



AIDS, Politics, and Music in South Africa

Fraser G. McNeill

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This book offers an original anthropological approach to the AIDS epidemic in South Africa, demonstrating 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.

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