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Smart African Politics: Candidates Debating Under a Tree

Political debates are good even when they're bad. Even when candidates are cringe-worthy, they're cringe-worthy in public view. And voters learn about all the candidates, not just new ones. In the United States, for example, Hillary Clinton has been center stage in political life for 24 years. Donald Trump is the very definition of "overexposed." Still, the debates tell us new things about them — their positions, temperament, grace under pressure (or lack thereof), charisma and political skill.

How much more could voters benefit from debates in countries where they know next to nothing about the candidates?

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