

Traditional African Music For Social Change

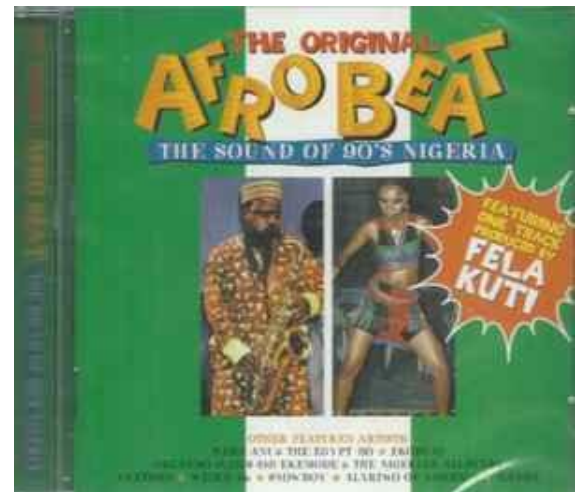
In the summer of 2020, I hosted an online fundraiser for my non-profit platform, ANewEra. This platform focuses on the empowerment and advocacy of disenfranchised girls and young women. Its goal is to arm girls and young women with the resources they may need to navigate through gender-related matters such as discrimination, sexual harrasment or culutral hindrances. With this goal in mind, I established a record label entitled aNewEraEntertainment to promote and sign artists focused on creating music addressing such gender-related issues.

aNewEra Website

aNewEra Entertainment Record Label

The fundraiser was set up via a Zoom meeting, where I performed original songs on piano— songs focused on women’s empowerment and gender-based discrimination. While donors listened to my music, they were able to click a link in the Zoom meeting that allowed them to donate to ANewEra-related charities. This fundraiser led to more than \$2,000 in donations, and I was absolutely thrilled by its success. I felt three of my passions colliding: my musical ability, my advocacy on behalf of gender equity, and my interest in marketing.

The idea for this online concert/fundraiser actually came from my own research on ways to promote and aid organizations that focused on women's empowerment. My research led me to the success of Sigauque Project, a band in Maputo, Mozambique, whose musical compositions



focus on trying to bring about change on prominent issues. Sigauque Project uses empowering lyrics in combination with rhythms and instruments that stir emotions as a way to encourage masses of people to take action. The band's musical influences are primarily the Senegalese *mbalax*, Nigerian Afro-beat, and Mozambican *marrabenta*. Sigauque Project's music is traditional and was originally recorded across Africa; however, the band plays in its own unique and modern style. For example, its music is often compared to American jazz.



Not only does Sigauque Project utilize traditional forms of African music, it also tries to make the messages of its songs extremely informative and impactful. For example, according to one of Sigauque Project's leaders, Daniel Walter, "[Sigauque Project's] music talks about HIV,

women's rights, recovering from a disaster, xenophobia and much more. It's not just great music, we're saying something."



Daniel Walter (playing trumpet) and other Sigauque Project musicians

Advocacy for social change is obviously a huge part of Sigauque Project's purpose and goals. Most of the music performed by the band was created by Community Media for Development (CMFD) Productions. CMFD specializes in recording music and radio projects that target social change. For example, through the Sigauque Project and CMFD, artists from Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe were able to connect through an organization called Musicians Against Xenophobia. The artists ended up creating and producing four successful songs about discrimination.

Members of Sigauque Project fully comprehend how music can raise awareness and elicit change in people. Its members also note how much youth tend to connect to music. Therefore, Sigauque Project and CMFD recently released two songs about HIV awareness and protection. In the first song, the band combined its powerful jazz sound with the lyrics and flow of a Mozambican rapper. The rapper spoke about the importance of being faithful to one's significant other as well as the importance of being protective of one's body when in an intimate

relationship. In the second song, band members sang about HIV awareness while they played popular *passada* dance rhythms.

Sigauque Project also donates its musical work to documentaries or radio show series that focus on social change. For example, the band, alongside CMFD, produced the song “Hungry City” that can be heard in a documentary and radio show series about recent food insecurity in South African cities (“Music Can Change the World | African Renewal”).

After researching the Sigauque Project and fundraising for social justice causes, I have truly come to realize how big of a platform music provides for discussions on social issues. Artists often repeat catchy song lyrics many times, driving home the intended message of the song. Then, using national broadcasting services such as public radio and other media service providers, they can convey those messages widely. My research also inspired me to produce more songs that convey messages calling for social, political, or economic change. Additionally, it further reminded me of how impactful music is.

Work Cited

“Music Can Change the World | Africa Renewal.” *United Nations*, United Nations,

www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2013/music-can-change-world.