

World Aids Day 2015: #lifebeyondHIV

In celebration of World Aids Day 2015 (1 December), a group of HIV positive people and advocates living in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, in collaboration with local artists and musicians, bring a powerful message of living active, creative lives, and proving that HIV is in no way a death sentence.

Their voice has been expressed through giant mural paintings in Khayelitsha and a specially-composed hip-hop track under the hashtag **#lifebeyondHIV**, which will be showcased in the lead up to World Aids Day 2015.

About the #lifebeyondHIV mural and 'making of' video

Local Khayelitsha artists Velile Soha and Patrick Holo, in collaboration with technical coordinator Ricky Lee Gordon worked closely with the group to capture their vision and bring it to life through **two giant mural paintings** on the side of OR Tambo Hall, the largest, most well-known building in Khayelitsha and highly visible from the N1 highway out of Cape Town.

HIV+ activists **Tembisa Mbhobho** and Welcome Makele were chosen to have their images incorporated into the design of the mural.

The making of the mural – from consultation to conception to completion – was filmed and edited by South African filmmaker Rowan Pybus into a 3-minute broadcast-quality video, which also includes interviews with Welcome and Tembisa.

About the #lifebeyondHIV song

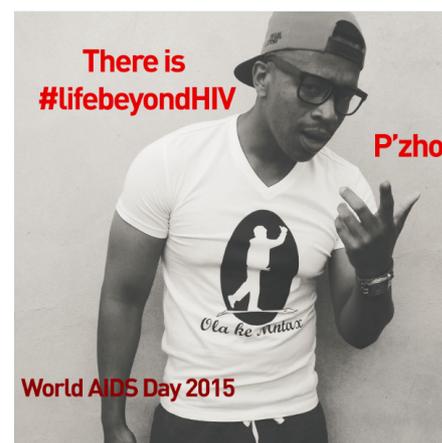
Khayelitsha hip hop artist and producer P'zho also took part in the mural consultation and was inspired by meeting Welcome and Tembisa to compose and produce a catchy track for World Aids Day 2015 called #lifebeyondHIV.

The song, performed in isiXhosa and English urges all South Africans to take a stand against HIV with three simple messages : get tested, take your meds and please, condomise.

Listen: www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGsoiUw8-zs



Watch: <https://youtu.be/Q9F6LI3ZQC8>



The making of the #lifebeyondHIV mural

A series of focus groups were held with HIV+ activists, patients and healthworkers – facilitated by artists Velile and Patrick, and technical coordinator Ricky Lee Gordon - to agree on what and who they wanted to be included in the mural. After Welcome and Tembisa had been chosen as the main subjects, the artists prepared drawings and sketches which were then rendered by computer. The group then provided feedback on the final design.

The artists then transferred the design to the walls of OR Tambo hall and painted over five days, with the group visiting on the last day to see the finished product.

THE HIV+ ACTIVISTS who feature in the film & mural

Tembisa Mbhobho, HIV+ activist

"I volunteered to be part of the mural painting because the youth isn't as brave as I am. HIV kills whoever wants to die. I'm doing this for girls younger than me so they can grow up seeing that a woman my age can be on a mural painting and not be ashamed of their status.

I found out I was HIV positive in September 2008. I fell pregnant in 2010, so I took ARVS and my child is negative. I've never been on a mural painting. Some people are shy to see themselves on walls, but I was really excited to see myself."



Welcome Makele, HIV+ activist

"I've been living with HIV since 1998. Working for the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), I give advice to people who need it, and I distribute condoms. They call me the 'Condom Man'. The stigma attached to handing out condoms was very high, but I've told myself that if I've managed to convince once person in a month, I'll be clapping my hands that I've done something.



When the artists came back with the final draft of their work, I was so happy. They just did what Welcome is. This mural is for us, it's made by the people of Khayelitsha. If you put something on a wall it will last for many years and the people will keep on passing and reading the message until the message is in their heads. If you are diagnosed today, go for ARVS. Don't be ashamed of yourself. There is life beyond HIV."

THE MURAL ARTISTS

Patrick Holo

Patrick Holo is the son of Jo Holo, a pianist in the 'Folk Quartet'. As a child Holo built toys made out of the resources he found, including cars, trains, and buses with tin wheels held together with long wires. Holo grew up in Cape Town and went to Langabuya High School.

To read more about Patrick, click [here](#).



Velile Soha

Soha developed an interest in art at a very young age. Encouraged to pursue his talent as an adult, he attended the Arts and Media Access Centre (AMAC) and went on to study at Rorke's Drift Art School in Kwa Zulu Natal. Founded by Swedish Missionaries, the school was the principal facility for black artists in South Africa.. He returned to Cape Town in 1984 to teach young artists at the Nyanga Art Centre and AMAC for several years before devoting himself full time to his art career.

To read more about Velile, click [here](#).



Ricky Lee Gordon aka Freddy Sam (Technical Co-Ordinator)

Ricky is a self-taught artist from Johannesburg who now lives and works in Cape Town. Ricky, who paints under the pseudonym Freddy Sam, is well known for his large-scale murals that can be seen in cities all over the world, from Cape Town to Istanbul and Kathmandu.

His murals focus on social issues, exploring the nature of man in present society, in history and in nature. His public art has been featured on CNN, and has earned him nominations for Mail & Guardian's '200 young people in SA who make a difference' and National Geographic's list of '11 street art greats' alongside the likes of Banksy.

To read more about Ricky, visit his website [here](#).



THE FILMMAKER

Rowan Pybus (Cameraman/Producer)

Rowan is a Cape Town-based director and producer who has produced numerous documentary features and video clips, including "Freedom Charter" clip, featuring street artists from Cape Town and Johannesburg: <http://vimeo.com/12910179>. He is part owner of Makulu Productions, an award-winning film, photography and media agency based in Cape Town, which aspires tell stories that encourage positive social change.

To see Rowan's work, visit Makhulu Productions' website [here](#).

About the #lifebeyondHIV song

#lifebeyondhiv is the track for World Aids Day 2015, written and produced by Khayelitsha hip hop artist and producer P'zho.

This is the freshest mix yet to put a powerful message on the table: your life is in your hands. This locally- grown isiXhosa hip hop track tells you how: get tested, take your meds and please, condomise.

P'zho was inspired after meeting a group of local health activists and healthworkers from Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and Doctors Without Borders, many of whom have lived with HIV for years.

His lyrics draw on their courage, speak to people already infected as well as those faced with life-changing choices. "I wanted to write a catchy song that was encouraging, not showing pity. These people are inspirations in their communities because of their bravery in living openly with HIV every day. I've never had to deal with HIV in my family, so it was quite a wake-up call," says P'zho. "My main message with this song is yes, you are HIV positive, but that doesn't mean it's a death sentence. And if you're not HIV positive, there's no way you can miss out on knowing."



#lifebeyondhiv was produced in P'zho's 'backyard studio' under his Nunstop Records label (www.nsrecords.co.za) using Cubase 5 for vocals and FL Studios 11.1.0 for Instrumentals. Final mix was done by Kevin Ribbans of Mix n Blend (www.mixnblend.com)

The making of the #lifebeyonDHIV song

In October 2015, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) commissioned P'zho to compose and produce a song for World AIDS Day 2015 that would deliver a simple yet powerful message to young people about testing, treating for and preventing against HIV

MSF's work in the field of HIV treatment and counselling in Khayelitsha since 1999 has shown that young people living in townships are now largely indifferent to standard forms of public health messaging like pamphlets, posters, radio and even TV.

At the same time, hip hop is increasingly defining the South African music scene, giving young people a platform of creative expression on a range of social issues affecting their lives.

MSF approached Pzho due to his large and loyal following among young people in Khayelithsa as well as the Eastern Cape. P'zho took part in a workshop/brainstorm session in Khayelitsha with patients and health advocates from MSF and Treatment Action Campaign. This catchy song is the result.

THE MUSICIAN - About P'zho and his music:



Zolani Lucas Ponco, a.k.a 'P'zholution Imbiza yespaza' was born and raised in Umtata, Eastern Cape. In 1999, he moved with his mother to the Western Cape, living in Wallacedine, then Kraaifontein and finally Khayelitsha. He soon found a home among the early hip-hop movement in the area, coming across underground 'spaza' artists mixing isiXhosa with township slang. Later, P'zho drew inspiration from vernacular rappers Cassper Nyovest and Kuli Chana. His first local hit 'Where's the Law?' was recorded with Lungile 'Broken Xhosa' Ludidi in 2004.

P'zho is one of a growing community of conscious rappers hailing from South Africa's main urban settlements. They inform their audiences about social issues neglected by the mass media, without imposing opinions or forcing action.

P'zho says: "Conscious rap speaks directly to the problems facing many South Africans. I'm conscious of what's happening around me. There are so many social ills - alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, HIV. There's a lot of musical talent in Khayelitsha, but we don't get a lot of airplay because radio stations have a problem with this type of genre. The swearing and loose language associated with hip hop means they don't get so much airplay. My track goes against these negative stereotypes with positive lyrics about being strong."

"Music is one of the few things that keep young people inspired. Hip hop in South Africa has taken a different turn in that more artists are making music that resonates locally and creates awareness of issues."

To read more about P'zho, click [here](#). To hear one of his hit songs, please click [here](#).

About Doctors Without Borders in South Africa

Doctors Without Borders has pioneered approaches to treating HIV in South Africa since 1999 – by being one of the first providers of anti-retroviral treatment in the public sector, decentralizing HIV treatment strategies and integrating tuberculosis (TB) treatment in HIV care.

In Khayelitsha, Doctors Without Borders put the first patient on ARV treatment in May 2001, and has provided treatment to over 20,000 people in Khayelitsha over the last 12 years. In 2013, MSF handed over all patients on first line ARV treatment to the national health system.

Today, Doctors Without Borders continues to provide support to clinics in Khayelitsha through mentoring and operational research on HIV and TB treatment and pilots innovative community-based treatment models to relieve the burden on the strained health care system and on people living with HIV (PLHIV). One of these models are adherence clubs in community sites outside health facilities and in patients' homes. Instead of attending one-to-one appointments at the health centre, adherence club members go to meetings every 2 months for a check-up and drug refill, and to talk to other patients. MSF's analysis found that 97 per cent of club members stayed in care, while the figure was 85 per cent for patients who qualified for club membership, but remained in mainstream clinic care.

By the end of 2012, there were 180 clubs, with more than 4,500 members, at nine health facilities in Khayelitsha. The Western Cape Department of Health has also set up more than 400 clubs.