



**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**

## 50 YEARS OF WORKING WITH CELEBRITIES: MUSIC

Music of all kinds has long been used in fundraising for Amnesty International, but it has also proved an effective tool for human rights education and awareness raising. From global album releases to festivals and concerts, music continues to be used for human rights, by a cross section of people all over the world. From American rock stars in giant stadiums to Sierra Leonean women singing to raise awareness of high maternal mortality rates in their country, music continues to be an excellent forum for human rights change.

### HUMAN RIGHTS NOW!

A worldwide tour of 20 benefit concerts that took place over six weeks in 1988. The 'Human Rights Now!' concerts were held to increase awareness of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on its 40th anniversary and the work of Amnesty International.

The shows featured Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, Sting, Peter Gabriel, Tracy Chapman, and Yousou N'Dour, plus guest artists from each of the countries hosting the concerts.

Human rights activists and former prisoners of conscience from around the world, led by Sonny Venkatrathnam from South Africa, participated in the tour. At each location, the artists and Amnesty International leaders held press conferences to discuss human rights and concert-goers were provided with copies of the UDHR in their own language. They were also given opportunities to pledge support for the Declaration and join the worldwide human rights movement.

### A CONSPIRACY OF HOPE

A musical caravan, travelling around the United States with six benefit concerts held during June 1986. 'A Conspiracy of Hope' aimed to increase awareness of human rights and of Amnesty International's work on its 25th anniversary. The tour spread information about Amnesty International to a new generation, inviting them to take action on behalf of prisoners of conscience.

Some of the world's leading rock artists gave two weeks of their time, at the height of the summer touring season, 'A Conspiracy of Hope' featured U2, Sting, Peter Gabriel, Lou Reed, Joan Baez, and the Neville Brothers. They travelled from west to east across the United States, joined en route by other performing arts stars.

"Morally and spiritually, we couldn't afford not to do it," Art Neville told Amnesty International members and reporters in the six cities that hosted the caravan.

At each stop, the performers held a press conference, using music to spread the word about what Amnesty International does, why it does this work, and how everyone can help stop human rights abuses by joining in Amnesty International's work.

“That’s where my respect goes—to the people who do this work,” Bono told cheering audiences in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Denver, Chicago, Atlanta, and Giants Stadium in New Jersey.

Lou Reed summarized the tour’s message for concert goers between sets. Rock music is “about energy and freedom,” he said. “Therefore, it has a direct relationship to Amnesty, the most astonishing group I’ve ever been involved with.”

The artists involved with the ‘A Conspiracy of Hope’ tour ‘adopted’ six prisoners of conscience and throughout the tour conducted a campaign called “Write. Get One Free.”

At each concert Amnesty International volunteers passed out postcards addressed to governments with the ability to release the prisoners. Sting urged audiences to sign a postcard or write a letter “for prisoners and for your own future.” He couldn’t resist adding, “It can be fun having a dictator for your pen pal.” After Amnesty International collected tens of thousands of postcards at the stadiums and delivered them to government embassies, two of the six prisoners of conscience were freed. Soviet authorities released Tatyana Osipova, who was jailed for joining a Moscow group that monitored human rights abuses. South African authorities released Thozamile Gqweta, charged with treason because of his vocal criticism of his country’s apartheid policies.

The tour artists played together both on stage and off. They danced through hotel lobbies, joined in impromptu jamming sessions at local restaurants, and to the chagrin of flight attendants, engaged in a sustained pillow fight during the flight to the East Coast. Fela Kuti, the outspoken Nigerian songwriter and a prisoner of conscience until shortly before the tour began, caught up with the caravan in New Jersey. He played keyboard before the 55,000 capacity crowd at Giants Stadium, while Carlos Santana played guitar and Rubén Blades sang “Muevete” (“Move On”), a song in defence of freedom. Stopping the music for a moment, Rubén Blades pointed to Amnesty International members passing out postcards and said, “I used to be an attorney in Latin America, and I can tell you from experience, many people have been saved by this organization.”

Bono named several places where mass human rights abuses were taking place and led the Giants Stadium crowd in a chant of “No More.” Jackson Browne sang “Lives in the Balance,” accompanied by a flutist who had been jailed in Chile simply for playing his instrument.

Best-selling author Timothy White, formerly a senior editor of *Rolling Stone*, wrote in the tour program book, “As the rock and roll being offered on this occasion lifts your spirit, let it also move you to make a basic gesture from the heart toward those who desperately need to know that you share in our ‘conspiracy of hope.’”

Famous musicians and Hollywood stars supported the caravan at various tour venues including Bob Dylan, Miles Davis, Madonna, Sean Penn, Meryl Streep, Robin Williams, Robert DiNiro, Yoko Ono, Michael J. Fox, and Muhammed Ali. Amnesty International USA’s membership more than doubled in the summer of 1986.

The 19-act final concert, performed on 15 June at Giants Stadium, was broadcast live on MTV. The *New York Times* critic covering the concert wrote, “The finale—dozens of performers singing Bob Dylan’s ‘I Shall Be Released’ alongside 25 prisoners who had been freed with Amnesty International’s help—was a memorable image of rock with a conscience.”

## FROM CHILE...AN EMBRACE OF HOPE (1990)

A two-day rock and pop concert, the 'From Chile...An Embrace of Hope' was held in Chile's National Stadium, which had been the country's largest detention centre. Military authorities conducted torture and executions there, following the 1973 coup that overthrew President Salvador Allende's government. 'An Embrace of Hope' symbolically returned the Santiago stadium to the people of Chile.

Held on 12 – 13 October 1990, each day began with all the artists singing Bob Marley's 'Get Up, Stand Up' together, followed by a minute of silence in memory of those who died in the stadium. The artists included Ruben Blades, Jackson Browne, Peter Gabriel, Wynton Marsalis, New Kids on the Block, Sinéad O'Connor, and local groups Inti-Illimani and Congreso. Sting ended the concert at 3 AM on 14 October with "They Dance Alone (Cuerca Sola)," which he wrote after witnessing the grief of family members whose loved ones had disappeared or were killed during Chile's military rule.

During the concert, New Kids on the Block read a declaration calling for the respect of human rights. The hit band ended its set with a shout to the audience of 80,000: "Let's have a party for liberty." Sinéad O'Connor lit a candle on stage in memory of 19-year-old Rodrigo Rojas de Negri. His mother, Veronica de Negri, spoke to a *New York Times* reporter at his funeral in 1986. "My son was a child who had everything in the United States, but he never felt really happy," she said. "He was always dreaming of Chile." He returned to the country of his birth with a friend in June 1986. Six weeks later, according to relatives, the two youths were picked up by uniformed men, doused with a liquid, and set on fire.

During his performance, Jackson Brown asked the Chilean government to free two Chilean journalists who were accused of falsely reporting human rights violations by members of the military. Even in October 1990, two years after Chile's transition from military rule to democracy, laws forbidding accusations against the military remained in force. Amnesty International volunteers moved among audience members throughout the concert, collecting signatures on petitions calling for the release of political prisoners around the world.

A worker in Amnesty International's Chilean section said, "With the arrival of democracy and more to the point, Sting, everyone was talking about Amnesty." In the month before the concert, she reported, "More than 500 letters a week poured into our shabby offices from Chileans who wanted to join." She continued, "The Amnesty staff, never comfortable with seeing uniformed men in the doorway, got used to the fact that police were now visiting in search of free tickets."

## IMAGINE CAMPAIGN

Yoko Ono donated the publishing rights to "Imagine" for a campaign to spread a message of peace and human rights and educate young people worldwide about human rights after September 11<sup>th</sup> World Trade Center attacks. The centrepiece of the campaign was a full length music video with music produced by Hollywood composer, Hans Zimmer. The video featured children from around the world singing 'imagine'. Jack Johnson, Willie Nelson and M'Shell Ndegeocello also recorded the song.

As well as 'Imagine', Yoko Ono also donated the rest of Lennon's back catalogue, an album named 'Instant Karma' was produced to raise funds and awareness for the campaign 'Justice for Darfur'. International recording artists the Black Eyed Peas, Snow Patrol, Regina Spektor, Lenny Kravitz, Green Day, U2, and Ben Harper, U2, Avril Lavigne, R.E.M., Aerosmith, Christina Aguilera, Green Day, The Cure and Youssou N' Dour recorded exclusive versions of iconic songs

from the John Lennon back catalogue. The CD was released by Warner Bros. Records and 98 per cent of all proceeds went to Amnesty International. The album went platinum in many countries and a T-shirt was designed by the band Green Day to promote the CD and the campaign.

## PORTISHEAD

In 2009, UK band Portishead wrote and released a track to mark human rights day, entitled Chase the Tear, as a digital download. All proceeds and rights were, and continue to be, donated to Amnesty International.

## THE PRICE OF SILENCE

A song written to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the signing of the UDHR, 'The Price of Silence' featured a number of well-known world musicians. The song was produced by Andres Levin in co-ordination with Link TV: Television Without Borders. The net proceeds from the sale of the song were donated to Amnesty International.

Artists involved include Stephen Marley (Jamaica), Natalie Merchant (United States), Julieta Venegas (Mexico), Aterciopelados (Colombia), Yungchen Lhamo (Tibet), Angelique Kidjo (Benin), Yerba Buena (Cuba/United States), Chiwoniso Maraire (Zimbabwe), Rachid Taha (France/Algeria), Kiran Ahluwalia (India), Emmanuel Jal (Sudan), Hugh Masekela (South Africa), Chali 2na (United States) Natacha Atlas (United Kingdom/Egypt)

The music video opened with Laurence Fishburne reciting a prologue written by Alicia Partnoy for the video. The video showed the musicians singing in front of delegates at the United Nations in New York.

<http://blog.amnestyusa.org/amnesty/the-price-of-silence/>

## RICHARD HUGHES AND KEANE

(ongoing since 2009)

Richard Hughes, the drummer from the band Keane, has been an advocate of Amnesty International's campaign against the death penalty, in particular supporting the American death row prisoner Troy Davis.

Richard accompanied Amnesty International campaigners to Georgia in 2010 to attend meetings with Troy Davis in the Diagnostic and Classification Prison, Jackson, Georgia, to appeal his case.

"Troy is innocent, yet he has been on the brink of execution, only last-minute judgements keeping him alive. He continues to fight for the chance to prove his innocence", explained Hughes.

Richard has also been involved with Amnesty International's education pack 'A Matter of Life and Death': [http://www.amnesty.org.uk/news\\_details.asp?NewsID=19037](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/news_details.asp?NewsID=19037)

## 'BELLE WOMAN DAE SUFFER'

In November 2009, as part of the Demand Dignity campaign, Amnesty International launched a mission to Sierra Leone. Activists, musicians and drama groups travelled in a caravan around the country, engaging with local communities, often in rural areas. Aimed at highlighting the high level of maternal mortality in the country, the caravan encouraged people to become active in demanding their rights and accountability from the authorities.

A group of Sierra Leonean music artists joined to produce the song 'Belle Woman Dae Suffer' (Pregnant Women Are Suffering), a video was produced featuring Nollywood actress Omotola Jakande Ekeinde, who sang and danced on stage as the excited crowd surged forward to take photos and shout their messages to her. Omotola, who is a major movie star in West Africa, has been helping Amnesty International raise awareness in the region on maternal mortality as a human rights issue.

Video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nsBhJfCMJI>

## OZZY OSBOURNE

(2010)

Rock legend Ozzy Osbourne recorded a new version of John Lennon's "How?" to mark the 70th anniversary of the birth of John Lennon on Saturday, 9 October 2010.

The song, released worldwide exclusively on iTunes, saw 81 pence of every 99-pence iTunes download in the UK going to Amnesty International. An accompanying video shows Ozzy Osbourne in various New York locations, including at the Lennon Memorial in Central Park.

Video:

<http://www.protectthehuman.com/videos/ozzy-osbourne-sings-john-lennon-s-how>