



AIDS, Politics, and Music in South Africa

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This book offers an original anthropological approach to the AIDS epidemic in South Africa. Based on a more than fifteen years association with the region, it demonstrates why AIDS interventions in the former homeland of Venda have failed – and possibly even been counterproductive. It does so through a series of ethnographic encounters, from kings to condoms, which expose the ways in which biomedical understanding of the virus have been rejected by – and incorporated into – local understandings of health, illness, sex, and death. Through the songs of female initiation, AIDS education, and wandering minstrels, the book argues that music is central to understanding how AIDS interventions operate. This book elucidates a hidden world of meaning in which people sing about what they cannot talk about, where educators are blamed for spreading the virus, and in which condoms are often thought to cause AIDS. The policy implications are clear: African worldviews must be taken seriously if AIDS interventions in Africa are to become successful.

- This book accompanies a website on which readers can listen to the songs that are being analyzed
- Includes rich ethnographic detail, reflecting the 15 year association the author has with the region, and his fluency in the local language, Tshivenda