

MovemenTunes.com: Music as Raw Material

by Heru Ofori-Atta

I am proud to introduce to you an exciting cutting edge initiative, www.movementunes.com. Your #1 Site for Positive Culture Music Downloads and More.

Politico-Economic Context: Raw Materials to the Market Place

Whilst recently in West Africa, it was reinforced again that the plight of Africans world wide is the same. We are presently suffering from a world wide lack of actualized power. True power. It is said that power comes from the land, and land represents the location of resources. Presently, Africans are disconnected from total supremacy over our land and resources that dwell therein. More succinctly, we do not have complete control over the extraction of our natural resources and the shaping, molding, and/or refining of our natural resources and its final packaging for sale on the world market. Plug in any natural resource/raw material which the African land has in abundance such as gold, oil, bauxite, cocoa, plutonium, etc. and the situation is the same.

In America, we Africans were-- and still are --raw materials. We were packaged and shipped and sold like any other commodity. Once again, others had control over our resources, our bodies and our labor. Presently, Africans in America, sometimes referred to as African-Americans provide ourselves as raw materials to be processed in the prison industrial complex for rich white men to become richer. Go sit in any random criminal courtroom in an American big city from 9am-12pm. You will literally see African bodies as commodities being "processed through the system." Again, we see an overwhelming amount of European descendant making money at every step of the process from policemen to bail bondsmen to lawyers to judges to wardens to prison industry investors to multinational corporations employing ultra cheap labor. Replace this with, let's say, cocoa or gold in Ghana or crude oil in Nigeria and the situation is the same. Other people are constantly becoming enriched through controlling the processing, packaging, distribution and selling of African raw material to the market place/end user/consumer.

The bottom line: Whoever controls the processing, packaging, delivery, marketing and sale of African raw materials in the market place is the total sum winner in the world economic scene. Period. This is the end game. This is the only conversation that really matters. Indeed, all of our problems are mere symptoms of a very real disease within the global economic and body politic: Un-Actualized African Group Power.

Speeches will not change our power relationships with others. Lectures will not change it. Events will not change it. Marches will not change our reality. Complaining will not change our reality. Sermons will not change it. Change will only occur when we, the conscious patriotic Pan-Africanists, who know the full story, develop, finance and maintain I-N-D-U-S-T-R-Y. For it is only industry that engages in the specific peculiar behaviors discussed above.

Because I know what we need to do, I therefore know what I need to do. My friends, I have now developed a form of industry for our collective benefit based on one of our raw materials: our musical talent. The rest of this essay examines that specific aspect of the African reality and introduces an exciting cutting edge solution.

"Music Gonna Teach Dem A Lesson" © Bob Marley and Peter Tosh

Posterity and necessity requires the African artist in this day and time to be self-sufficient and self-determinative. Verily, the African musician and poet set the tone and language for the people. Therefore, the implications that European cultural imperialism brings to the table of the African are grave. The means of production and distribution, in any colonial situation, are sought to be controlled and manipulated by the power elite. Therefore, it is necessary that poets and musicians interested in African liberation completely control our own means of distribution and production. In that vein, some serious artists are embarking on new enterprises and thereby creating an indelible paradigm shift.

As an independent and professional spoken word poet, I perform internationally and nationally without the backing of a multi-million dollar corporate conglomerate. Although some of my fellow artists, who are well known, due to European corporate exposure, feel as though their signing a "major record deal" represents an elevation and evolution in their artistic career- I argue that the major record deal is actually a commonly observed devolution.

Firstly, contracts from major record companies are so heavily skewed against the artist, that the only thing the artist receives is a promise of fame without the promise of an appreciable fraction of wealth s/he has generated for the record company. In fact, 99% of artists on the major labels do not make any money off of "their" albums until at least the third album. The record company and other industry appendages receive 90% of the money generated from an artist's sales. The ten percent left to the artist is used to pay the record company back any advances given to the artist, any promotional money spent on the artist, and in some cases executive dinner dates and the cost of light bulbs for the major label's office are charged against the artist's account. For most artists in the music business, receiving a royalty check worth more than the stamp on the envelope is as common as meeting a fair and honest wealthy white man. It doesn't happen.

Consequently, the artist is left to make money through touring and live shows. The artist will make some money because the record companies are good at making anyone they wish "famous." As the major European descent owned record companies have partnerships with their blood and/or ideological brother's or cousin's radio and television stations, they have the ability to transplant images of artists they own into the minds of anyone who tunes in. The artist may be able to tour for a few years, and make some money, but since they are forced to make meaningless music that the public can digest and throw away, they become the flavor of the month... until the next flavor of the month appears with a newer, updated gimmick. This is the fate of most commercial artists.

Question: What happens to the culturally conscious artist who decides to sign with a major record label? 1) Consciousness or anything related to Black Group Power is either put on the back burner or struggled against vehemently by the record company. This causes the artist to be silenced and lack the ability of recording through other means, as the record company owns and controls all of their intellectual property and recording activities. 2) The artist compromises his/her spirit and conforms to the expectations of white corporate conglomerates to become a poster boy/girl for Black pathology. 3) The other and rare occurrence is the artist is allowed to speak to the needs of the people and becomes a true cultural and political icon like Bob Marley or Peter Tosh. However, the slave master's record company receives the lion's share of economic benefit from our "redemption songs." In one of Bob Marley's last interviews, when asked about the record business, he said, "We are making plans to distribute our own music worldwide, because, when you sing songs about slavery and the slave master and his children end up with a bag of money from your record, those types of things hurt. It really hurts."

Clearly, neither of the aforementioned options is acceptable to the African centered artist of today. Presently, we are at the point where we are willing to literally starve before we sell out our people or be silenced. However, starving is not necessary nor an option. The situation on the ground for independent Black liberation poets and musicians is ripe for implementing a cooperative model of exchange and economics. The internet has been an inexpensive, effective and far reaching way of exposing my work to people world wide. I sell my spoken word CDs, have sound files, live performance reviews, a bio, fan mail, pictures and an essays and interviews page--on my website heruspeaks.com. My work is available to the entire planet. I receive messages of appreciation for my poetry from supporters in Ghana, New York, Australia, Brazil, Miami, London, Holland, Japan and Ethiopia. In fact, I am my own record label because I finance, produce and manufacture my own CDs, control the artwork on my CD, the content in my CD, I take orders from the general public, ship the CDs to customers, answer any and all inquiries about my work, etc. I am also responsible for my own publicity and bookings. All of this has prepared me and other similarly situated artists to enter into a competent cooperative environment where resources can be pooled together and everyone can enjoy the fruits of their labor.

A few years ago, I employed a third party digital download service on my website for my CDs, and the results were astronomical. I decided to study the precise science of digital download technology and taught myself how to administer and process digital files on my own. I have conquered this technology and felt I should multiply my efforts times one thousand.

Digital downloads are the new frontier for storing and delivering content. Physical sales of CDs are down. In fact, CDs (and DVDs) are most likely going to go the way of the cassette tape. More and more mp3 players like Apple's iPod and Microsoft's Zune are being sold. iTunes has reached it's 1 billionth download. We Africans, who provide so much raw material for the music industry must position ourselves to take our equivalent market share and thereby dominate the digital download industry. The time is now.

Today, we are prepared and resolute to embark on creating an industry that deals head on with cutting out the slave master and his minions from benefitting from our raw material of musical talent and anything else that may be digitized. Remember, every problem has a solution.

Problem Solved!!! Enter: Movementunes.com

We are proud to provide you with digital downloads from world class artists from around the globe. Social consciousness and historical awareness are the common themes of all the artists on www.movementunes.com. The artists actually care about their respective people and communities and have taken the responsibility to inspire and uplift people through music. All of the artists are known for their solid reputations of commitment and purpose through music. Every song and each CD, is a tribute to our great legacy.

We have hand-picked artists, authors and thinkers who exemplify Pan-African/Positive values and have a mastery of their art. The site has set up content channels worldwide with other Black activist channels to make sure that our people get to hear the other half of the story that is rarely told. The days of incessant complaining about the lack of positive messages in our music and art are effectively over.

Our journey and goal are in essence identical: the creation of over-lapping, interconnected and intertwined economic entities of consciousness.

I am pleased to be one among the new breed of Pan-Africanist industry creators who are entering into a new paradigm of doing for self by uniting community and personal economic interests with others who

are like-minded with no apology. Because we are who we are, at least 10% of the annual profits will go to clean water and solar energy projects in Africa.

When you go to movementunes.com, you'll see that the "Artists and Genres" page has a variety of artists with diverse musical styles including, Reggae, Hip-Hop, Spoken Word Poetry, Soul Music, World Music, and more. Our catalogue of artists will be growing regularly, so feel free to check in for more updates. There is no registration required. Just click the artist's name and listen to free samples and buy downloads of the music that speaks to you. Most albums are sold for \$10.00 and most singles are sold for \$1.00. You can download single songs from different artists or complete albums. The choice is yours. It's a movement, and you're part of it!!!

All music purchases are secure. All purchased music is sent to your entered email address immediately as a zip file. Just click the zipped folder, and the mp3 music file will appear. This site is extremely simple and user friendly. Finding and supporting Positive Culture Music has never been so easy.

There will also be a free live 1 hour interview posted on this page of feature artists that will rotate frequently. You will be able to hear your new favorite artists talk about politics, history, culture and their music live & direct. Enjoy!!!

MovemenTunes.com is here to serve. Customers and Artists should feel free to contact us at info@movementunes.com for any inquiries.

More Than Music

We have also entered into agreements with LIBradio.com and Harambeeradio.com to offer digital downloads of 2 hour intense and in depth interviews with some of our greatest historians, thinkers and activists such as Ashra Kwesi, Marimba Ani, Molefi Asante, Asa Hilliard, Queen Afua, Tony Martin, Anthony Browder and many, many more.

In addition, we will have AudioBooks from Publishing Houses such as Black Classic Press and Third World Press available for digital download.

Lastly, look for downloads of conscious films made available through movementunes.com

Conclusion

"Talking is only necessary in the planning stages." © Anonymous Rasta Elder

Controlling our raw materials in every aspect is the order of the day. The human being is on earth to solve problems. When there is too much endless talking and philosophical debates about theory, confusion takes root and no industry blossoms. Consequently, no problems are being solved. Africans are here to solve African problems. Let's get busy.

Do your part and let at least 3 people know about movementunes.com. Let us soldier forward together toward real power through control of industry.

Celebrated Spoken Word Poet Heru is an award winning Poet who is legendary for his mesmerizing performances, intellectual creativity, historical depth and commitment to upliftment.

He is also a Radio Personality, a Record Company Owner & Producer, as well as a Business Owner.

Check out his website: www.heruspeaks.com or send him e.mail: heruspeaks@yahoo.com