



strategy + support for
musicians creating change

Air Traffic Control

1475 15th St. San Francisco, CA 94103 | 415.255.0331 | www.atctower.net

RESEARCH CONFIRMS THE POWER OF MUSIC TO SHAPE IDENTITY, ACTIVATE OPTIMISM, & ENGAGE NEW AUDIENCES

From the civil rights movement to debt relief to human rights, popular musicians have been allies that lend their celebrity and spotlight to movements and issues, and their creativity and ability to convene people. President Barack Obama acknowledged this important role that musicians can play when he called the civil rights movement, "a movement sustained by music."¹

We know that music inspires us to think differently about the world, to join social change movements we didn't know about before, and that music can become the energizing soundtrack for our personal activism. Interestingly, the power of music is also being documented in market and academic research:

- A study in California found that music is the most important influencer in the formation of young peoples' identities—even more than religion.² The Intelligence Group, a trend marketing research company, asked young people what they are most addicted to. Music & sex tied.³ Finally, the Recording Industry Association of America has consistently found that people under 30 are the top consumers of music.⁴
- Biologists determined that music activates the part of the brain that governs optimism, making it a powerful antidote to the long and sometimes difficult work of change making.⁵
- A study published in February of 2009 reveals that celebrities who appeal to youth can help motivate engagement in civic affairs. The study showed that endorsements and encouragement from celebrities helped the fans to feel more personally connected to the issues (which lead them to seek out more information on issues and candidates), and increased belief that participation can make a difference. The study cited both the short- and long-term effects, and

¹ From "Obama: Civil rights 'a movement sustained by music'"
<http://content.usatoday.com/communities/theoval/post/2010/02/obama-civil-rights-a-movement-sustained-by-music/1>

² "California Dreamers: A public opinion portrait of the most diverse generation the nation has known," New America Media, Poll, Apr 2_, 2007. Available online:
http://media.newamericamedia.org/images/polls/youth/ca_youth_poll_presentation.pdf

³ "The Cassandra Report: The Vital Stats Issues", The Intelligence Group, May 2006.

⁴ "Ten-year Music Consumer Trends", Recording Industry Association of America, 2010.
Available online at: http://www.riaa.com/keystatistics.php?content_selector=consumertrends

⁵ See also: Levitin, Daniel J., *This is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession*. Penguin Group, 2006.

found that both were consistent regardless of the celebrities' grasp of the specific issues.⁶

- A recent study found that musicians were reaching new supporters—ones not already touched by other social-justice groups.⁷ Indeed, a voter validation study by the [New Organizing Institute](#) on the work of [HeadCount](#) shows that 85% of their registrations were considered “impactful,” meaning the registration was unique and that the person was not already registered at the same address. This was the second best percentage for any group in the study. Furthermore, 72% of the people the organization registered at concerts voted—11% more than the national average.

Air Traffic Control (ATC) exists to help musicians play an effective, unique and vital role in the promotion of social justice. Musicians and managers established ATC five years ago to assemble an experienced and trusted team of leaders, resources and tools that would help them to create more effective social change collaborations with each other and with social justice organizations. As a result, ATC became an artists' air traffic control—one that develops capacity, efficiency, and coordination to produce stronger and more creative social change partnerships. For more information, please go to www.atctower.net.

⁶ “Celebrity Endorsements and their potential to Motivate Young Voters” *Mass Communications and Society* 11: 420–436, February 2009.

⁷ For more information on this, please see: <http://www.atctower.net/study-shows-concerts-an-effective-place-to-register-new-voters/>