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 "Politics in Music and Song"

Paper Abstract

***Senzeni na: What Have We Done?***  
**Music, Resistance and Social Change in the Anti-Apartheid Struggle in South Africa**

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*Any suffering we experienced was made much more real by song and rhythm [which promotes] a culture of defiance, self-assertion and group pride and solidarity.*  
 (Steve Biko, died in detention at Pretoria Central prison)

Music was a critical force for resistance and propelling social change in the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa (1948-94). Against a backdrop of popular uprisings and violent protests, music became an integral part of the liberation movement, tracing the history of the struggle for democracy and racial equality, and evolving in response to the changing political climate and conditions across the country. Drawing on the wider socio-political context, together with new first-hand interviews with surviving struggle veterans and song recordings, this paper explores how popular song provided the voice of defiance and protest in the freedom struggle that fuelled the people, transcending political, linguistic and ethnic differences to unite an oppressed people against a common enemy. First, the evolution of so-called 'freedom songs' will be traced to consider how music was introduced in the struggle as a mode of critique and a strategy for peacefully undermining the white supremacist government's dominance. Second, the impact of intensified racial violence by the apartheid regime on the musical repertoires evolving in tandem to propel change will be considered. Lastly, the role of women in the movement will be examined to ask how music was used as an identity for female activists to protest the oppression of women and gender inequality, with a specific women's musical repertory communicating a female perspective on the struggle. These South African models of musical resistance to mass violence and to advance social change raise broader questions for research into the uses of music by individuals suffering and protesting the violation of human rights under oppressive regimes at the intersections of race, politics, violence, trauma, gender and human rights.

**Biographical note:**

Dr. Janie Cole (PhD University of London) is an Adjunct Senior Lecturer at the University of Cape Town's College of Music, Research Officer for East Africa on UCT's Mellon project "Re-Centring AfroAsia," and a Research Associate at Stanford University's Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics. Her research encompasses a broad range of subjects with a strong focus on interdisciplinarity, source studies and global music histories, including on musical practices, instruments and thought in early modern African kingdoms and Afro-Eurasian encounters, transcultural circulation and entanglements in the age of exploration; the intersection of music, consumption and production, politics, patronage and gender in late Renaissance and early Baroque Italy and France; and the convergence of music, trauma, resistance, incarceration, violence, and social change in 20<sup>th</sup>-century apartheid South

Africa. Her current work focuses on early modern musical culture at the royal court in the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia and intertwined sonic histories of entanglement with the Latin Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean world. Her publications include two monographs and numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals and book chapters. She has been granted fellowships from The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies at Villa I Tatti, the Newberry Library, the Medici Archive Project, won research grants from The Getty Foundation, The Leverhulme Trust, and The Italian Cultural Institute, and been awarded the Stephen Arlen Award from English National Opera, the Janet Levy Prize from the American Musicological Society, the Author Grant Award from the Academic and Non-Fiction Authors Association of South Africa, and most recently the Claude V. Palisca Fellowship Award in Musicology from the Renaissance Society of America. She served as Council Member of the Renaissance Society of America as Discipline Representative in Music (2015-17) and is currently the founding Discipline Representative in Africana Studies (2018-22) at RSA and on the Editorial Advisory Board of *Renaissance Quarterly*. She is the co-founder of the international Study Group “Early African Sound Worlds” and the founder of the Kukutana Ensemble which develops musical performances rooted in indigenous East African music and its historical links to a pre-colonial Indian Ocean World sound- and visualsapes. She is building the Malibongwe Women’s Archive of women’s struggle testimonies and music from apartheid prisons in collaboration with University of Cape Town Libraries Special Collections funded by the Schlettwein Foundation. She is the Founder/Executive Director of Music Beyond Borders, a platform for public musicology, engaged scholarship and innovative digital humanities projects ([www.musicbeyondborders.net](http://www.musicbeyondborders.net)).

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