselves quite individually and distinctively while the rest of the members of the population are constructed as demographic masses (Marshall, 1997, Pg. 5). This general definition covers a

wide variety of public figures that we see today, such as musicians, artist, and actors. Darrel West and John Orman, scholars in celebrity culture, provide several categories that are considered celebrity status such as by family affiliation such as President John F Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Jackie Kennedy, to those involved in political scandal such as Richard Nixon and Monica Lewinsky, or to those who become celebrities through their charismatic activism and public performances like Jesse Jackson and Martin Luther King Jr. (Street, 2004, Pg. 437).

While this definition offers a comprehensive overview of a celebrity, for the purpose of this paper, I look at two specific celebrities that mix together both popular culture and politics, a Celebrity Politician. I analyze the two categories of celebrity politicians in my paper from that offered by John Street, a professor in politics at the University of East Anglia in England. The first category refers to the legitimately elected or candidate to a office representative position who engages with the world of popular culture in order to enhance or advance their pre-established political goals, and who has a background in entertainment, show business, or sports, and employ on this background (by virtue of the skills acquired or popularity achieved) to get elected. This will be referred to as CP1 throughout this paper. Contemporary examples of CP1 would include, Sonny Bono, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and more recently U.S. President Donald Trump.

The second category refers to an entertainer, musician, or celebrity who speaks on politics and claims the right to represent people and causes, but who does so without seeking or acquiring an elected office. Their engagement tends to take the form of public actions or statements that are aimed at changing specific public policy decisions or advocate for movements. This will be referred to as CP2 throughout this paper. Contemporary examples of

CP2 would include, American Night Live television show, SNL, whose skit pokes fun of 2008 U.S. Republican Vice President candidate Sarah Palin or American Actor Leonardo DiCaprio tweeting to his followers on twitter protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline using hash tags such as “#RespectOurWater and #KeepItInTheGround”.

There are, of course, ambiguities and overlaps in these definitions of CP1 and CP2, but they serve to establish two forms of a celebrity politician, which is important in this paper. Both engage with politics and both claim to advocate for others but with different goals to accomplish (Street, 2004, Pg. 438-439).

### *Engagement in politics*

The first argument I will analyze is the career patterns among popular celebrities, which I examine the path they have taken from the entertainers to professional politics. This is important in understanding why voters and media has begun to move away past processes of the political system of moving through the political stages of a government institution and by taking a close look at specific cases of celebrities who have joined the political arena through popularity.

The first example is Brazilian celebrity, Francisco Everardo Oliveira Silva. I choose to examine the transition of Silva into Brazilian politics because it offers a perspective on the connection between what is shaping national political systems and the specific historical and cultural background that transforms and adapts these new political practices. The recent election of Francisco Everardo Oliveira Silva, publicly known as Tiririca, to the office of Federal Deputy, goes a step further in the merging of mass media entertainment and political campaigns. Dressed in a clown costume, Tiririca launched a stimulating campaign marked by hilarious, sarcastic comments, and a campaign slogan saying, “I don’t know what a congressman does; Vote for me,

and I will tell you later”. With his major Sertanejo (Brazilian music genre) hit, ‘Florentina’, as the background music for his political messages, Tiririca’s campaign attracted enormous attention from the media, turning him into the second most voted-for Federal Deputy (Ribke, 2015, Pg. 44). A migrant from northeastern Brazil with an underprivileged background, Tiririca began his career early in his childhood as a circus artist, gradually becoming famous in the northeastern regions. During the second half of the 1990s he recorded three music albums with some popular success. Later he participated in various comedy shows on television as a guest. Representing a tiny Republic Party, Tiririca transformed himself into an important media celebrity through the media exposure he gained as a candidate for the office of Federal Deputy. Launching an overconfident and aggressive campaign, Tiririca urged Brazilian voters to vote for him, embracing an “antipolitics” discourse (Ribke, 2015, Pg. 44). “Vote for me; it could not be worse than it is now’ were among his most acclaimed campaign slogans. His surprising success in the polls led to a widespread public debate in the media and encouraged citizens to become more engaged in elections (Ribke, 2015, Pg. 44).

While not ruling out the possibility that some voters opt for celebrities as a form of protest voting, we should also consider the celebrity politics as a form of engagement with politics by citizens who have long felt left out of the political game (Ribke, 2015, Pg. 46). For Tiririca, his transition to politics was strong due to his engagement in politics encouraged citizens to become more engaged in the elections. Celebrities in Brazil are elected because a significant part of the population feels that they somehow represent them, regardless of their ideological positions. Tiririca’s campaign slogan could be construed not as a sign of alienation but as an attempt to reach voters who perceive the electoral system as cryptic and lack the necessary analytical tools and cultural capital to understand its functioning (Ribke, 2015, Pg. 46).

My second example is Italian celebrity, Beppe Grillo, who is a new player that has been present on the Italian political scene, attracting interest from scholars and observers at both a national and international level. His profile differs as he is that of the traditional professional politician and comes from the world of show business. He is a comedian with a particular background regarding his relationship with politics and television and is one of the figures most active in giving voice to the anti-political sentiment that is making a deep impact on the orientation of Italian citizens in the 2010s (Bordignon and Ceccarini, 2013, Pg. 428). Grillo became a celebrity in the 1970s and 1980s as an actor, comedian and television presenter, working on a number of successful programs broadcast by the RAI, Italy's public television network. In 1986, a caustic joke about the Socialists in government, described as thieves, led to him being ousted from the RAI. This marked the beginning of a rocky period when he was in and out of television, which came to an end when he left it definitively in 1993. Grillo found a new home on the web in the 2000s. Grillo, who used to detest computers, became an enthusiast of the web. In 2005 he created the blog [beppegrillo.it](http://beppegrillo.it), where his political initiatives would then take shape. The blog has been remarkably successful: in the same year it was launched, Time magazine nominated Grillo as one of its European Heroes of the year in the media world. He then invited his community of followers on the blog to organize themselves independently through the [beppegrillo.meetup.com](http://beppegrillo.meetup.com) platform. The first big event in a public square was known as the Vaffanculo Day (or V-Day) which took place on September 8<sup>th</sup> 2007, in the main square of Bologna, where 350,000 signatures were collected for a bill to be presented by the general public. During the course of the V-Day, Grillo stated his intention to act as a kind of guarantor for certain civic lists and became one of the founding moment of the political party, Five Star Movement, which became one of the leading political parties in Italy. From being a comedian to

his role as a full-fledged political entrepreneur, web guru and founder of one of the most interesting political parties on the Italian political scene, Grillo's involvement in politics grew into becoming a prominent political actor on the national scene (Bordignon and Ceccarini, 2013, Pg. 447).

These two examples provided show how celebrities transition into the realm of politics to both enhance or advance their pre-established political goals, and who has a background in entertainment and establish a representation for individuals who support their causes. These two examples fall under the definition of CP1 and both serve as evidence of how popular culture figures influence political affairs through the form of engagement in politics because their involvement has shown impact in their countries governments.

### *Globalization of Culture*

Next, my second argument is how I analyze is the influence popular celebrities that become diplomats for their governments who serve to represent the national interest. This is important in understanding that not only do celebrities themselves get involved into politics to promote their own specific goals, there are governments themselves that utilize the influences and popularity of celebrities have on the citizens in order to benefit their agendas.

Hallyu or The Korean Wave is the phenomenon that described the rapid interest and popularity of South Korean popular culture in the recent 10 years as a contemporary renaissance in Korean arts and entertainment. Television shows, films, and music culture is melodramatize narratives that produce and promote the idea of a globalized South Korea (Park, 2010, Pg. 178). Due to this, the Korean Wave created the idea of a picturesque, over-idealized, contemporary image of South Korea that the people take pride in. This growth has also changed the image of



South Korea for the Asian audience as well. For example, in China, the impact of Hallyu television dramas has led to South Korea being associated with technical advancement and a new modern style in the eyes of the Chinese population (Kim, 2007, Pg. 48)

What's new about the way in which celebrities are melodramatized in Korean popular culture is that they could be used serve to promote an underlying political purpose (Park, 2010, Pg. 178). Given the success of Hallyu at exporting a positive image of South Korea, the Korean government has identified the Korean Wave as a means of serving national interests at a political level. In 2004 the South Korean government instigated the exported of Hallyu dramas and their actors from the K-dramas, *Autumn in My Heart*, *Winter Sonata* and *Jewel in the Palace* to Egypt into Middle Eastern countries. The government stated that this cultural exchange would help to establish a positive image of South Korea and improve relations between the two nations at the time when South Korea was about to send more troops to Iraq to help support the United States efforts. This was the first time Korean television drama had ever been shown in the Middle East and, more importantly given the contemporary international political climate, was consciously done so to serve a diplomatic function; Where its export was designed to convey the good character of South Koreans and justify the country's honorable intentions in taking part in a controversial military action (Kim 2007, Pg. 53). Due to this influx of popular Korean culture into the Middle East, many celebrities included these countries as part of their tours. The Korean company CJ E&M announced that it would be taking its K-pop festival, KCON, to the Middle East and Abu Dhabi became the first location to host KCON. This is the first time that any major K-pop event was held in United Arab Emirates, or anywhere in the Middle East (Kim 2007, Pg. 53).

This example is evidence that celebrities are pushed into the realm of politics to enhance or advance pre-established political goals. Even though the government of South Korea instead of the celebrities themselves perpetrated this example, the fact that the government decided to use them initially shows that their significance and ability to persuade individuals hold a strong political tactic, which is successful in serving its means as diplomats. This example falls under the definition of CP2 and serve as evidence of how popular culture figures influence political affairs through the form of engagement in politics because their involvement has shown impact in their countries governments. It also, is important to recognize that the government uses the celebrities that have a big presence in the entertainment industry.

### *New Technologies and Influence*

My third argument is that cohesive and effective communication strategy can determine the influence a celebrity politician has through new mediums and technologies that connect them with fans and the public. It is not enough to simply identify the scope of how many people might view a particular message but the impact they have to push engagement into politics.

With today's new technology advancements, there are often new ways a politicians can communicate with his or her constituents whether through social media or appearing on Saturday night television shows. This has challenged the traditional means of getting political news/political opinions on issues from traditional mediums like news programs or newspaper interviews and allowed the celebrity and politician role to be blurred because the influence and variety of people reached is far greater in modern technologically advance societies (Sinnreich, 2014, Pg. 861).

New media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, have been broadly used to promote candidates and celebrate victories with political ideology and models of civic engagement, especially among younger audiences. It is important to think about who and why these politicians are using these mediums, is it because it is an easier way to connect to audiences or trying to engage the younger population into politics.

An important example is during the 2008 and the 2012 president campaigns of U.S. President Barak Obama. In the presidential elections of 2008 and 2012, musical celebrities from nearly all popular genres used social media to express political beliefs about campaigns, and more importantly, to endorse the presidential and vice presidential candidates. A prominent example of endorsement is hip-hop mogul Jay-Z's support of Barack Obama on YouTube in the 2012 presidential election. Along with creating three videos supporting the 2008 Barack Obama campaign, which were distributed on YouTube, rapper Jay-Z also hosted this rally for the candidate in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on November 3, 2008, the day before the election. Also in attendance at the rally were fellow musicians and singers Mary J. Blige, P. Diddy, and Jay-Z's wife, Beyoncé, all of who have a high volume of social media influence (Sinnreich, 2014, Pg. 862).

Influential examples during the presidential campaign used a variety of social media activism by musicians including those such as Rock the Vote, Rap the Vote, and Tweet the Vote, the last of which occurs entirely via social media. A non-partisan, nonprofit organization, Rock the Vote was conceived in the United States over 20 years ago when a Virgin Records executive teamed with an electoral campaign worker who was also experienced in political fundraising. It was founded in response to perceived threats to freedom of speech and political expression among major label artists, and as part of a broader plan to politically engage younger citizens by

using the promotional power of the entertainment industry (Sinnreich, 2014, Pg. 862). It quickly established itself as an important organization, helping younger audiences connect with politics and blending nicely with popular culture. To date, Rock the Vote has registered more than 5 million young people to vote. The Rock the Vote organization has employed social media in a variety of contexts, including the 2010 Tweet the Vote Campaign, which partnered with musicians including Faith Hill, Tim McGraw, Maroon 5, and Pink. These musicians tweeted during the midterm elections that year, directing eligible young voters to an active web page, which they could register to vote. This social media campaign generated over nine million involvement in the course of the election cycle. Rock the Vote and its affiliate organization Rap the Vote have also employed social media via specialized Twitter hashtags, specifically targeting black and urban youth for political engagement. Musicians such as Akon participated in Rap the Vote during the 2012 presidential election cycle, appearing in YouTube videos recorded throughout the Atlanta Metropolitan Area, which were then shared as content to users of Facebook and Myspace.

Next example that shows the influence of new media technology assisting in the influence of a celebrity politician is the analysis of the Egyptian political satire show, Al Bernameg and an Egyptian cardiac surgeon, Bassem Youssef. Recently, after the 2011 Egyptian revolution, most Egyptians started to watch a new form of political satire program that tackles social, cultural and political issues. This type of political satire creates a new method for discussing and criticizing the political arena and democracy in Egypt. Viewers have started to turn to these political shows in order to become aware of current political and social events in Egypt, to acquire political information and to gain knowledge about their political system (Younis, 2014, Pg. 10). Like other global satirical shows, Al Bernameg has been able to

successfully reach viewers who do not have high levels of political engagement, and gain their attention by using humor and comedy. Having noticed the significance of this new and growing phenomenon in Egyptian society, Dina Mohamed Younis, a Scholar in Journalism and Mass Communication at the American University in Cairo, began to understand the different aspects and features of this new genre of political shows, including its 2 reasons, its consequences, and, most importantly, the audience's perceptions of Al Bernameg. A number of factors account for the existence of this phenomenon and the need to research it. First, it is a new type of political satire that became prominent in Egypt after the uprisings, and thrived when the Muslim Brotherhood came to power. Second, as a consequence of the Egyptian revolution, Egyptians were given more freedom to express their opinions, whether on broadcast media or in print media. Third, little research exists regarding it.

During the January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution in 2011, a new type of political program was introduced to the Egyptian audience online. Bassem Youssef, a cardiac surgeon, started broadcasting a new show called "The B+ Show" which initially was only available on YouTube. Youssef's rise to fame occurred when he first started to broadcast The B+ Show, leading to many television executives offering Youssef his own political satire show on their networks. Youssef has previously mentioned that his role model is Jon Stewart, the host of The Daily Show in the United States. In August 2011, Bassem Youssef premiered another political show that was broadcast on mainstream television and called it "Al Bernameg". The first season was broadcasted on the ONTV channel. He stated that he relied on the same format as Stewart's program in Al Bernameg, including the use of segments from different programs. Youssef immediately became famous for ridiculing well-known political talk show hosts, political figures and institutions. Al Bernameg brought a new aspect to Egyptian television that had not existed

before. It gained momentum and popularity as it contained more material ridiculing famous political figures, and enjoyed more freedom than any other political program that existed at the time. Soon afterwards, in 2012, Al Bernameg was renewed for a second season on a different Egyptian channel and Youssef's program was rated the most watched television program in Egypt. Egyptians everywhere began to tune in to Al Bernameg on a weekly basis and almost weekly Youssef would receive a good deal of criticism for his comments (Younis, 2014, Pg. 12). During its second season, Al Bernameg gained most of its popularity due to Youssef's ongoing critique and ridicule of the Muslim Brotherhood and former president Mohamed Morsi. The Egyptian audience began turning to Al Bernameg as a way of ventilating their suppressed feelings against the regime then in power. People everywhere were highly accepting of Youssef's ridicule and praised his courage for publicly criticizing the ruling party and the president. Although the use of humor in politics is not a new notion in the Arab world, Bassem Youssef was able to introduce a new form or type of political comedy programming to his Egyptian audience (Younis, 2014, Pg. 14).

These two examples provided show how celebrities use new forms of media and technology to influence the realm of politics to speak on politics and claim a sense of right to represent people and causes, but who do not seek elected office. These two examples fall under the definition of CP2 and both serve as evidence of how popular culture figures influence political affairs through the form of engagement in entertainment because their involvement has shown impact in their countries political contribution as well. Social media and the Internet have played an important role in Egypt as well as the United States. They have provided a space and tool for creating networks and express views on issues. They facilitate new connections among citizens who oppose the regime or support activism without having to be protest physically. They

have supported the circulation of news stories, which may be banned from mainstream media and allowed people like Bassem Youssef to establish and launch his own programs that give people the freedom to report on any news story that they wanted to.

### *So What? Importance of Popular Culture and World Politics Relationship*

As we move through the idea of Celebrity Politicians, it is important to this about the larger scope and role that these actors have on International Relations. Popular culture and World Politics have a special relationship because it all depends on the way constituents, celebrities, and government actors utilize media. States actively use popular culture in many ways and for multiple purposes. In both wartime and peacetime, popular culture plays a surprisingly large role in foreign and domestic policies. It is not the specifically of how the media is made but how it is used. The themes, messages, images displayed, all hold influence that is important to acknowledge when talking about international relations.

In times of war, states create, deploy, and exploit popular culture as/for propaganda. For instance, posters and other media forms were famously deployed to define nations and their enemies in WWI. North Vietnamese posters similarly constituted the US enemy in the “American War”. Films like *Casablanca* (1942), backed by the ‘War Films’ division of the US Department of War, sold U.S. intervention in Europe to U.S. publics, legitimating World War II and the attendant military expenditures and public sacrifices. *The Green Berets* (1968), starring John Wayne, was so overtly a propaganda film that the US Department of Defense had the usual credit thanking it for its assistance removed, for fear that it might undermine the film’s propaganda value and draw unwanted attention to the department’s involvement in Hollywood films (Caso & Hamilton, 2015, Pg. 21).

States also deploy popular culture in times of peace. To develop soft power, states engage in cultural diplomacy practices that actively deploy popular culture. The British Council seeks to build trust by enhancing cultural relations through international collaborations in, among other areas, fashion, film, music, theatre and dance. Post-9/11 American cultural exchange programs also emphasize popular culture, notably sports and film, in trying to refurbish the US image in Muslim countries. Popular culture features centrally in the increasingly pervasive state practice of “nation branding” (Caso & Hamilton, 2015, Pg. 21).

In defense of why the study of contemporary celebrity politics is important is because of its historical precedents that draw upon the idea that the phenomenon is an inevitable product of social and political change. In particular, celebrity politics is seen as a product of the transformation of political communication. The breakdown of traditional social structures under the strains of modernization have seen the need to form political communication in which new symbolic reasoning have to be created, containing templates where we as a society need a person to fill these roles (Street, 2004, Pg. 440). In such a world, the focus shifts on to individual politicians politics become personalized to a group of likeminded individuals. This trend is highlighted by mass media that favor this form of politics. This new styles of political communication is logical extensions of this reality especially in situations where new technologies play a role (Street, 2004, Pg. 440).

It is necessary to shapes the conception of the word “representation”. Representatives sell themselves to their market, which they represent. Successful parties are like successful entrepreneurs (Street, 2004, Pg. 441). Celebrity politicians use a form of marketing and then simply make use of the techniques of marketing, either, as with CP1s, selling themselves, or as with CP2s, endorsing a product (a policy or a politician). For such celebrities, representation



necessarily entails an “appearance” and claims to represent a variety of contexts and can be validated in a variety of ways (Street, 2004, Pg. 442). I argue that representation has to be understood as both a political process and a cultural performance, and that the issue of whether celebrity politics, in either form, constitutes a legitimate basis for representation depends on the characteristics of both the process and the performance.

### *The Critique of Celebrity Politics*

Not all literature believes that the interest of the Celebrity is necessarily to benefit others or serve as a voice for the people who do not have their own. Neil Postman, a scholar in mass communications, states, “We the undersigned American Citizens stand against wealthy Hollywood celebrities abusing their status to speak for us. We do not believe that they have a clear understanding of how we live, what we fear, and what we support” (Postman 1987, Pg. 58). He argues that the celebrities live in a bubble or in an environment where they do not live the normal lives of average citizens and therefore should not be supporting or participating in politics. These are important positions to consider because average citizens could not always know the whole story when supporting a celebrity because there is so much that can be done behind closed doors in the life of a celebrity.

Darrel West and John Orman argue that the rise of celebrity politics has seen the displacement of traditional political skills such as bargaining, compromise, respect of different views, ability to analyze problems while identifying the best solutions for all, and being replaced to their natural talents in show business of media management, maintaining loyalty of fans, and fundraising. The new qualities of the celebrity politician are believed to be “ill suited” to the duties of statecraft which representatives owe their constituents. These inadequacies are

compounded by ignorance. Celebrities have a lack of knowledge/expertise in public policy and do not consider serious political issues (Postman 1987, Pg. 54).

Another major point that West and Orman offer is that, Celebrities are too influential, especially in a society dominated by social media. West says, “Even with the influence of new technologies, it only takes one shared post on twitter or Facebook wall to see the dangerous consequences of misinformation or ignorant positions” (Postman 1987, Pg. 66). People increasingly repost celebrity views on political issues as if they have genuine power and these rapidly garner support to the point where celebrity opinion replaces the facts on the issue. It can very distressing to see people picking sides on the complex issues for example the Israel-Palestine subject simply because Cristiano Ronaldo refused to wear a team jersey. If we've gotten to the point where a soccer player's actions determine the way people view arguably the most significant and complicated international conflict of the last century, what is influence they have (Postman 1987, Pg. 66).

Both types of celebrity politicians, CP1 & CP2, have provoked criticism, and now we will look what the terms of that critique are. In particular, I want to concentrate on those criticisms that relate to the representative claim, that criticism which focuses on the ways that particular accounts of representation are privileged over others especially in terms of celebrity status and non celebrity status politicians (Street, 2004, Pg. 435). The complaint is that celebrity politics undermines any claim to “representativeness”. This is either because the elected politician (CP1) impoverishes the relationship between representative and represented by marginalizing issues of political substance in favor of irrelevant gestures and superficial appearances. Or it is because the celebrity (CP2) boasts irrelevant qualities and phony knowledge that do not justify their claim to “represent” (Street, 2004, Pg. 435). As the website, “Citizens

against Celebrity”, declares, like previously stated: “We the undersigned American Citizens stand against Wealthy Hollywood Celebrities abusing their status to speak for us. We do not believe that they have a clear understanding of how we live, what we fear, and what we support. This is not a new complaint. It builds on familiar distinctions between the trivial (entertainment) and the serious (politics), and a concern about the infection of the second by the first. This was Postman’s worry that “Our politics, religion, news, athletics, education and commerce have been transformed into congenial adjuncts of show business.” Appearances and images, according to Postman had come to dominate politics, so that “we may have reached a point where cosmetics have replaced ideology as the field of expertise over which a politician must have competent control” (Postman 1987, Pg. 54). These criticisms of celebrity politics are premised on a set of assumptions about the proper nature and character of political representation. Their particular claim is that representatives owe citizens a duty of informed political judgment. Both types of celebrity politician threaten the principles of representative democracy either because they privilege style and appearance over substance, or because they marginalize relevant expertise.

### *Conclusion*

The advantages of bringing popular culture and world politics together encourages us to consider the role of visual politics and emotions in shaping the socio-political world, complicating the hierarchy of sources of world politics, and invites us to challenge the idea that world politics take place only in the public sphere. In doing so, the bringing together of world politics and popular culture reanimates debates in international relations by creating new spaces for critical reflection and expression of ideas in public. I argued here that popular culture does in fact change political affairs around the world by the use of Celebrity Politicians. These

politicians are or were celebrities that in term use their status and expertise at generating a fan base to influence political policy through areas such as engagement in politics, diplomacy, and new media technologies. The purpose to research this topic is to create a conversation to others as to why we believe what celebrities say and what influence are we buying into by answering the questions from an international perspective because we all are influenced by different backgrounds and come from different culture and sometimes it feels great to have someone that is like us, on the television screen. After all, like U.S. President Ronald Reagan said, “Politics is just like show business”.

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