

Do We Need Another Hero?

Understanding Celebrities' Roles in Advancing Social Causes

Stephen Huddart

Program Director

The J. W. McConnell Family Foundation, Montreal, Quebec

Formerly Executive Director, the Troubadour Foundation and Troubadour Music Inc.



McGill-
McConnell Program:
Master of
Management
for National Voluntary Sector Leaders

Module 1

McGill University, Montreal, Canada

August 2002 • Revised May 2005

Copyright 2002, 2005 by Stephen Huddart

Contents

Abstract	4
Acknowledgements	5
Introduction	7
1. History and Neurobiology	11
From Plato to Bono: The Roots of Celebrity Activism	11
Stars Are Born . . . and Made.....	15
2. Early Case Studies: Robeson and Guthrie.....	21
Paul Robeson: Prophet.....	21
Woody Guthrie: People’s Poet.....	25
Archetypes: Heroes and Prophets, Poets and Preachers	26
3. The Evolution of Celebrity Activism, 1960–1990	30
The Civil Rights Movement.....	30
Giving Peace a Chance: The Anti-war Movement	32
We Are the World: Responding to Global Concerns.....	34
Band Aid and Live Aid.....	36
4. Typology, Critique and Comparative Analysis	40
Awareness Raising.....	41
Fundraising	43
Advocacy	45
Critique	47
Comparative Analysis of Celebrity Activists.....	49
5. Case Study: A Shared Burden – Geldof and Bono in Africa	52
6. Summary and Conclusions	55
Appendix: Celebrity Activism Timeline, 1960–1990	57
References	59

Abstract

Activism among many of today's star musicians and actors is a significant complement to regular voluntary sector efforts on social issues. This paper explores the phenomenon from multiple perspectives, including the historical (and possibly even neurobiological) roots of music's capacity both to create empathic social bonds and to serve as a precursor of social innovation. The paper also examines the tightly controlled and artificial construct called "stardom," which, with its origins in Hollywood, was initially hostile to individual stars' involvement in social justice. However, two early 20th-century figures, Paul Robeson and Woody Guthrie, set examples which influenced the proliferation and evolution of celebrity activism in the 1960s. More recently, the work of artists such as Bob Geldof, Bono and Robert Redford has restructured celebrity activism around definite strategies of awareness, fundraising and advocacy. Celebrities today can occasionally transform entire domains, and despite suggestions that activism in the arts is becoming debased by attempts to commodify it, a profile of Bono's and Geldof's work shows that celebrity activism at its best continues to shape social meaning and inspire civic engagement, while its "non-confrontational" reordering of economic forces in the service of higher goals may represent a new model of visionary leadership.

Acknowledgements

This paper would not have been written had the Board of Directors of the British Columbia SPCA, its CEO, Doug Brimacombe, and the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies not supported my original decision to enrol in the McGill-McConnell Program for National Voluntary Sector Leaders.

It could also not have been completed without the inspiration and example provided by Canadian children's troubadour, Raffi, with whom I had the privilege and pleasure of working from 2001 to 2002. Raffi's vision of a child-honouring world is apparent throughout his creative and intellectual work, and continues to influence people of all ages concerned with creating a humane and sustainable world.

I would also like to thank Program Director Frances Westley, for mentorship and friendship during this life-changing process. Among many other inspired and inspiring faculty, I should acknowledge Nancy Adler, Fred Bird, Michelle Buck, and Brenda Zimmerman. The insights and examples provided by my fellow students made them my teachers too.

For the philanthropic vision behind the McGill-McConnell program, my profound gratitude goes to the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, its Board of Directors, President and CEO Tim Brodhead, and the staff, who I am now fortunate to count as colleagues.

Next, I owe much to Audrey Bean, project coordinator, for her gentle but persistent reminders, and to Fred Louder, editor extraordinaire, for helping to bring the paper to its final, improved form.

Finally, to my wife, Catherine Rideout, and our son, Kaj Huddart, thank you for supporting me during the many weeks away from home, and during so many hours spent writing this paper.

Introduction

Looking at Star Power

They are called “stars” and they occupy a special place in the firmament of popular imagination – performers whose appearances on television, film, and stage and in recordings make them recognizable to millions. Their attractive power, expressed in tickets or albums sold, might be described as an opportune convergence of talent, appearance, management and timing. As the Greeks revered their gods, so do we idolize our favourite actors and musicians, according them the power to inspire, to dictate fashion and diet, to lead us where we might not otherwise go.

Stars’ fame is both fickle and elusive; once gained, it may be perpetuated by events and means unrelated to the arts that first brought them to public attention. Society’s interest in such people can be intense – witness the crowd of fifteen hundred fans who turned out to see Céline Dion and her infant son enter Montreal’s Notre Dame Cathedral for his baptism (Reuters, 2000) or the 29,700 Internet references to his birth¹. Whole industries – the paparazzi, the tabloid press, television talk shows and celebrity paraphernalia – are built around the attractive power of celebrities. Their images and implied endorsements are used to sell us everything from long distance telephone service (Jamie Lee Curtis for Sprint), to banking (the Bank of Montreal’s jarring use of Bob Dylan’s “The Times They Are A-Changin’” in a television commercial targeted to young investors), to books (Oprah Winfrey’s Book Club).

As well as exerting considerable sway over their fans, musicians and actors can also influence the times they live in – to the extent that it can be difficult to separate performer from social movement. This occurred perhaps most famously in the 1960s, when popular culture and its related styles expressed a generation’s identity and ideals:

¹ Obtained by entering “Céline Dion” at www.google.com and refining that search to find sites with the words “baby boy.” Note that the references have ballooned to over 600,000 by 2005.

President Kennedy, the Beatles . . . cinema . . . pirate radio ships . . . miniskirts, long hair for men – these were the symbols and icons of an age that felt itself on the very edge of modernity. . . . The whole ethos of the sixties was of course an escape from the privations of the Second World War and the conformity of the mid-fifties.” (Johnson 2001, 1)

The sixties were also an age of mass protests – against racial segregation and opposing US involvement in the Vietnam War. Performers not only amplified and popularized those messages, but also helped to raise funds, build organizations and forge coalitions in support of them. In causing millions of people to listen to and act upon the dictates of their awakened consciences, Pete Seeger, Joan Baez and Peter, Paul & Mary can be said to have had as great an impact on history as the politicians and generals they opposed. As Bob Dylan put it, “I always thought that one man, the lone balladeer with the guitar, could blow an entire army off the stage if he knew what he was doing” (Piazza 2002, 28).

When a performer takes a public stand on a social issue, acts as spokesperson for a charity, or participates in a benefit performance, he or she can be said to be engaging in a form of *celebrity activism*. Here are some examples:

- Michael J. Fox was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease and along with Muhammad Ali, became a spokesperson and lobbyist for research funding. His royalties from *Lucky Man* (2002), the best selling book about living with this degenerative illness, were donated to the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research.
- U2 lead singer Bono, who toured sub-Saharan Africa with US Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill, is a regular speaker at G8 and World Bank meetings. His views on aid and debt relief for developing nations have garnered the attention of world leaders, senior policy makers, NGOs – and the public.
- Canadian singer-songwriter Sarah McLaghlin’s eponymous foundation, established in September 2000, assists disadvantaged youth to study music and the arts. With Lilith Fair, a festival showcasing female musical talent, and her recent World on Fire video, McLaughlin has created new business models in her industry – a mark of the transformative leader.

In each of these cases, celebrity and its accompanying wealth are being used to advance a social cause. What is taking place here? How is this power obtained, and how does it work? Who started it? What are the varieties of ways in which it is carried out? Does it really make a difference?

Celebrity activism is a complex, changing phenomenon, which this paper will examine from several perspectives:

1. Historical/Neurobiological. While celebrity activism can be seen as a predominantly twentieth-century phenomenon, it has roots in the history of Western music and drama. In particular, Plato's notion that changes in musical style foretell or precipitate changes in the state will be explored. Four examples of links between "change in modes of music" and profound changes in society – two from the middle ages, one from the nineteenth century and another from the early twentieth century – will illustrate the dynamic relationship between music and social evolution. Recent research on music's effect on the brain will also be referenced as a means of understanding music's power to shape social movements.

A review of the invention of the star system in early Hollywood and its subsequent evolution will inform the development of a descriptive model of the social and economic construct that is stardom today.

2. Early Case Studies: Robeson and Guthrie. The careers of two early twentieth-century performer-activists – singer and actor Paul Robeson, and singer-songwriter Woody Guthrie – will be examined. The idea that celebrity derives a part of its attractive power from archetypal heroic roles, such as magus, prophet or healer, will be proposed.

3. Evolution of Celebrity Activism, 1960–1990. A celebrity activism timeline, covering the period from 1960 – 1990, will delineate the evolution of various forms of celebrity activism during its "golden age."

4. Comparative Analysis. A typology and critique of contemporary celebrity activism will be developed, with illustrative examples in three principle domains: fundraising, awareness building and advocacy. Particular emphasis will be placed on examples of

transformative engagement, where a celebrity has acted to substantively alter a domain. A comparative analysis tool will be presented, and will be used to plot (a) celebrity altruism versus cost, and (b) the degree of challenge to existing social structures versus level of commercial success.

5. *Case Study: Bono and Geldof.* A description of Bono's celebrity activism, building on the work of Bob Geldof.

6. *Summary and Conclusion.* The paper concludes that celebrity musicians and actors have played a legitimate role in advancing social causes, and that as a social phenomenon celebrity activism offers several pathways for further research into its applications and dynamics. If celebrity activism today appears to be in danger of becoming trivialized and commodified, at its best – as exemplified by Bono and Geldof – it continues to shape social meaning and inspire civic engagement.

1

History and Neurobiology

From Plato to Bono: The Roots of Celebrity Activism

Any musical innovation is full of danger to the whole State and ought to be prohibited . . . when modes of music change, the fundamental laws of the state always change with them.

Plato, *The Republic*, Book IV

In the early sixth century, the sacred music of Western Christianity, with its origins in Jewish and Byzantine liturgical song, was codified into what we know today as plainsong or Gregorian chant. These pure, ethereal compositions remain among the most spiritually moving and profound music in western culture. Beginning with the introduction of a second, parallel voice in the ninth century (“organum”) the complexity of musical forms increased, such that by the fourteenth century a clear division appears between *Ars Antiqua* – the simpler form – and *Ars Nova*, characterized by elaborate polyphony. This is a clear example of Plato’s “change in the mode of music”; but did it portend a fundamental shift in the state?²

It can be argued that any number of trends or events – Copernicus’s discovery of heliocentricity, the rise of the middle class, corruption within the church – signalled or precipitated the end of the Middle Ages. It is intriguing however, to postulate that the development of complex polyphony in Europe produced a sort of “vibratory shift,” disturbing the medieval vision of celestial order and enabling receptivity to a different

² It has been suggested that a musical Platonism may exist, awaiting discovery. Music exists in all human cultures and in some animal species, whose songs include rhythm, phrasing, recognizable length, percussive elements, tone, structure and timbre. Humpback whale songs even include repetitive refrains that form rhymes, which in human music assists in memorization of complex material. The characteristic of *verticality* (the evolution of musical forms across generations), a universal quality of human music, is also evident in the songs of several animal species (Gray et al. 2001).

“music of the spheres” – that would eventually lead to the Copernican revolution and a reordering of society.

Current neurobiology suggests an intriguing possibility of this nature. Using positron-emission tomography (PET), researchers Platel and Baron at the University of Caen have mapped the parts of the brain involved in listening to music. Firstly, in distinction to speech, it is processed primarily on the right side of the brain. One of their most interesting results occurred when they examined the effect of changes in pitch or notes in an otherwise familiar melody. When this happened, they discovered that in addition to activity in the temporal lobes, parts of the visual cortex at the back of the brain were engaged. These zones, called Brodmann’s area 18 and 19, are recognized as the area where images are conjured by the imagination (*The Economist*, 12 December 2000).

It may also be the case that the music of the Troubadours – who flourished in late twelfth century and early thirteenth-century France and eventually circulated throughout Europe – contributed to the restructuring of power relationships between the church, the aristocracy and the popular classes that occurred during the Renaissance and Reformation. Troubadourian exaltations of courtly love honoured, mimicked – and eventually subverted – the devotional expressions of medieval sacred music – for the “adored” or “beloved” could be understood in terms both pious and profane. The *sirvente*, or satirical verse, the narrative *pastorela* and the dialogue forms – *tenso*, *partimen* and *joc de partie* – sung in the vernacular and in all manner of public locales, constituted an early form of popular political dialogue. With the Church’s crusade against the Albigensian heresy (1209–1229), Troubadour culture was repressed in France, but dispersed to other parts of Europe, including Florence, where it undoubtedly influenced Dante. Similarly, Chaucer’s ribald skewering of ecclesiastical mores in the *Canterbury Tales*, using satiric commentary and double meanings, drew on the Troubadours’ techniques.

We need not conclude a causal relationship between musical forms and social constructs. Rather, it is sufficient to discern in medieval song two possible models of music as precursor to social innovation – one *structural*, consisting of rhythm, tone scale and harmonics and the other *expressive*, comprising language and melody (which necessarily overlap.) We can clarify our categories with reference to a modern example – the

introduction of rock and roll in the 1950s, containing elements of boogie-woogie and twelve-bar blues, represents a structural (rhythmic) innovation that has been said to anticipate the sexual revolution of the 1960s. Protest songs of the 1960s, on the other hand, structurally recognizable as rock and roll, gospel, or folk music, exemplify specific, expressive intervention around social and political issues.³

We observe another example of musical form signalling profound change with the appearance of “nationalist/idealist” composers in the nineteenth century. Setting his work apart from the Italian composers, who had dominated opera since the late sixteenth century, Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826) employed German folklore and myths to create a German operatic style that not only foretold the establishment of the German state in 1861, but also, in its use of instruments as dramatic voices, foreshadowed Richard Wagner’s invention of Music Drama. In *Rites of Spring* (1989), his history of the First World War and the birth of the modern age, Modris Ecksteins describes Richard Wagner’s influence on the titanic idealism then emerging in Germany:

Richard Wagner’s contribution to the German perception of *Kultur*⁴ in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was of particular importance. His vision of grand opera aimed not only at uniting all the arts but also at elevating his *Gesamtkunstwerk*, his total art work, to a position where it was the supreme synthesis and expression of *Kultur*, a combination of art, history and contemporary life in total drama, where symbol and myth became the essence of existence. Even politics were subsumed into theatre. Wagner’s influence on German consciousness . . . [is] difficult to exaggerate. (Ecksteins 1989, 77)

The music of Wagner, an anti-Semite, was adopted by the Nazis after the First World War, and was played at their rallies. The Israeli Symphony refrained from performing any of his works until 2000. Wagner’s example reminds us that shifts in musical form are not necessarily associated with social progress. It also exemplifies two other dimensions

³ What then of Bob Dylan’s storied appearance at the 1965 Newport Festival, where he stunned folkies with his loud, loose, electronically-amplified rock and roll? Almost forty years later, critics and musicologists are still debating that event, but credit Dylan for introducing a new sub-genre, “folk-rock,” to American popular music in a category-smashing event that augured the cultural upheaval of 1968.

⁴*Kultur* here has elements of “cult” as well as “culture.” Ecksteins describes it as a combination of “authenticity,” “overcoming,” “truth,” “essence” and ‘reconciliation of the ‘two souls’ that lay in Faust’s breast” (ibid.).

of the relationship between music and the state: (1) *the power of music to convey ideals or world views*, and (2) *its ability to shape loyalty, create shared bonds and define the boundaries of a community*.

Ecksteins provides another example – his opening premise is that a performance of Stravinsky's *Le sacre du printemps* in Paris on 29 May 1913, contains the seeds of the modern era – discontinuous, affective, habitually surprising or shocking and above all, engaging, as performer and audience become part of an overall spectacle. Plato might say, "I told you so." McLuhan would point to a resurgence of aural or tribal space, asserting influence on human cognition after centuries of domination by visual culture and the written word.

Neurobiological research is also helpful in understanding music's power to influence us at an emotional level. In addition to mapping the subtle shifts in brain response to music, evidence clearly points to the limbic system – the emotional centre of the brain – as the area of greatest affect. Carol Krumhansl, a psychologist at Cornell University, measured physiological changes in subjects' response to characteristically moody compositions. Music in a fast tempo and in a major key induced happiness; slow music in a minor key produced feelings of sadness; and rapid, dissonant music caused fear. These findings were confirmed by Zatorre and Blood at McGill University, who used PET scanning to isolate similar responses in their subject's limbic systems (*The Economist*, 2 December 2000). Such responses are associated with fluctuations in hormonal levels – including cortisol (involved in arousal and stress), testosterone (arousal and aggression) and oxytocin (nurturing behaviour). They also may trigger release of endorphins (Lemonick and Dorfman 2000). Most intriguingly, Isabelle Peretz at the University of Montreal has shown that music's emotional and conscious effects are completely separate (Ibid). Peretz hypothesizes that the ability to hear music is an evolutionary adaptation to increase social cohesion, by providing deeply shared experiences (Balter 2001).

If music does indeed play a role in shaping the tenor of the times, celebrity musicians transmit that influence, with the added force of their fame. But how does celebrity work? What forces are involved in achieving and sustaining celebrity status? Has there been an evolution in the form over the past century? What encourages – or prevents – stars from taking up social causes in the first place? The development of the star system in

Hollywood, which was copied by the music industry, provides answers to these questions and reveals the social and economic forces which both support and constrain celebrity activism.

Stars Are Born . . . and Made

Concert performers such as Paganini, Liszt and Caruso in the nineteenth century enjoyed fame before the invention of recorded music. Actors like Henry Irving and Clara Wordsworth were renowned leads in travelling troupes. However musicians' and actors' power and reach grew exponentially with the advent of the gramophone and the cinema. The modern concept of a "star" – meaning a performer whose public visibility is so great as to constitute wide recognizability of name, features and something of their personal story – has its origins in a specific confluence of events in the history of the cinema.

American Film Institute researcher Vicki Botnick notes actors in early films were anonymous. Audiences would supply their own names to familiar faces, giving them names like "the Biograph girl," or "the Moving Picture boy." D. W. Griffith was among early directors who recognized audiences' growing affinity for certain performers and began using Mary Pickford and Lillian Gish regularly (Botrick 2002, 1–3).

Although various factors within the profession contributed to the star system, it was ultimately the audience who insisted on knowing the actors, first by name and later in minute, intimate detail...and this mass of viewers, backed by their ticket-buying clout, began to demand to know whom they were seeing – and loving – week after week. (Ibid., 2)

Interest in stars changed the way movies were made – with scenes broken down into multiple angles to allow close-ups and point of view shots that put the viewer in the protagonist's place. Such techniques, coupled with the creation of new genres of film – romance, adventure, westerns and so on – transformed actors into "eroticized, fetishized icons" (Ibid., 4), both larger than life and seemingly close enough to touch. Viewed in the dark, so that we can see them but they can't see us, sharing intimate moments, stars came to hold considerable sway over our oneiric and conscious lives.

Eventually the pioneer independent producer-directors became subservient to the powerful impresarios who began to dominate the emerging industry. All elements of production – writing, casting, direction, post-production, publicity and distribution – were brought into single monolithic structures: the major studios. Meanwhile, as stars became recognizable, public curiosity about them became insatiable. This phenomenon – whereby actors’ personal histories, private lives, tastes and opinions became of enormous and abiding interest to the public – was exploited by the industry, for which a star’s name on the marquee could make or break a film. Studio publicity divisions soon rivalled production departments in size, and magazines like *Photoplay* flourished, devoted to celebrity gossip and biographies fabricated to complement actors’ typical characters, further blending performer and role.

Business capitalized early on stars’ power to influence purchases. Helena Rubenstein and Max Factor virtually created the modern cosmetics industry by producing products like mascara and eyelash thickeners for stars like Clara Bow and Theda Bara to wear on-screen and off⁵. Celebrity endorsements soon followed. Lux soap (“9 out of 10 screen stars use Lux toilet soap”) was endorsed by Mary Astor, Douglas Fairbanks, Marlene Dietrich and at least seventy others before the Second World War. Lucky Strike and Chesterfield cigarettes, airlines, electronics – even Abbot and Costello got into the act, endorsing Tums.

Indeed, it is worth asking why stars who depended upon public support for their status, would so readily accept being used to sell products, and take so long to take up popular causes. While stars had economic power in the studio system (by 1920 Mary Pickford was making a million dollars a year) they were also vulnerable. With such large investments by studios in their stars and with the adulation that supported them so fickle, stars in effect wore golden handcuffs (see Figure 1A and 1B).

In (A), directors are the primary force in making movies. They use anonymous actors. By 1920, however, the industry has consolidated into a small number of vertically integrated

⁵ In her book *Inventing Beauty: A History of the Innovations That Have Made us Beautiful* Teresa Riordan includes a detailed discussion of the process by which 19th century attitudes towards make-up were reversed by the early cinema. Prior to this, rouge and face powder were associated with prostitution. Riordan also describes how colour film ended the 19th century association of pale skin with beauty, spawning an array of tanning products. (Riordan, 2004).

companies that control production and distribution. While actors become stars (B), with greater economic power and visibility, they are dependent on the studio system for employment and on its publicity function for their fame. With the exception of the stage, there is no alternative structure within which to work.

The full integration of sound into film by 1930 coincided with the onset of the Depression, ending the careers of many actors whose voices did not match their on-screen personas and emphasizing Hollywood's role as a factory for escapist fantasies. Movie stars could now be heard as well as seen, but with few exceptions industry constraints on freedom of expression continued to mute the voice of protest.

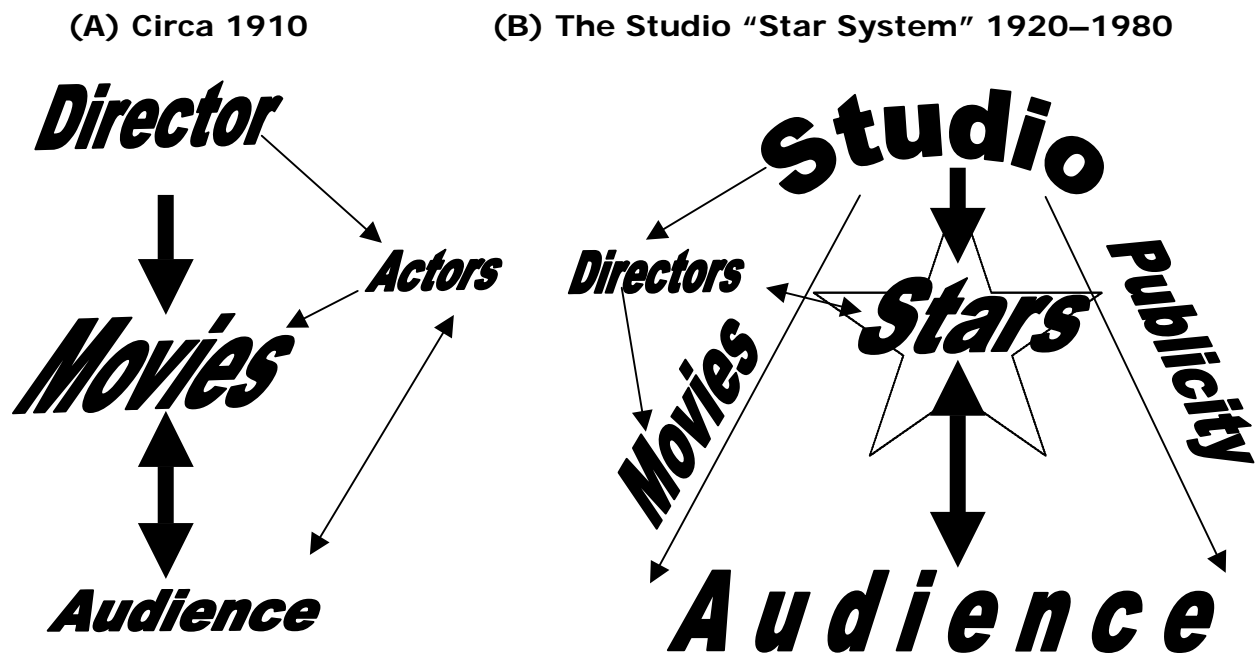


Figure 1. Evolution of the Hollywood "Star System"

Echoing an evolution that encouraged alternative voices in music during the 1960s, with small labels and independent producers, American film eventually evolved a new business model: the independent film made outside the studio system, challenging studios' lock on the processes of moviemaking and revitalizing the industry.

This new model was the vision and achievement of actor Robert Redford. At Redford's Sundance Institute, established Hollywood writers, stars and directors came together with emerging talent, enabling them to learn from and work with each other. Innovative talents are showcased at the now hugely successful Sundance Festival and a new generation of stars, as well as writers and directors, has come to prominence (Meyerson et al. 2002, 58).

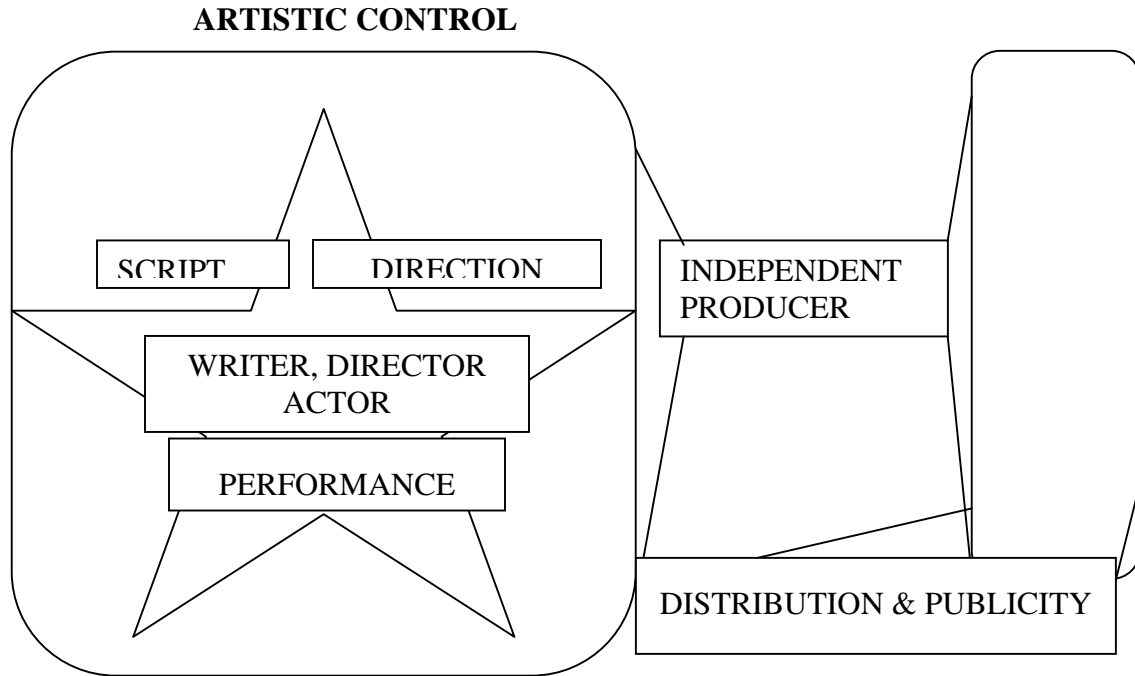


Figure 2. Influence of the Independent Production (1980 Onward)

Figure 2 shows how the power relationships have evolved from those depicted in 1(B). Writers, directors and stars have acquired power outside the studio system by being allied with independent producers who can “package” a project for a studio. Sundance-nurtured films like *Milagro Beanfield War*, *El Norte* and *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* have helped to restructure American cinema. New stars, such as Edward James Olmos and Hilary Swank, have surfaced on the strength of their performances and portrayals of marginalized groups (respectively, Latinos and transsexuals). In addition to sharing star billing with writers and directors, such actors enjoy newfound freedom of expression outside the confines of the studio-controlled star system, which continues to exist.

Redford's work reminds us that in any consideration of celebrity activism, the business or commercial context is an important conditioning factor. In her paper on Bob Geldof's success with Live Aid, Frances Westley notes that by 1984 a shift in recording industry structure was in part what enabled Geldof to produce the Band Aid recordings and Live Aid benefit for famine relief:

While large conglomerates may have dominated the market, professional artists, managers, talent scouts, technicians, or promoters demanded and got, independent status. . . . Each production had qualities of a self-designing system, the artistry lying in the combination of particular skills and people, as much as in the combination of particular technologies and resources. (Westley 1990, 1024)

Redford and Geldof achieved significant innovations within their respective industries by building upon their relationships with people and using existing resources in new ways. This "non-confrontational" reordering of economic forces in the service of higher goals may well be a characteristic of visionary leadership. (Sarah McLachlan has achieved similar results with Lilith Fair, which transformed the touring function in popular music.) Myerson (2001) describes Redford as the "quintessential tempered radical" – a phrase that could be applied as well to Geldof. Had he lived in different times, Paul Robeson might have been similarly described. Under attack by the House Un-American Activities Committee, blacklisted by every major US record label and prevented from leaving the country, Robeson established his own record company, releasing two albums before the Supreme Court finally ended his internal exile in 1958.

As interpretive artists, actors are infrequently the authors of their on-screen roles, which may vary greatly from one project to the next. Marlon Brando's favourite film of those he has appeared in is said to be the 1970 *Burn!*, directed by Gillo Pontecorvo. Its anti-colonialist message more closely reflects the beliefs of the real-life Marlon Brando than does *The Godfather*, which was released two years later and for which he received an Academy Award for best actor.⁶ This occupational distancing from personal values may explain why there appear to be so many more activist musicians than actors. On the other

⁶At the 1973 Academy Awards ceremony, Brando sent "Sacheen Littlefeather" (actually activist Maria Cruz, of Yaqui descent) to declare: "To his great regret Marlon Brando feels unable to accept this award. The reasons lie in the treatment of the Indian in TV and the movies in this country and in the recent events at Wounded Knee."

hand, actors' celebrity – in terms of recognizability – is often greater, because they work in a visual medium. It is in their off-screen, non-professional lives – which as we have seen constitute a significant portion of their public appeal – that actors are most often productively engaged in championing social causes. As celebrity activists therefore, they do not have the advantage of the singer-songwriter, for whom greater consistency between principle and artistic production is possible.

2

Early Case Studies: Robeson and Guthrie

Until the late 1950s, mainstream twentieth-century musicians and actors espoused few but the safest social causes. Larger historical events – two world wars and a depression – dominated public concern. During peacetime and prosperity, the rigidities of the Hollywood studio system; movies’ and music’s role as escapist entertainment in the 1930s; and the anti-communist scare after the Second World War – all militated against performers visibly aligning themselves with movements for social change. There were a few exceptions of course. Chaplin’s film *The Great Dictator* warned the world about fascism and a small number of actors and musicians found ways to express their ideals through their work. Two such people were singer/actor Paul Robeson and singer-songwriter Woody Guthrie. Each of them made important contributions to subsequent developments in celebrity activism.

Paul Robeson: Prophet

Since the days of David, the athlete and musician who slew Goliath . . . people who have extraordinary gifts . . . have obligations to save nations, not just to glorify themselves. There is a tradition of artists . . . whether it is Paul Robeson, Harry Belafonte, or . . . Stevie Wonder . . . who have stood for racial reconciliation rather than racial polarization . . . they operated outside the political box and they made politics better. They bring oxygen to our politics. We are all indebted to artists who have . . . the courage to project their convictions. When there is no music there’s no power. When there is no power there’s no progress.

Jesse Jackson (quoted in Crosby 2000, 14)

The artist must elect to fight for freedom or slavery. I have made my choice. I had no alternative.

Paul Robeson (quoted in Foner 1978)

Paul Robeson was an individual with extraordinary gifts, who combined song and towering presence, intellect and compassion, to communicate a vision of racial equality

and a just society. He was born in 1898, the son of an escaped slave who had become a preacher. Obtaining first place on a state-wide scholarship exam enabled him to attend Rutgers University – only the third African-American to do so since its founding in 1788, and the first to play on its football team. He was valedictorian of his graduating class and after obtaining a law degree from Columbia (which he paid for by playing professional football) he worked briefly for a New York firm, leaving after a white secretary refused to take dictation from him. In 1924, the playwright Eugene O’Neill saw him act in an amateur theatre in Harlem and cast him in the lead role of *All God’s Chillun Got Wings*, opposite a white actress who played his wife. The play opened amidst a media uproar, and in spite of threats of bombing and riots. In 1925, Robeson performed the first-ever solo concert of Negro spirituals, to an overflow crowd in New York and began a singing career that eventually took him to England, Europe, Russia, Africa, Australia, Canada and the Caribbean. Songs of such abiding beauty as “Swing Low Sweet, Chariot” and “Follow the Drinking Gourd,” with their coded messages about freedom from slavery, imparted a powerful moral authority that Robeson carried into other areas of his life and work.

He was also one of the first people to collect, record and perform folk songs from around the world, seeing in them “an emotional product developed through suffering” (Chambers 1998, 2). His 1932 tour of the United States, for example, included Negro spirituals and songs of Russian serfs.

Robeson’s film career was less stellar. His first film, *The Emperor Jones*, based on another Eugene O’Neill play, was released by United Artists in 1933 and was criticized by African-American writers for perpetuating stereotypes. Over the next decade he had some notable successes in finding roles that treated blacks with dignity, including the film version of *Showboat* and a trio of British-made films that included *Jericho*, in which he played the leader of a small African nation. But in 1942, he renounced film work after his role as a black sharecropper in *Tales of Manhattan* was again criticized by African-American intellectuals as a demeaning portrait.

His outspoken support of progressive causes however, was unceasing. Examples include co-founding the Council on African Affairs, which supported anti-colonialist struggles in Africa; visiting Spain during the civil war to rally republican troops and later performing

benefit concerts for those left homeless by the war; denouncing Hitler's treatment of Jews in 1934 and donating the proceeds of his performance in *The Emperor Jones* to Jewish refugees; becoming a personal friend and vocal supporter of Nehru and Indian independence; publicly repudiating McCarthyism; criticizing the CIA-led coup in Guatemala in 1954; and endorsing the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and non-violent protest against discrimination in 1957.

While the struggle to find dignified film roles for blacks was daunting and led to a series of mostly forgettable films, his struggle with the US State Department eventually played out around the world. At a time when his popularity was soaring, the state was both lauding his patriotism and organizing efforts to discredit and disenfranchise him. In 1940, he recorded *Ballad for Americans*, a patriotic song that topped sales charts. In 1941 he created and became chair of the Council for African Affairs; protested the imprisonment of American Communist Party leader Earl Browder; spoke in support of striking Detroit autoworkers; and at a concert in Washington, called for aid to besieged China. The FBI placed him under surveillance. In 1942, he received a citation from the Secretary of the Treasury for "distinguished and patriotic service to our country," even as the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) was placing him on its list of presumed communists. In 1943, he was awarded the Abraham Lincoln medal for notable and distinguished service in human relations – and he called on major league baseball to remove its ban against African-American players. The FBI labelled him a leading communist and issued an order permitting his immediate arrest in the event of a national emergency.

In March 1950 Robeson added to his list of other firsts that of becoming the first American to be banned from television, when NBC blocked his appearance on the *Today* show with former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. After he criticized US involvement in the Korean War, the State Department acted to prevent him from leaving the country by cancelling his passport. His concert career came to a halt in 1951 when rioters – alleged to have been hired by the FBI – smashed two halls where he was appearing. Undaunted, he performed internationally *by telephone*, including once to striking Welsh miners. Blacklisted by recording companies, he formed his own and released two albums, *Paul Robeson Sings* and *Solid Rock*. Between 1955 and 1958 there were several suspicious attempts on his life. In 1956, he finally appeared before the House Un-American

Activities Committee, whom he had challenged for several years to subpoena him directly instead of intimidating other black leaders into repudiating him. “You are the true un-Americans and you should be ashamed of yourselves” he told them (ibid., 2). His response to a senator from Ohio, who asked him why, when he had visited the Soviet Union, he hadn’t stayed there was:

Because my father was a slave and my people died to build this country and I am going to stay here and have a part in it just like you. And no fascist-minded people will drive me from it. Is that clear? (DNTO 2002)

A story from this period illustrates Robeson’s “star power” even while constrained by internal exile. He had been invited to speak at a mineworkers’ meeting in Vancouver, but was prevented from leaving the US. Instead, he spoke and sang for the meeting by telephone and offered to perform publicly the following spring. In May, 1952 he stood on a flatbed truck on the American side of the Peace Arch border crossing and sang to 40,000 people assembled on both sides of the international boundary. His 60th birthday was celebrated around the world, including in India, which proclaimed Paul Robeson Day. International pressure grew with a British-organized “Let Paul Robeson Sing” campaign that flooded the State Department with thousands of letters and telegrams. Later that year a Supreme Court decision restored his right to travel and he left the US for five years. In 1959, he warned a Toronto concert audience: “Don’t be too smug. In the three days I’ve been here, I’ve met only two black people. One asked to carry my luggage and the other offered to shine my shoes” (DNTO 2002). By the time of his death in 1976, recognition of his work had faded. This began to change in 1998 – the centennial of his birth – when he was awarded a posthumous Grammy. Since then, there have been several efforts to honour his name and re-establish his status as a visionary and outspoken champion of human rights. Several of his films and recordings have been re-released, universities have published new material about his life and work and in May 2002 a fiftieth anniversary concert was held at the Peace Arch border crossing.⁷

⁷ A record of Robeson’s life would not be complete without reference to his ties to the Soviet Union. On an early visit, he was impressed by a society that ostensibly stood for racial equality and later went so far as to enroll his son in school there. After World War II, his continued championing of America’s Cold War adversary undoubtedly influenced the State Department’s decision to curtail his civil rights. Although he was not a member of the Communist Party, his often uncritical admiration for the USSR eventually led to bitter disillusionment. When Khrushchev exposed the barbaric excesses of Stalinism in 1956, Robeson

Robeson's life follows the classic path of the hero. Gaining entry to Rutgers, leaving a promising legal career on principle, championing unpopular causes, and his long and ultimately successful battle with the state – evince extraordinary courage. From singing Negro spirituals to bringing about changes in civil rights, it also depicts Plato's dictum played out on grand scale.

Woody Guthrie: People's Poet

Woody Guthrie was the first alternative musician. While Hollywood and Tin Pan Alley were busy peddling escapism to the masses, Woody was out there writing songs from a different point of view with a lyrical poetry that captured the awesome majesty of America's scenery and the dry as dust humour of its working folks. He traveled the country with a newsman's eye for a story and a collector's ear for a song.

Billy Bragg (2000)

In *Pastures of Plenty* (1990, 70) there is a letter from Woody Guthrie to Paul Robeson, written around 1940 at a time when Guthrie, after a separation from his wife, had stopped composing and singing songs. It describes their meeting at a party after a concert that Guthrie had attended as a writer for the *People's Daily World*:

I sung you a song . . . you acted like you didn't know the song and sort of hummed it along with me and it gave you a good excuse too, to let me take the light while you rested up a good lot on a big sofa . . . had to be to fit such a big man living here on such a (could be) big free world . . . if every human alive and trying to live on it would live, work, pray, go, come, sing, smile, act and hug all his peoples up as warm and as tight in his bearhuggy arms . . . as I felt on this particular night that you did . . . I decided right there and then to keep on going with my job of turning out such kinds of balladsongs [*sic*] for folks a hundred generations from us to learn how things were with our bunch here.

For Guthrie to credit Robeson for the inspiration to continue his musical career is all the more remarkable given the number of subsequent performers who cite Guthrie's influence on theirs. At the beginning of the 1960s this included Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, Joan Baez, Judy Collins and Peter, Paul & Mary. Contemporary performers

suffered an emotional collapse. In 1959, after an evening in Moscow where his friends could only whisper for fear of being overheard by secret police, he attempted suicide.

who acknowledge his influence include Ani di Franco, Billy Bragg, Bruce Springsteen and Bob Geldof.⁸ Folksinger Arlo Guthrie (*Alice's Restaurant*) is his son.

Woody Guthrie created the model of the modern American folksinger, traveling around playing harmonica and guitar, composing songs about the landscape and the people he met, and calling for social change. Born in 1912 in Oklahoma, he was 19 years old at the onset of the Depression. Along with thousands of other “dust bowl refugees,” he rode freight trains, hitched and walked to California, where he experienced the scorn and hatred of resident Californians. These experiences – economic misfortune, travel on the open road and solidarity with the less fortunate – shaped his life’s work and mark him as another kind of hero. His outspoken lyrics pilloried corrupt politicians, banks and lawyers, while he championed the likes of Jesus Christ, outlaws Pretty Boy Floyd and Jesse James and union leader Joe Hill. From California he traveled to New York, where his wry humour and authentic worker’s voice made him welcome among leftist musicians, including Josh White, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGee and Pete Seeger. Along with Seeger, he wrote and performed songs with The Almanacs, predecessor to The Weavers and a force in establishing folk music as a commercial form. By 1951, however, at the age of 39, Guthrie’s creative output effectively ended, as he fell victim to Huntington’s disease. In just twenty years he had written over two thousand songs – one every three days – as well as two autobiographical novels and extensive journals.

Archetypes: Heroes and Prophets, Poets and Preachers

When their fame and influence extend to millions, stars like Robeson and Guthrie appear to acquire the mythic status and powers of ancient heroes or gods. The adoration with

⁸ The name of Geldof’s band, the Boomtown Rats, is taken from Guthrie’s autobiography, *Bound for Glory*. Geldof writes: “I had reached the part where, at the age of about eleven, oil was discovered in his home town in Oklahoma. Teams of casual labourers moved in and the place became a boomtown. A split had developed between the native kids and the children of the newcomers. Excluded from the existing gangs, the new kids formed their own. It was called the Boomtown Rats. Even at that tender age Woody could spot the moral discrepancy and left his old friends to join the new gang. As a result the two gangs eventually merged” (Geldof 1986, 101).

which fans regard their favourite stars is described as hero worship, and the media's role in perpetuating the illusion of near-perfect beings borders on hagiography. In a supposedly rational age, our most popular musicians and actors sometimes seem to have transcended their humanity. How do the famous consider themselves?

To understand stars' influence, it may be helpful to consider some of the archetypal roles that they appear to emulate. It is the primary role of the priest, for example, to intercede on humanity's behalf with the gods, guiding our supplications, calling the gods to account (and reminding us of their moral law) and as intermediary, appealing on our behalf for intercession and forgiveness. The true "man of God" is a man of the people. Woody Guthrie was such a person: walking with his fellow men and suffering with them during the Depression, he legitimately became their voice, singing of their joys and troubles, and calling for economic justice. Though not conventionally religious, he had been raised in the Protestantism of the American Midwest, and as his wife recalled, he knew the Bible chapter and verse. He was a storyteller, a lover of children and nature, celebrating humanity without losing critical distance; gratefully acknowledging the gifts of nature; and paying tribute to Jesus, outlaws, and even Paul Robeson. Unlike Robeson, who suffered the fate of the true believer, Guthrie displayed a degree of humorous detachment. "I ain't necessarily a communist, but I've been in the red all my life," he liked to joke. His journal (Guthrie 1990, 89) also contains the following:

Lenin: "Where three balalaika players meet, the fourth one ought to be a communist."

Guthrie: "Where three communists meet, the fourth one ought to be a guitar player."

In contrast to priests and poets, angels and prophets are endowed with divine or heroic powers and located at some remove from humanity. They may carry out superhuman feats; exercise extraordinary prescience; instruct or pronounce judgment on human affairs. Robeson – with his ability to break taboos, create international alliances, dispense financial beneficence to the unfortunate, enter war zones and warn humanity of impending disaster – displayed this kind of prophetic power. His lofty disdain for HUAC, which had cowed and silenced lesser mortals, and his use of the telephone to perform internationally after his passport was revoked, suggest compliance with a higher authority. If he had an Achilles heal, it was a blind belief in the redemptive power of the workers' state, which ironically was atheist.

Reviewing Robeson's and Guthrie's work in the light of the four dimensions of music and social change identified in Section 1 (structural/expressive, embodying ideals/creating social bonds), we see that Robeson helped to introduce new musical forms to American and international audiences. By bringing spirituals – the music of slaves – to the attention of white liberal audiences, he created an empathic bridge that resonated for many years, disturbing consciences, amplifying the plight of southern blacks and breaking the silent acquiescence that allowed “Jim Crow” laws to exist in many states. His pioneering efforts on behalf of American black performers have been acknowledged by singers Odetta and Harry Belafonte and actor Sidney Poitier. The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., borrowed the term “black power” from him.

As a folk poet, Woody Guthrie's work falls more into the expressive category. In his itinerant lifestyle, championing of the common man, satiric skewering of hypocritical and self-serving bankers and bureaucrats, beautiful love songs to women and children and rhapsodic evocation of American geography, we hear an echo of the Troubadours of medieval Europe.

Guthrie's fame, though minor during his lifetime, endures. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame held a ten-day concert and seminar series in 1996 that attracted three generations of musicians and scholars. The Smithsonian and Rounder Records make all of his original recordings available. Billy Bragg's excellent *Mermaid Avenue* CDs (2000) consist of Guthrie lyrics set to new music, and in 2001 producer Frankie Fuchs released a compilation of Guthrie's children's songs, *Daddy O Daddy*, performed by leading blues, rock and country artists. Today, Guthrie continues to inspire musicians, activists and dreamers of a world governed with more love, fairness and humour than the one we inhabit.

Plato himself might have spoken the words of J. Edgar Hoover, when the latter described Robeson as “the most dangerous man in America” (DNTO 2002). Though they had ideals in common, middle-class Guthrie adopted the language and humour of the commoner, whereas Robeson's speech revealed his Ivy League education. He was also a greater celebrity than Guthrie and suffered a calculated and sustained attack on his career and reputation. For his views on civil rights and US foreign policy, for his global reach and

outlook, he was targeted by the FBI and HUAC, blacklisted and sentenced to exile in his own country. Though eventually vindicated, his career never fully recovered.

Their life's work was central to both men, with celebrity being an instrumental but secondary consideration, rather than sought for its own sake. Robeson even abandoned a lucrative film career on principle. Each man displayed a capacity for suffering, resilience and renewal. As archetypal hero and people's poet, they lived lives that leave us an enduring legacy. For how many of today's celebrity activists will the same be said?

3

The Evolution of Celebrity Activism, 1960–1990

With Guthrie and Robeson as early prototypes, the flowering of celebrity activism that took place from 1960 onwards will now be examined. The timeline from 1960 to 1990 (see Appendix One) reveals that, like the development of musical forms, celebrity activism involves *verticality* (the adaptation of forms over time) and *adaptive cycles* (encapsulating previous forms in a process that combines continuity and learning).

The Civil Rights Movement

The civil rights movement was the crucible where many singers and actors first participated in leading social change. Joan Baez was one of several musicians inspired by Martin Luther King's campaign for civil rights, based on Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent resistance. She first heard him speak at her Quaker high school in 1956 when she was fifteen years old (Baez 1987, 1). After touring the South in 1962, she returned in 1963 and for the first time insisted that her audiences be integrated. Pete Seeger, Peter, Paul & Mary and Bob Dylan⁹ were similarly engaged, making appearances throughout the South and publicly championing civil rights.

The movement reached its peak with the March on Washington in August 1963. Baez was there and describes the moment when King improvised his "I Have a Dream" speech:

In the blistering sun, facing the original rainbow coalition, I led 350,000 people in "*We Shall Overcome*," and I was near my beloved Dr. King when he put aside his prepared speech and let the breath of God thunder through him and up over my head I saw freedom and all around me I heard it ring. (Baez 1987, 103)

⁹ Dylan performed "Only a Pawn in Their Game" at a rally in Greenville, Mississippi in 1963 to protest the killing of black civil rights leader Medgar Evers – an extraordinarily courageous thing to do.

Baez was not the only performer to witness and be inspired by King's speech. King had asked Harry Belafonte, the popular black singer (and first recording artist to sell a million albums) to organize a group of celebrities to walk with him in Washington. Those who responded included Marlon Brando, Burt Lancaster, James Garner and Charlton Heston. Peter, Paul & Mary and Bob Dylan sang, as did Marian Anderson and Mahalia Jackson.

Kennedy's assassination just three months afterward cast a shadow over the movement; but two years later, King organized a march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, after CBS News showed state troopers clubbing, whipping and tear-gassing 600 peaceful marchers (protesting the killing of a black civil rights activist who had tried to stop state troopers from beating his mother and grandfather as they lay on the ground). Once again, motion picture and recording stars rallied to the cause. Musicians included Sammy Davis, Jr., Pete Seeger, Tony Bennett, Leonard Bernstein, Joan Baez, Nina Simone, Odetta, Leon Bibb, Oscar Brown and the Chad Mitchell Trio. Mike Nichols, Elaine May, Anthony Perkins, Shelley Winters and Alan King were among the actors involved.

Three models of celebrity activism are discernible here: the *heroic voice* (Baez, Seeger, Dylan, Peter, Paul & Mary); the *convenor* (Harry Belafonte); and the *entourage or support group* (Brando, Bernstein et al.).

As well as making a distinction between the role of the Troubadours and the celebrity entourage, we can also isolate the music itself. It plays a special role – as a *rhythmic community bonding agent* and *codified resistance language* (spirituals); as *anthem* (“We Shall Overcome”); as *social commentary* (“Only a Pawn in Their Game”); and as *expression of world view* (“If I Had a Hammer”).

In Figure (3) a visionary leader is putting pressure on an issue (the need for better laws and enforcement around civil rights) by two means involving celebrities. Troubadours have signed on early, inspired directly by the visionary leader and influenced by the music of enslaved blacks. In this case they are writing and/or performing powerful songs about the issue, directed both to victims of segregation and to the general public. Meanwhile, the leader has engaged a convenor, Harry Belafonte, who forms a support group or entourage of celebrities willing to stand alongside the leader. This latter use of celebrities assists in increasing public and media interest in the event, adds moral weight,

reduces anxiety (“nothing could happen to them”; “these are familiar faces”) and both strengthens and softens the challenge to the state.

In 1964 Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, which made segregation in public places illegal; in 1965 the Voting Rights Act ensured equal access to the ballot box. Even as civil rights activists celebrated, their movement underwent a transformation. A new generation of black leaders came to prominence that regarded King’s Gandhian philosophy as antiquated. The Black Panthers’ inflammatory language (“racist low-life pig-assed power structure” – Bobby Seale),¹⁰ use of weapons and their zealous pursuit by the FBI made the civil rights movement uncomfortable territory for many white, liberal supporters. Celebrity activism had played a role, and that role was over.

Giving Peace a Chance: The Anti-war Movement

Meanwhile, as the timeline shows, a new cause attracted the attention of celebrity activists from 1965 onwards – opposition to the draft and to US involvement in Vietnam. The anti-war movement repeated the models of the civil rights movement – Phil Ochs joined the small cast of heroic voices. Convenors ranged from actor Jane Fonda to impresario Bill Graham. Country Joe McDonald composed the great anti-draft anthem – the *I-Feel-Like-I’m-Fixing-to-Die-Rag*, while songs like Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young’s *Ohio* expressed social truths in the best tradition of the Troubadours: “Tin soldiers and Nixon’s coming, we’re finally on our own. This summer I hear the drumming, four dead in Ohio” (Young 1969).

The period also saw the creation of several new models of engagement. In 1969, Lennon and Ono’s Bed-In for Peace posed an *imaginative challenge* to think and act outside the confines of polarized political debate. The Bed-In also produced the song “Give Peace A Chance,” recorded in their room at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal with an impromptu chorus that included Timothy Leary, the Smothers Brothers, members of a Hare Krishna temple and a rabbi. In 1970, Peter Yarrow (of Peter, Paul &

¹⁰ Seale’s quote was obtained from the historical section of his website, www.bobbyseale.com, which also features his new book, *Barbeque’n with Bobby Seale*. Any connection between the quote and the book’s subject is presumably unintended.

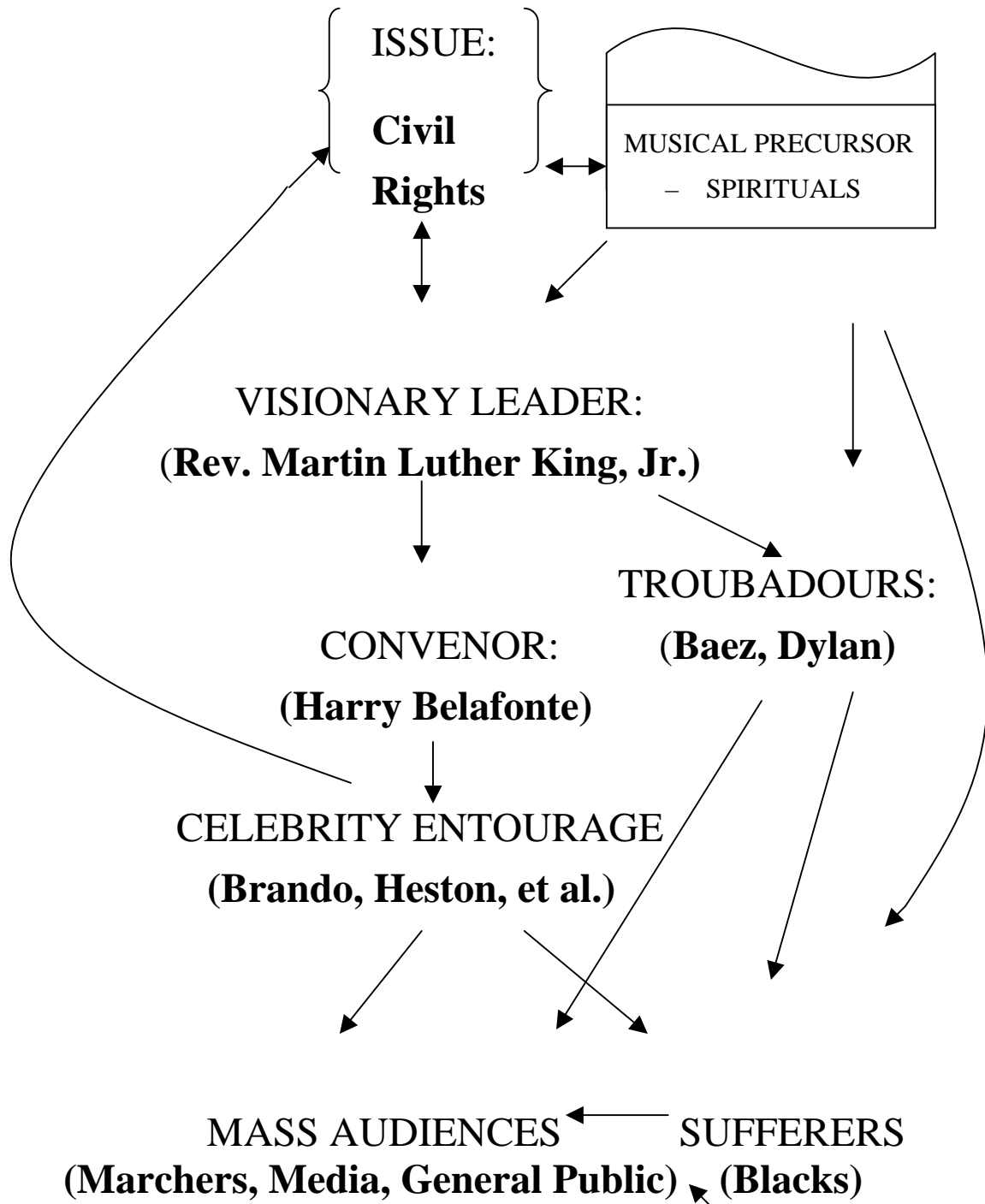


Figure 3. Celebrity Activism in the Civil Rights Movement

Mary) organized the first major *rock and roll benefit concert*, raising \$100,000 in one night at Madison Square Garden and paying off the debt of the Vietnam Moratorium Committee.

Did all of this activity actually help to end the war? There is reason to believe so, but good intentions do not always generate good consequences and an argument has been made that celebrity-led public protest may have lengthened the war. This view holds that a majority of voters viewed protesters as unpatriotic and linked them to the militancy of the black power movement. As a result, they elected Richard Nixon in 1968 and again in 1972, with his promise of “peace with honour” (Garfinkle 2000). On the other hand, heavy casualty rates and the unsustainable scale of engagement did lead to the “Vietnamization” of the war by 1971 – reducing US presence to one-third of its peak with a consequent shift in casualty rates from the US to its South Vietnamese ally. Even though there were still over 130,000 US troops on the ground and with three years before the war was to end, celebrity activism on this issue had peaked and moved on.

We Are the World: Responding to Global Concerns

As celebrity involvement in opposing the war in Vietnam declined, other issues came into focus. Responding to a request from his friend Ravi Shankar, George Harrison organized the Concerts for Bangladesh in New York in 1971. With a related film and a recording that won the Grammy for album of the year, they generated an incredible 13.5 million. Unfortunately, it took eleven years for those funds to reach the intended beneficiary, UNICEF, due to problems with the US Internal Revenue Service and an audit of the Beatles’ Apple Records in the UK. This incident raises a question relevant to all fundraising, but that is often posed in connection with celebrity benefits – how much of this actually goes to the beneficiary? As Bob Geldof was to discover fourteen years later (and, to his credit, largely overcame), the cost of putting on major concerts and broadcasts can be very considerable and if not donated, can make a big difference to the amount of money raised. In 1972, an earthquake devastated Nicaragua. With his Nicaraguan wife, Bianca, whose family’s fate was at first unknown, Mick Jagger organized a benefit concert for quake victims – a rare instance of the world’s most successful rock band doing something for someone else. It raised \$500,000, which

Bianca fought hard to have delivered to where it could make a difference. As well as generating the largest charitable gift for a single concert to that date, the event was arranged in such a way as to enable the Stones to overcome some difficulties they were having with US immigration authorities and thus highlights *the career-enhancing charitable gesture*.

In contrast, the 1974 Evening for Salvador Allende at the Felt Forum was less about aid and more about politics. Phil Ochs organized it, with Harry Chapin, Bob Dylan, Arlo Guthrie, Pete Seeger and Peter, Paul & Mary. The goals were to raise money to assist refugees escaping from post-coup Chile, inform Americans about US involvement in Allende's overthrow and commemorate the torture and death of folksinger Victor Jara. Ochs had met Jara in Chile and like him, was a victim of state interference in his life. Years of FBI surveillance and harassment are considered to be contributing factors in Ochs' mental breakdown and suicide in 1976 (Eliot 1989).

Celebrity activism embraced another cause from 1978 to 1979, when the anti-nuclear movement was briefly prominent and a series of No Nukes concerts took place led by Bonnie Raitt and Jackson Browne. They gave the issue a prominent profile among young people. With the additional influence of Three Mile Island, Michael Douglas' film *China Syndrome* and Helen Caldicott's National Film Board documentary *If You Love This Planet*, popular opposition grew until it became a foregone conclusion that it would be a long time before any more nuclear energy plants would be built in the US or Canada.

Another notable initiative involved Joan Baez, who established Humanitas International in 1979, echoing Paul Robeson's founding of the Council for African Affairs. Humanitas' first public act was to print full-page ads in major US newspapers calling on Vietnam to respect fundamental human rights – a move consistent with Baez's Quaker principles but one that distanced some left-wing supporters. In response to Baez's personal appeal on behalf of Vietnamese boat people, President Carter dispatched the Seventh Fleet, saving thousands of lives. Under Humanitas' auspices, Baez traveled to South East Asia to publicize Cambodia's killing fields. She was also responsible for a series of concerts to raise emergency funds for Cambodia. In addition to raising over a million dollars, the concerts were noteworthy for having been inspired by a similar series held in London a few weeks before. The linking of concerts in the UK and the US to publicize and assist

victims of civil war in a third country was of course what occurred with Live Aid in 1985. Yet another precursor to Live Aid occurred in 1982, when Graham Nash of Crosby, Stills and Nash organized the Peace Sunday concert at the Rose Bowl. Coinciding with a UN Disarmament Conference, the concert attracted a record 100,000 people and raised funds for grassroots peace groups.

Band Aid and Live Aid

In 1984 and 1985, Bob Geldof organized two projects for famine relief in Ethiopia that accelerated the growth of celebrity activism, both in terms of the models he developed and their magnitude. The recording of “Do They Know It’s Christmas” in December 1984 brought together forty-five of the UK’s top musicians and raised six million pounds. It inspired sister recordings in Canada (“Tears are Not Enough”) and the US (“We are the World”). In July 1985 Geldof produced the Live Aid concerts, in London and Philadelphia. Broadcast in Europe, North America, Australia, South East Asia and Japan, they became the world’s largest telethon, raising almost 150 million dollars US. Geldof’s achievement was that of a *bricoleur* – rearranging pre-existing elements in a way that no one had before, to achieve surprising results. The Beatles had performed “All You Need is Love” for the *Our World* television show, seen by 400 million viewers, in 1967. George Harrison had organized a benefit song, concert and film for Bangladesh in 1971 and in 1979 Joan Baez produced the US Concerts for Kampuchea, in response to a similar event in the UK. Geldof combined these models, added a telethon and uniquely prevailed upon his contacts in the music business. Simultaneous concerts in the UK and the US created a sense of global occasion. Phil Collins opened the London event, took Concorde to the US and appeared live in the Philadelphia concert as well. The concerts brought the plight of starving Ethiopians to the attention of 2 billion viewers, and challenged them to respond.

While raising more money than all previous celebrity benefits combined (personal estimate), Geldof admitted that the financial outcome was a “drop in the bucket” compared to the scale of the unfolding tragedy. Yet his contribution should not be measured in monetary terms alone. He used moral suasion to awaken a response in celebrities, in 2 billion people who watched the concerts and in world leaders with whom

he met personally. Live Aid's use of highly emotional televised images to stimulate donations – discovered by accident during Live Aid – subsequently changed the face of international fundraising.¹¹ Attention to sponsorship (in England at least) allowed him to eliminate many of the costs that had until then reduced the net donation to whatever cause was being supported by celebrity events. He precipitated changes to aid distribution in Africa and inspired a quantum leap in the range and scale of celebrity fundraising.

From July 1985 onwards, moved by the success of Live Aid, celebrity activism grew significantly. In September of that year Willie Nelson, John Mellencamp and Neil Young launched Farm Aid, in response to Bob Dylan's comment during Live Aid, "Wouldn't it be nice if we did something for our own farmers?" Its mission is to assist poor farmers and promote family farming. It has disbursed over \$15 million in grants since then, and held its fifteenth benefit concert in September 2002. Farm Aid marks the beginning of the *single focus/multiple celebrity activist organization*.

The following year, Neil Young organized the first annual benefit concert to support the Bridge School for children with cerebral palsy. The concerts continue to this day and the school's international outreach program is recognized as the best in the world. Hence the *single focus/single celebrity fundraising event*.

Comic Relief, founded in 1986 by comedian Bob Zmuda with assistance from Robin Williams, Whoopi Goldberg and Billy Crystal, provides direct aid to the homeless and raises awareness of issues around homelessness. It has raised over \$50 million, while its UK offshoot has generated over 60 million pounds. It has also expanded to assist people affected by hurricanes and in 1992, took just three weeks to organize a benefit that raised 2.5 million for 10,000 people left homeless by Hurricane Andrew. Comic relief created the *multiple focus/multiple celebrity activist organization*.

¹¹ The image of a child struggling to lift himself, filmed by a CBC cameraman and shown to the accompaniment of the Cars' "Who's Going to Pick You Up" caused a tremendous spike in donations when it was shown during Live Aid (Geldof 1986, 293, 307). It provided the inspiration for the founding of Eagle-Com Inc. a Canadian fundraising company that produces long-form fundraising infomercials that often employ celebrities to deliver highly emotional pitches. Its current clients include Greenpeace, Amnesty International, World Wildlife Fund and Foster Parents Plan.

The frequency with which celebrities responded to international relief efforts continued to increase. The explosion of Mt. Purace in Colombia in 1986 resulted in the Colombian Volcano Relief Concert at Royal Albert Hall. Two years later, after Hurricane Gilbert devastated Jamaica, Ziggy Marley garnered support from U2 and Keith Richards to produce the “Smile Jamaica Concert.” Similarly with the San Francisco quake of 1989, a rock benefit held in two locations simultaneously, raised \$2 million via a telethon. More recently, in the month after the September 11, 2001 tragedy, at least three separate major music benefits were held, in New York, Washington and Nashville. The New York concert alone raised \$14 million, with CD sales expected to double that number. In Canada, Music without Borders Live raised over \$1 million for Afghan relief.

While raising funds and public awareness appear to be the primary objectives of large-scale post-1985 celebrity activism, its use for advocacy purposes has declined. For a time – from 1963 to the late 1970s – popular music and popular movements often seemed synonymous. Following Live Aid, many more musicians and celebrities became involved in charitable work, while fewer appeared as leaders around more systemic issues. Several hypotheses have been advanced to explain this phenomenon. COINTELPRO, the FBI’s covert campaign against domestic dissenters, is cited by several writers as discouraging all but the most determined or innocuous of celebrity social critics (e.g. Eliot 1989, Estes 2002). Others point to a demographic shift – whereby baby boomer activists had children and thus became participants in maintaining the economic status quo. It may be that the Live Aid model displayed such obvious strengths – effectively focusing widespread attention and assistance on urgent issues, that addressing more systemic problems henceforth seemed less appealing – or newsworthy.

From the perspective of Plato’s dictum, it would appear that the predominant forms of popular music from 1980 to the mid 1990s posed little threat to states. This was after all, the Reagan/Thatcher/Mulroney era. On the other hand, if we look for evidence at a lower order of magnitude, there are many signs of engagement in deeper social change by musicians and celebrities. For example, musical activism is evident in the eco-folk movement and at anti-globalization demonstrations. And on a larger scale, Bono, working in close association with Bob Geldof, is taking the form of celebrity activism that is political lobbying to new heights.

This was also when hip-hop and rap germinated and spread – together with related graffiti and gang culture – throughout much of America and the rest of the English-speaking world. They are the quintessential post-modern forms, borrowing from many sources – poetry, rock, jazz and TV sitcoms. Adaptive and (to many adults) unintelligible, they remained under the radar of mainstream media until the 1990s, when they evolved to become commercialized commodities on the one hand and on the other, a central element in growing popular reaction to the forces of globalization. Proponents argue that hip-hop and rap are born of the violence that afflicts society's underclass and simply reflect its harsh realities. Certainly they have played a role in creating identity and empowerment for excluded youth and made some of them rich. However, much rap music, with its misogynist, racist and violent content is a reminder that being oppressed is not an assurance of eventual enlightenment (Best and Kellner 1999).

4

Typology, Critique and Comparative Analysis

A typology and critique of contemporary forms will enable a further evaluation of several inherent and conditioning factors in celebrity activism today. Celebrities' contributions to civil society organizations can be separated into three primary categories – *awareness raising*, *funding* (through own or others' resources) and *political advocacy*. Although the categories may overlap in practice, viewing them separately assists in understanding the nature of commitment involved and in evaluating results. Within this typology, we identify low, medium and high levels of engagement. In addition, a fourth category – visionary leadership – is introduced, wherein a celebrity is reshaping an issue or domain in fundamental ways. Graphically, these categories can be represented as follows:

<i>Primary Activity or Focus</i>			
<i>Engagement level</i>	<i>AWARENESS</i>	<i>FUNDING</i>	<i>ADVOCACY</i>
<i>LOW</i>	PATRON	APPEAL LETTER /DONOR	PUBLIC LETTER
<i>MEDIUM</i>	SPOKESPERSON	PERSONAL FOUNDATION, BENEFIT	CONVENOR, ENDORSER
<i>HIGH</i>	AMBASSADOR, AUTHOR	BENEFIT TOUR, PUBLIC FOUNDATION	THEMED FILM OR RECORDING
<i>TRANSFORMING</i>	VISIONARY LEADER		

Figure 4. Models of Celebrity/Civil Society Engagement

Awareness Raising

Low Engagement

Patron. The celebrity allows his or her name to be cited by an organization, affording credibility to external publics and validation to internal audiences. Celebrity's role is often passive. Based on the model that resulted in many British charities appending the prefix "Royal" to their names and less common today as celebrities tend to be more actively engaged in the causes they support.

Awareness Raising: Medium Engagement

Spokesperson/Endorser. The exponential growth of this form of celebrity activism represents a commodification of the genre and indeed it is common for agencies that match celebrities with charities to also offer product endorsement packages. Typically, the celebrity is identified with a particular charity and appears or makes statements on its behalf. By participating in a public service announcement, writing an opinion piece, or appearing at a public rally, the celebrities attract visibility to the cause and to themselves. As the president of Celebrity Source, Rita Tateel put it, "When a celebrity hires a publicist, one of the first questions that publicist asks is, 'What causes do you want to identify yourself with?' Being active in a cause is becoming a standard part of the career package of a lot of entertainers" (Smillie 1998).

Celebrity Source has 5,100 celebrities in its database and charges \$4,000 and up to match one of its clients to a charity, a fee for which the charity is usually responsible. The charity should also be prepared to pay for a celebrity's direct expenses, including first class airfare, meals and hotels, plus a gift or honorarium and possibly the cost of an assistant. Kids With a Cause on the other hand, is itself a charity. It specializes in engaging child celebrities and works with 110 young actors, finding appropriate institutions for them to support, providing training and chaperoning them on major assignments.

Board member. This resembles the patron model, but here the celebrity plays a more active governance role, connecting the organization to personal networks. Except with

foundations in which the celebrity has a personal investment, not very common as their time is usually more valuable to the organization in other ways. Oprah Winfrey's membership on the board of Civitas is a notable example.

Awareness Raising: High Engagement

Ambassador. UNICEF pioneered this model when it named actor-comedian Danny Kaye an "Ambassador at Large" in 1954. Building on the success of this model, UNICEF today has seventeen Goodwill Ambassadors, including Harry Belafonte, Michael Douglas, Roger Moore, Chinese-American television celebrity Yu-Sai Khan and Benin-born singer Angelique Kidjo.

Author. When a celebrity writes a book about a cause, he or she has generally made a significant effort to understand the issue and has an ongoing personal and professional commitment to it. Michael J. Fox's recent memoir, *Lucky Man*, is an example of this form. Bryan Adams' work on behalf of breast cancer includes two books of photographs: *Made in Canada*, with proceeds to the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation and *Haven*, which benefits the UK Haven Trust, a breast cancer support centre.

Awareness Raising: Transformational Engagement

Ambassador extraordinaire. Audrey Hepburn is remembered for the extraordinary effort she put into her UNICEF role, when between 1988 and 1992 she made over 50 journeys to developing countries to bring hope to impoverished and disenfranchised peoples and news of their plight to the rest of the world.

Global televised concert/telethon. By bringing the story and images of the Ethiopian famine to almost a billion people, Bob Geldof helped two billion people become aware of the unfolding tragedy, and gave them a way to respond. Interestingly, today his efforts are largely focussed on advocacy, as an active collaborator in Bono's campaign to improve Western aid to Africa. After initially declining, he recently agreed to participate in a follow-up concert.

Fundraising

Low Engagement

Signing a letter or public appeal. A celebrity allows the use of his or her name on an appeal letter to donors, or joins with others in making a public call for support. Fundraisers continue to cite its value in getting prospects to respond to direct mail solicitations.

Personal donations. An artist makes a donation of money, an artistic work, or a personal object to a cause. Financial and artistic gifts can be significant and where this is the case, would indicate a higher level of engagement. The donation of a performance or recording enables NGOs to produce concerts, or distribute compilations of several artists' work. The CD, *Groundwork: Act to Reduce Hunger* (Groundwork 2001) for example, with contributions from Madonna, Daniel Lanois and others, was sold in Starbuck's coffee outlets, with all profits going to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to support small scale farming projects in developing nations. Donated celebrity paraphernalia – autographed scripts or music charts, items of clothing or jewellery worn by the star and so on – can be marketed at special events and through on-line auctions.

Fundraising: Medium engagement

Foundations. As Hollywood publicist Ronnie Lippin noted recently, “It seems like *everybody* has their own foundation these days” (Lippin 2002). Most foundations in this category are eponymous, are funded solely by contributions from the star's work and tend to make gifts to schools, causes or communities that reflect the stars' own provenance. The Sarah McLaughlin Foundation for example, provides an annual grant to Vancouver's Arts Umbrella, enabling disadvantaged students to study music.

Sponsored Tour. Music Matters is a Minneapolis-based agency that matches bands on tour with sponsors and beneficiaries. Currently, the Dave Matthews Band is touring with support from Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream, with partial proceeds (approximately \$1 per

ticket sold) to World Wildlife Fund's Global Warming campaign. As well, the tour has purchased carbon offsets to mitigate its own contribution to the problem (Martin 2002).

Fundraising: High engagement

Public foundation. In contrast to the personal foundation that is primarily a vehicle for the star to direct charitable contributions, the public foundation is focused on an issue or cause and often involves the celebrity on more levels than as donor. Examples include Jewel's Higher Ground for Humanity Foundation, which sponsors clean water projects in several developing countries and Rob Reiner's I Am Your Child Foundation, dedicated to increasing public spending on early childhood programs. I Am Your Child produced a widely viewed television special with that title and offers high quality resource materials for parents and early childhood educators. An independent board ensures that the star's influence is balanced with financial and oversight contributions from other individuals.

Fundraising tour. Canadian actor and country music star Tom Jackson has produced *The Huron Carol* every year since 1988. Each December in ten to fourteen Canadian cities, local performers join the touring cast, raising a total of \$500,000 for local food banks (Charity Village 1998). Interestingly, confidential anecdotal evidence shared with this writer suggests that the effort that it takes a small charity to comply with the demands of the tour is so great as to almost overwhelm local staff and volunteers – in other words, engagement levels are also high for the nonprofits involved.

Fundraising: Transformational Engagement

Branded merchandise. There is an appealing, Warhol-like circularity to seeing Paul Newman's image on bottles of pickles. One can almost hear him saying, "Well at least you can eat my brand of celebrity activism." Newman owns this category, using his fame to market a range of food products in North America, Europe, Australia and Japan. The enterprise now employs his daughter and has recently expanded to include organic items. Profits over the past 20 years have totalled over US\$125 million, all of which has been donated to charities in communities where the products are sold.

Global Concert/Telethon. Geldof's Live Aid raised over US\$100 million by the time he wrote his memoir, *Is That It?* (1986). With additional commitments by governments, private donations and continuing royalties from merchandise and records, that total would reach over 67 million pounds (US\$150 million) (Westley 1990, 1013).

Advocacy

Low Engagement

Signatory to a public letter. Musicians and actors, along with authors, scientists and other prominent individuals, sign a public statement calling on someone – usually a government – to take action. Sometimes the signatories contribute funds to place a newspaper advertisement. In 2002 such a campaign was carried out to dissuade UNICEF from partnering with fast food giant McDonalds to sponsor World Children's Day, November 20, 2002 (Commercial Alert, 2002).

Advocacy: Medium Engagement

Convenor. As a convenor, a celebrity acts to bring together friends or similarly to support an organization or political candidate. Celebrities can be very effective in this role – whether it was Phil Ochs persuading his friend Bob Dylan to perform at an Evening for Salvador Allende in 1974, or Geldof getting every major British rock star of the previous 25 years to perform at Live Aid, celebrities respond to other celebrities.

Lobbyist. In February 2002 World Wildlife Fund Canada called upon children's Troubadour Raffi to present its call for reform of Canada's pesticide laws. The result was extensive media coverage and a public commitment from the Minister of Health. Key elements included solid background research that presented the scientific and ethical case; a well-briefed and sympathetic celebrity with a genuine link to the issue; careful timing; and an imaginative agenda with multiple photo and TV opportunities. (World Wildlife 2002)

Endorsing politicians. Politicians often seek and accept celebrity endorsement during election campaigns. It can signal to certain constituencies that the candidate is sympathetic to their concerns. The practice can be controversial. Ray Charles was criticized for performing “America the Beautiful” at the 1984 Republican convention and afterwards revealed this had been a paid appearance – he’d already turned down the Democrats because they wanted him to play for free (Lydon 1998, 354). Another problem occurs when politicians enlist celebrities but fail to carry out a promised agenda, as occurred with Clinton and gays and the support of Melissa Etheridge and Michael Stipe of REM (Crosby 2000, 103).

Advocacy: High Engagement

Movement leader. The music of Joan Baez, Pete Seeger or Bruce Cockburn often expresses the artist’s views about controversial issues. In addition to their music and their appearances at rallies and benefits, these artists traveled, wrote and gathered with others of like mind to create a sense of civil society in development. This synchronous and symbiotic relationship between artistic output, advocacy and civil society appears to be re-emerging in the eco-folk movement (Kupfer 2002, 16). It characterizes the work of Ani di Franco, Billy Bragg and rappers like Drew Dillinger and the duo Common Prophet (Estes 2002, 40).

Advocacy: Transformational Engagement

Running for office. A discussion of celebrity activism would be incomplete without mention of the actor who became President of the United States. Ronald Reagan’s appeal was at least partially based on nostalgia and a hearkening back to the simplistic value system that imbued his film roles. His paternal, self-effacing style embraced several myths that translated into dubious public policy. The patriotic, rags-to-riches subtext of *Knute Rockne – All American* links to Reaganomics for example. The good-versus-evil rhetoric that led to the spectacularly wasteful Strategic Defense (“Star Wars”) Initiative is the central dramatic device in *Cattle Queen of Montana*, in which Reagan protects a widow against unscrupulous land thieves and Indians who are portrayed as bloodthirsty murderers. The frontier ethic in several of his westerns foretells his insistent

pronouncements against various conservation initiatives on issues such as global warming and acid rain.

Transforming a domain. Domain transformation is rare, and even more rarely can we point to a single individual or moment when something of this magnitude occurs. Social problems and efforts to ameliorate them are so complex as to generally preclude the efforts of a single individual making a noticeable difference. Bob Geldof is such an individual and although we have stressed the historical trajectory that preceded and informed his success with Live Aid, Geldof is more than the sum of his predecessors. He draws on the moral cadences of the Robeson-King tradition, pressing against seemingly insurmountable odds and succeeding in creating a massive response. He also adapts the expressive, Troubadourian role. “Do They Know It’s Christmas,” co-written with Midge Ure, contains the same kind of oblique appeal to a sense of justice as Guthrie’s and Dylan’s best songs. He was also a consummate convenor, bringing an unprecedented number of rock’s top stars together, to record and perform on both sides of the Atlantic. Furthermore, having sworn to avoid creating another bureaucracy, he didn’t, though he certainly inspired many other individuals and organizations. Today, he works closely with Bono on the issues of debt forgiveness and increased aid to Africa.

Critique

The celebrities are necessary, because “magazines at some point become hostage to their own success. I’d love to put scientists and statesmen, nurses on the cover, but you can’t, it’s a business. . . . So you put a celebrity on the cover. Look, most of them, like, are 27 years old and they spend most of their time in a trailer. They don’t read much. They’re nice people and I think, why beat up on some poor little movie star? They’re like baby seals. I’d rather take a club to somebody bigger. They’re not overdogs, they’re underdogs. They’re terrified. The shelf life of a movie actor or actress is so short, it’s like milk. They go through breakups with their boyfriends or their husbands or their wives and they actually lead such an insular life that there’s not a lot to say about them.

Graydon Carter, editor, *Vanity Fair* (quoted in Houpt 2002)

I get calls all the time from publicists saying, “Find me a charity. Any charity will do,” says Barry M. Greenberg, head of Celebrity Connection in Los Angeles, which links

Hollywood stars with causes. “I ask what sorts of things they are interested in and they say, “Whatever.” They are just looking for publicity. (*Philanthropy Journal* 2000)

The media, with their emphasis on fame, are helping to destroy this country, helping to destroy the human race.

Pete Seeger (quoted in Kupfer 2001)

Celebrity’s appeal and reach to the public may lead to commitment, constructive engagement, social grouping and philanthropic behaviour. On the other hand, in the hands of the unscrupulous or unenlightened, celebrity can also be used to promote greed, apathy, racism, sexism and violence.

Celebrity also does us a disservice when it makes doing good look like an exclusively heroic act – diminishing the power that each of us has to act on principle to affect our immediate surroundings and the world, and reducing the perceived importance of causes that lack celebrity support.

Celebrities’ attention can also distort social priorities by influencing philanthropy and government spending. The *Philanthropy Journal* notes that diseases with celebrity advocates get more research money than those without, for example, and reports that in 1999 celebrity-supported HIV/AIDS got six times as much US government research money as heart disease, despite affecting one-fifteenth as many people. Mary Tyler Moore is credited with helping to boost the research budget for juvenile diabetes from \$3 million to \$75 million since 1984 (*Philanthropy Journal* 2000).

Michael J. Fox and Christopher Reeve are considered heroes for their efforts to publicize and raise funds for Parkinson’s and spinal cord injuries. Were these increases in funding at the expense of other afflictions?

The sheer proliferation of celebrity activism and its commodification threaten to bring the whole field into disrepute. When every celebrity has to have a cause and when those celebrities can be bought, credibility and sincerity should be questioned.

Comparative Analysis of Celebrity Activists

Figures 5 and 6 employ a simple and admittedly somewhat subjective tool for comparing celebrity activists. Figure 5 plots cost (in time, effort and reduced commitment to career) against degree of altruism (in degree of service to others as opposed to self-serving activity). Geldof and Bono exhibit similar degrees of selflessness in their cause-related work, for example, but written accounts suggest that Geldof exerted greater personal effort for Live Aid than Bono does for African debt relief. As noted earlier, Sarah McLachlan's personal foundation is committed to funding arts education for underprivileged youth. She also continues to influence industry standards she did with Lilith Fair; her recent *World on Fire* video was made for almost no money, the balance of the usual budget going to nine charities. Jewel's Higher Ground for Humanity Foundation sponsors clean water projects in developing countries. McLachlan is her foundation's sole funder, whereas members of Jewel's foundation receive regular appeals to support its work.

Activities such as Ted Nugent's involvement in Rock the Vote seem to be as much about the celebrities themselves as the causes they support. Dave Matthew's Band's One Whirled Tour donated one dollar per ticket to World Wildlife Fund, and also purchased carbon offset credits. Clearly, engagement can cut both ways, benefiting the star as well as the cause – Michael J. Fox's book, which raises funds for Parkinson's research, also reveals that Fox has come to terms with his disease in ways that evince a deeper humanity. Personal disaster also prompted the late Christopher Reeve's work for spinal cord research. Oprah's Book Club, which made the fortune of many a deserving writer, was dropped at one point for "ratings reasons," casting her original motive and commitment into question.

In Figure 6, a larger star indicates a cluster of like activity – such as the large number of celebrity spokespersons and benefits, or the plethora of organizations inspired by Live Aid. Clusters – like Seeger/Early Dylan/Baez or Danson/Sting, indicate related or complementary activity. We can identify several tiers, beginning with the improbable Lennon/Yoko Bed-In for Peace. At the next tier we find several challenges to the prevailing social order, with Bono combining a rare degree of career success and commitment to an issue. With Dylan we see a degree of social vision and engagement

that diminishes in his later career – in contrast to Geldof, whose musical career was eclipsed by his activism.

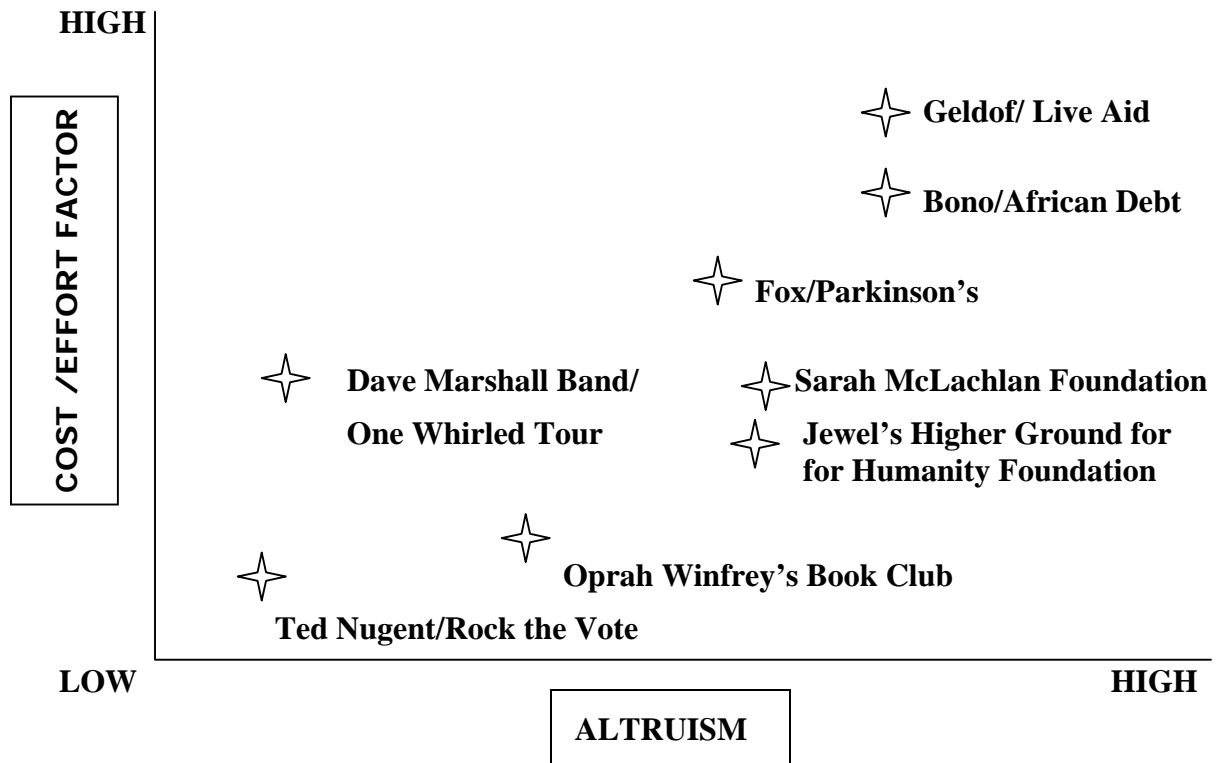


Figure 5. Celebrity Motivation (Degree of Altruism) vs. Personal Cost

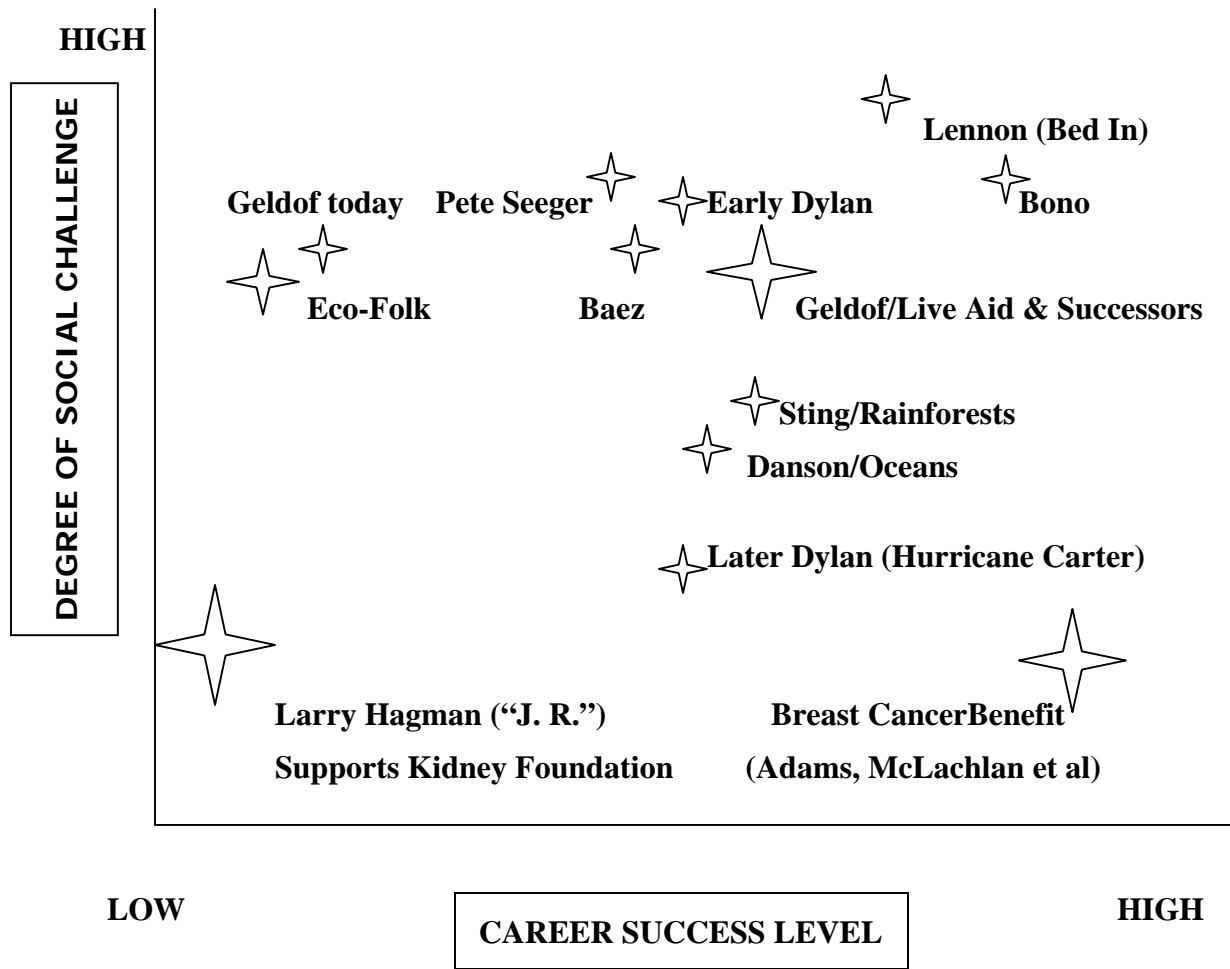


Figure 6. How "Safe" Is It? Degree of Social Challenge vs. Degree of Success

5

Case Study: A Shared Burden – Geldof and Bono in Africa

Bono's personal passion for the cause communicates absolutely to those with whom he meets face to face to discuss this issue. . . . And it has to be said that the person who put him on that track was actually Bob Geldof.

Jamie Drummond of Jubilee 2000 (quoted in Jackson 2000, 201)

Bob Geldof's work with Live Aid constitutes the single most significant example of celebrity activism of the past twenty years. But while Live Aid raised over \$150 million by 1986, from 1995 to 1997 Ethiopia was due to make debt repayments of \$500 million a year to industrialized countries and international financial institutions. Today Geldof continues to work for the alleviation of poverty in sub-Saharan Africa by emphasizing advocacy over awareness raising or fundraising.

Geldof is joined in this effort by Bono, whose reputation as a social activist was well established before he took up the case of debt relief. Between 1991 and 1999, Bono had

- worked with Greenpeace on a successful campaign to oppose construction of a nuclear fuel reprocessing plant in Cumbria (at a cost of 1.6 billion pounds)
- arranged for the author Salman Rushdie – at that time a fugitive from death sentence of an Islamic religious court – to appear onstage before 73,000 fans at Wembley Stadium
- highlighted the plight of besieged Sarajevo to world attention, using satellite technology to present live images of Serb, Croat and Muslim citizens telling stories of rape and torture to U2 concert audiences

-
- challenged France's resumption of nuclear testing in the South Pacific with this statement at the MTV Europe awards in Paris: "What a city. What a night. What a crowd! What a bomb! What a mistake! What a wanker you have for a President! What are you going to do about it?" (Jackson 2001, 150)
 - appeared with U2 at the Tibetan Freedom Concert
 - opened a music therapy centre in Bosnia with War Child.
 - joined former US president Bill Clinton and former South African president Nelson Mandela in actively calling for a Yes vote for a peace agreement in Northern Ireland.

Ann Pettifor, head of the Jubilee 2000 campaign, which sought to use the occasion of the millennium to persuade industrialized nations to forgive Third World debt, describes how she recruited Bono to become the campaign spokesperson in late 1998. She told him about "Sabbath" economics, "the idea that every seven days you stop consumption and exploitation and every 49 years you write off debts and free slaves. It was the opposite of globalization and it got Bono very excited" (Jubilee 2002). Geldof joined their initial meetings and was instrumental in persuading Bono of his potential to influence the campaign.

Within a couple of months of joining Jubilee 2000 as its spokesperson, Bono's public challenge to British Prime Minister Tony Blair resulted in the UK announcing a 50-million-pound debt cancellation. Letters to major world newspapers followed, as well as meetings with the Pope and other world leaders. When the G-7 leaders met in June 1999, they agreed to forgive *\$100 billion* in debt (CBC News, 19 June 1999). The effort continued. In September 2000 Bono presented a petition containing 21.2 million signatures to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and successfully lobbied Capitol Hill on behalf of President Clinton's proposal to make a \$435 million contribution to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. In doing so he made an unusual ally in the ultra-conservative Republican Senator Jesse Helms (Jackson 2001, 200). Faced with a situation where the political will seemed evident but the red tape was still an obstacle, Bono used characteristic bluntness at a Washington news conference to say, "I'm asking, get your

scissors and cut through the crap!” (ibid., 201) In a related effort, in 2001, he joined forces with Archbishop Desmond Tutu in a successful bid to force pharmaceutical companies to lower their prices for drugs to fight HIV/Aids (ibid., 220).

In March 2002, Bono appeared in a photograph standing beside President George W. Bush as the latter announced a “surprise” \$5-billion aid package for the world’s poorest countries. A highly sophisticated research, lobbying and public relations effort lies behind such successes. Bono and Geldof spend much more time on meetings, phone calls and in developing alliances than they do in photo sessions. Challenged for appearing with the likes of Helms and Bush, Bono responded, “I’d have lunch with Satan if there was so much at stake” (Jubilee Research 2002, 1).

Like Robeson and Guthrie, Geldof and Bono are modern heroes whose lives seem to play out on a mythic scale. The account of Geldof’s life – including the tragic early death of his mother, difficulties with his father, success in Vancouver cut short by not having a work visa, failure to secure a bank loan to start a business in Ireland and his subsequently accepting the position of lead singer with the band that would become the Boomtown Rats – can be read as a tale of personal suffering leading to transformation. His deep, empathic response to the plight of starving Ethiopians and the frequent occurrence of apparently miraculous coincidences during his quest to create Band Aid and Live Aid, mark Geldof as a kind of contemporary shaman. He who is chosen for this role is first wounded by the gods, so that he experiences a deep need to heal himself. In the service of humanity, whose pain he knows only too well, the shaman is able to call on the assistance of the gods and thus works on a superhuman scale.

Bono on the other hand, the son of unconventional parents who married and retained their respective Catholic and Protestant faiths, is, despite his blunt language, the quintessential ambassador, compelled to reconcile the divides that separate Northern Ireland from the Irish Republic, rich from poor, Catholic from Protestant, Democrat from Republican, aggressor from victim, Christian from Muslim. As the final celebrity in our survey, he provides an extraordinary example whose story is far from over.

6

Summary and Conclusions

This paper has explored celebrity activism involving musicians and actors – two distinct but complementary professions. While the modern focus on celebrity causes us to see the musician as the central agent in musical activism, music itself influences social change. Articulating a social truth or an ideal through music can create emotional bonds, which in turn foster social cohesion around shared perceptions. Indirectly, this may occur through music’s introducing new rhythms and structures to aural space, thereby predisposing a shift in patterns of human perception. In support of these ideas, the modern discovery of specific neural pathways by which music influences the brain and in particular the limbic system, is beginning to explain music’s power to inspire, to express ideals and to create empathic bonds among people. A rich area for future exploration exists here, in considering for example, music’s ability to sculpt the developing brain, and to complement education at all levels.

If music itself can be understood as a meta-language or cultural code, we also found historical and empirical evidence of musicians’ employing music to promote social change. In the middle ages, Troubadours satirized church officials. In recent times, musicians have applied their art and fame to oppose wars, save rainforests, provide famine relief, restructure relations with developing countries, raise money for medical research and support children’s rights. They have participated in efforts to identify and articulate the aspirations of oppressed and excluded minorities, from African-Americans in the Southern US and colonized peoples in Africa, to ghettoized urban youth. The Platonic principle that an evolution in musical forms precedes or accompanies other changes in society appears to have some validity.

In 1986, Paul Simon sang “...every generation throws a hero up the pop charts” (Simon, 1986). Did the appearance of rap and hip hop presage a new era of youth activism? It might be interesting to map cycles in celebrity activism and civic engagement according to the adaptive loops and systems dynamics that C. S. Holling describes as “panarchy.”

With the advent of Hollywood and the star system, modern actors were linked with their onscreen characters in the popular imagination and occupy a psychic space that simultaneously situates them as our intimates and as mythic beings. Though they frequently lend their names and presence to social causes, actors rarely author the roles they play and unlike musicians, are seldom able to express their convictions through their art. The commodification of Hollywood actors supporting causes is a trend that speaks both to the power of celebrity activism and the dangers of taking it too far.

While each of us is entitled to name our own, a list of other outstanding twentieth-century celebrity activists might include musicians Baez, Seeger and Lennon and actors Poitier and Brando. While additional nominees could be proposed and debated, there can be no doubt that celebrity activism has grown tremendously as a social force since 1960. Multiple forms of celebrity activism exist and new hybrids continue to develop.

Meanwhile, the true hero is as rare today as ever. We identified two early candidates in Robeson and Guthrie, in roles we described as prophet and people's poet. Do shaman and ambassador describe Geldof and Bono? Their work on behalf of heavily indebted poor nations elevates celebrity activism to a new plateau and may presage other, similar efforts to mobilize humanity's striving to address its most complex problems.

It is in the transformative category that we place our greatest hope. As individuals, as a culture and as a species, we face increasingly complex and pressing challenges. In terms of Plato's dictum, we need a new song, a new story, a new vision of ourselves, to overcome some of the problems we face. We continue to look to our most admired and respected performers – to inspire and lead us, to engender love and hope and to bring about action based upon a deep appreciation of our shared humanity.

Civil Rights

1955	1961	1963
Martin Luther King launches Montgomery bus boycott	Bob Dylan writes "Blowin' in the Wind," "The Times They Are a-Changin'," "Chimes of Freedom"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, and Peter, Paul & Mary tour Southern Black colleges March on Washington: Harry Belafonte organizes appearances by Marlon Brando, Burt Lancaster, James Garner, Lena Horne, Sammy Davis, Jr., Peter, Paul & Mary, Bob Dylan, Odetta -- followed by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., "I have a dream" speech

Opposition to Vietnam War

1964	1965	1970	1969	1971
Phil Ochs records "Talking Vietnam"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beatles oppose US involvement in Vietnam Joan Baez is jailed twice for protesting Vietnam War; refuses to pay portion of income tax that goes to military Country Joe Macdonald records "I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die-Rag" Phil Ochs records "Draft Dodger Rag," "I Ain't Marching Anymore" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neil Young writes "Ohio" to protest killings at Kent State University Peter Yarrow organizes first major benefit concert: the Winter Palace concert at Madison Square Garden (with Jimi Hendrix, the Rascals, Blood, Sweat & Tears, Judy Collins, Harry Belafonte, Richie Havens, Peter, Paul & Mary) raises \$100,000 for Vietnam Moratorium Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> March on Washington attracts 500,000 with John Denver, cast of <i>Hair</i>, Pete Seeger. A simultaneous event in San Francisco features Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, Joan Baez, Phil Ochs John Lennon and Yoko Ono publish "War Is Over, If You Want It" billboards; stage "Bed-Ins for Peace"; record "Give Peace a Chance" 	Jane Fonda organizes Winter Soldier concert with Vietnam Veterans Against the War

Celebrity Activism Timeline, 1960–1990

1975

Rolling Thunder Review's final concert at Madison Square Garden is a benefit for Rubin "Hurricane" Carter trust fund, organized by Bob Dylan with Joni Mitchell, The Band, et al.

1975

- 30 April:
US withdraws from Vietnam

- 11 May:
War Is Over concert organized by Phil Ochs, with Joan Baez, Paul Simon, Harry Belafonte, Odetta, Pete Seeger, George Harrison

1977

Peter Gabriel records "Biko," protesting Steven Biko's murder by South African police

1982

CBS cancels *Lou Grant* show after Ed Asner expresses support for Salvadorean resistance

1985

- "Live Aid" produced by Bob Geldof
- Stevie Wonder records "It's Wrong" to protest apartheid and is arrested for performing outside the South African Embassy in Washington

1987

Ted Danson founds AOC international oceans initiative

1989

Sting helps found Rainforest Foundation

Global Issues

1971

George Harrison, Ravi Shankar Concert for Bangladesh raises \$13.5 million for UNICEF.

1972

Nicaraguan earthquake relief concert with Rolling Stones, Santana, Cheech & Chong

1973

Marlon Brando refuses Academy Award, citing treatment of Indians on TV and standoff between US authorities and American Indian Movement at Wounded Knee.

1974

"An evening with Salvador Allende" at Madison Square Garden, organized by Phil Ochs, raises awareness of CIA involvement in Chilean coup. Featured celebrities include Harry Chapin, Bob Dylan, Arlo Guthrie, Pete Seeger and Peter, Paul & Mary.

References

- Balter, Michael (2001). What makes the brain dance and count? *Science* 292, no. 5522: 1636.
- Best, Steven and Douglas Kellner (1999). Rap, black rage and racial difference. *Enculturation* 2, no. 2, Spring. [http:// enculturation.gmu.edu/2_2/best-kellner.html](http://enculturation.gmu.edu/2_2/best-kellner.html).
- Botrick, Vicki (2002). The Hollywood star system. American Film Institute. <http://www.fathom.com/fks/catalog/course.jhtml?id=21701722>.
- Bragg, Billy (2000). *Mermaid Avenue* Vol. 2 (liner notes). New York: Electra CD 62522.
- Canadian Revenue Agency, charities database, www.cra-arc.gc.ca
- CBC News (1999). G-7 leaders agree to forgive \$100 billion in foreign debt. 19 June. http://cbc.ca/templates/view.cgi?category=&story=/news/1999/06/19/g-8_990619.
- CBC Radio One (2002). The rebel angels of song: Paul Robeson. *Definitely Not the Opera*, 26 July.
- Chambers, Lori (1998). *Paul Robeson*. Rutgers University. www.rutgers.edu/robeson/.
- Charity Village (1998). Tom Jackson. Singing for Suppers. <http://www.charityvillage.com/archive/asp/asp98/asp9801.html>.
- Commercial Alert (2002). Coalition asks UNICEF to cancel McDonald's World Children's Day. <http://www.commercialalert.org/index>.
- Crosby, David, and David Bender (2000). *Stand and be counted: Making music, making history*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, a division of Harper Collins.
- Dunaway, David (1981). *Pete Seeger: How can I keep from singing?* New York: Da Capo Press.
- Ecksteins, Modris (1989). *Rites of spring: The Great War and the birth of the modern age*. Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys.
- The Economist* (2000). The biology of music. 2 December: 83.
- Estes, Carol (2002). Who's afraid of music? *Yes: A journal of positive futures* (Summer): 38–41.
- Foner, Philip S. (1982) Paul Robeson Speaks: Writings, Speeches, and Interviews, a Centennial Celebration. NY: Citadel Press.
- Fox, Michael J. (2002). *Lucky man: A memoir*. New York: Hyperion.

-
- Fuchs, Frankie (2001). *Daddy Oh Daddy: Rare family songs of Woody Guthrie*. Boston: Rounder Records.
- Garfinkle, Adam (2000). Mythed opportunities: The truth about Vietnam anti-war protests. *Foreign Policy Institute Bulletins* 1, no. 8 (June): 1–3.
- Geldof, Bob (1986). *Is that it?* New York: Penguin.
- Gray, Patricia M., Bernie Krause, Jelle Atema, Roger Payne, Carol Krumhansl and Luis Baptista (2001). The music of nature and the nature of music. *Science* 291, no. 5501: 52.
- Groundwork (2001). [http:// www.groundwork2001.org](http://www.groundwork2001.org).
- Guthrie, Woodie (1970). *Bound for glory*. New York: Dutton.
- Guthrie, Woodie (1990). *Pastures of plenty: A self-portrait. The unpublished writings of an American folk hero*. Edited by Dave Marsh and Harold Levanthal. New York: Harper Collins.
- Houpt, Simon (2002). Get Carter. *Globe and Mail* (17 August): R1, R8.
- Jackson, Laura (2001). *Bono: The biography*. London: Piatkus.
- Johnson, Jim (2001). ABC history: The golden age. <http://www.transdiffusion.org/abc/history/goldenage.htm>.
- Jubilee Research (2002). The Guardian celebrates the Bono phenomenon. <http://www.jubilee2000uk.org/analysis/articles/bono180302.htm>
- Kupfer, David (2001). Longtime passing: An interview with Pete Seeger. *Whole Earth Review* (Spring). <http://www.wem.com/ArticleBin/406.html>.
- Lemonick, Michael D. and Andrea Dorfmann (2000). Music on the brain. *Time* 155, no. 23: 74.
- Lydon, Michael (1998). *Ray Charles: Man and music*. New York: Riverhead Books.
- Myerson, Debra E., Bronwyn Fryer and Robert Redford (2002). Turning an industry inside out: A conversation with Robert Redford. *Harvard Business Review* (May): 57–62.
- Philanthropy Journal (2000). Diseases with celebrity advocates get more research money. <http://www.philanthropyjournal.org/more.asp?ID=596>.
- Piazza, Tom (2002). Bob Dylan's unswerving road back to Newport. *New York Times*, 28 July (Arts and Leisure section): 1, 28.
- Plato. *The Republic*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871] (1982). New York: Modern Library.

Riordan, Teresa (2004). *Inventing beauty: A history of the innovations that have made us beautiful*. New York: Broadway Press.

Shainbaum, Barry (2001). *Hope and heroes: Portraits of integrity*. Toronto: London Street Press.

Simon, Paul (1986). "The Boy in the Bubble," *Graceland*, compact disc, Warner Brothers Music #46430.

Smillie, Dirk (1998). Activism is entertainers' new role. *Christian Science Monitor*, 16 October (Arts and Leisure Section, cover story).

Westley, Frances (1991). Bob Geldof and Live Aid: The affective side of global social innovation. *Human Relations* 44, no. 10: 1011–36.

World Wildlife Fund Canada (2002). Raffi calls on Health Minister to protect children's health. http://wwfcanada.net/en/news_room/nr_display_release.asp?release=02_02_25.