



Necessary Noise: Music, Film, and Charitable Imperialism in the East of Congo

Chérie Rivers Ndaliko

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Since 1997, the war in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has taken more than 6 million lives and shapes the daily existence of the nation's residents. While the DRC is often portrayed in international media as an unproductive failed state, the Congolese have turned increasingly to art-making to express their experience to external eyes. Author Chérie Rivers Ndaliko argues that cultural activism and the enthusiasm to produce art exists in Congo as a remedy for the social ills of war and as a way to communicate a positive vision of the country. Ndaliko introduces a memorable cast of artists, activists, and ordinary people from the North-Kivu province, whose artistic and cultural interventions are routinely excluded from global debates that prioritize economics, politics, and development as the basis of policy decision about Congo. Rivers also shows how art has been mobilized by external humanitarian and charitable organizations, becoming the vehicle through which to inflict new kinds of imperial domination. Written by a scholar and activist in the center of the current public policy debate, *Necessary Noise* examines the uneasy balance of accomplishing change through art against the unsteady background of war.

At the heart of this book is the Yole!Africa cultural center, which is the oldest independent cultural center in the east of Congo. Established in the aftermath of volcano Nyiragongo's 2002 eruption and sustained through a series of armed conflicts, the cultural activities organized by Yole!Africa have shaped a generation of Congolese youth into socially and politically engaged citizens. By juxtaposing intimate ethnographic, aesthetic, and theoretical analyses of this thriving local initiative with case studies that expose the often destructive underbelly of charitable action, *Necessary Noise* introduces into heated international debates on aid and sustainable development a compelling case for the necessity of arts and culture in negotiating sustained peace. Through vivid descriptions of a community of young people transforming their lives through art, Ndaliko humanizes a dire humanitarian disaster. In so doing, she invites readers to reflect on the urgent choices we must navigate as globally responsible citizens.

The only study of music or film culture in the east of Congo, *Necessary Noise* raises an impassioned and vibrantly interdisciplinary voice that speaks to the theory and practice of socially engaged scholarship.

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