



Sacred Rhythms: Afro House and the Practice of Peace

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In a world often marked by conflict, polarization, displacement, and grief, peace is usually imagined as something negotiated in formal rooms. We think of peace as treaties, dialogue tables, ceasefires, institutions, and interreligious declarations. These formal efforts matter deeply, but they are not the only places where peace is made. It is practiced in the way people gather, move, sing, mourn, celebrate, and remember together. Sometimes, peace begins not with a speech, but with a rhythm.

Afro House music speaks directly to this quieter, embodied side of peace. Born from African musical traditions, house music, spiritual vocals, and communal rhythm, Afro House has become one of the most recognizable sounds in global electronic music.¹ Its rise has been shaped by artists such as Black Coffee, a South African DJ and producer who won the Grammy Award for Best Dance/Electronic Music Album for *Subconscious* in 2022, and who is widely recognized as one of the key figures who brought Afro House to global dance floors.² But beyond awards, festivals, and streaming numbers, Afro House carries something deeper: a capacity to turn pain into movement, longing into prayer, and strangers into temporary communities.

This article explores Afro House as a practice of peace, showing how rhythm, prayer, and collective movement can soften distance amongst people of different faiths. In its shared sound and embodied joy, Afro House creates spaces of connection that are felt before they are fully explained.

Many listeners may not understand every lyric or know the cultural and spiritual references behind a song, yet they can still feel its invitation. The drums, vocals, repetition, and movement create a shared emotional language. Peace often begins when people become open to one another again, and music can make that openness feel possible. Afro House does not ask everyone to become the same. It invites people to enter the same rhythm while carrying different stories, languages, and beliefs.

Perhaps no song demonstrates this better than “Jerusalema” by Master KG featuring Nomcebo Zikode, a hit that peaked at No. 1 on the Billboard World Digital Song Sales chart. During the pandemic, “Jerusalema” became a global phenomenon through the #JerusalemaDanceChallenge, with people across countries, professions, ages, and religions joining the same choreography. It was not just popular because it was catchy. It became meaningful because it gave people a way to feel together at a moment when so many were

¹ Shukla, Ayush. “Play House Links Afro-Culture to the Global Stage.” *Billboard Africa*, 11 May 2026, <https://africa.billboard.com/music/music-news/play-house-links-afro-culture-to-the-global-stage/>

² “Black Coffee.” *GRAMMY.com*, Recording Academy, www.grammy.com/artists/Black-Coffee/37937.



separated. The song's lyrics, sung in isiZulu, speak of Jerusalem as a home and ask to be guarded, guided, and not left behind.³ In that sense, "Jerusalem" is not only a dance song; it is a song of sacred longing.

That longing is familiar across faith traditions. Jerusalem itself carries deep religious meaning for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. But the power of the song is not limited to those who understand Jerusalem through a particular theology. Its longing is human. It speaks to the desire for refuge, protection, belonging, and accompaniment. During a global health crisis, when people were grieving, isolated, and afraid, millions danced to a song that was essentially asking not to be abandoned. This is where "Jerusalem" becomes more than a worldwide anthem. It becomes a doorway into thinking about Afro House as a practice of peace. It shows that joy does not erase suffering. Sometimes joy is how communities survive suffering.

A similar spiritual force appears in "Khusela" by Kabza De Small featuring Msaki. He is widely recognized as one of the major names in amapiano, the South African house-influenced sound that has gained global attention.⁴ Although the song is often associated with amapiano rather than Afro House in a strict genre sense, its emotional world belongs naturally in this conversation. The repeated plea, "Bawo khusela abantwana bakho," can be translated as "Father, protect your children."⁵ This is prayer in its most direct form. It is not abstract. It asks for protection over children, over vulnerable people, over those who cannot secure safety on their own.

For an interfaith peacebuilding audience, "Khusela" is powerful because protection is one of the moral languages shared across religions. Faith communities may differ in doctrine, worship, ritual, and sacred text, but many agree that children must be protected, grief must be held, and the vulnerable must not be abandoned. The song's spiritual power lies in the fact that it does not separate prayer from rhythm. It allows the body to participate in supplication. The beat does not weaken the prayer. It carries it.

Here, Afro House offers a quiet but important lesson about peace. Peace is not only cognitive. It is not only the result of people agreeing intellectually that coexistence is necessary. Peace also has to be felt. It has to enter the body. In communities affected by violence, exclusion, racism, displacement, or poverty, trauma is often carried physically as well as emotionally. Rhythm can create a space where fear loosens, breath returns, and people remember that they are not alone. Dance becomes a practice of re-humanization.

Black Coffee's "We Dance Again," featuring Nakhane, carries that same spirit of return. It remains one of Black Coffee's signature tracks, helping bring the Afro House sound to a wider global audience. Alongside

³ Hissong, Samantha. "How South Africa's 'Jerusalem' Became a Global Hit without Ever Having to Be Translated." *Rolling Stone*, 16 Oct. 2020, www.rollingstone.com/pro/news/jerusalem-global-dance-hit-south-africa-spotify-1076474/

⁴ Vikilahle, Luthando. "An Amapiano Evolution according to Its King Kabza De Small." *GQ South Africa*, 13 May 2024, <https://gq.co.za/culture/entertainment/2024-05-13-an-amapiano-evolution-according-to-its-king-kabza-de-small/>

⁵ Kabza De Small and Msaki. "Khusela." Spotify, 17 June 2022, <https://open.spotify.com/track/1ULFJZX54HXXjSTMx63dk0>



major hits like “Drive” and “The Rapture Pt. III,” it stands as one of the defining songs in his catalogue. The song was connected to the #WeDanceAgainChallenge, where people were invited to show themselves dancing with openness and freedom. Across platforms, the challenge sparked thousands of user-generated videos and drew participation from celebrities including Somizi, Cassper Nyovest, and Swizz Beatz. The title itself feels like a theology of resilience. We dance again. Not because nothing happened. Not because the wound was imaginary. Not because the world is already peaceful. We dance again because life insists on returning.

This is a deeply peace-centred message. After conflict, communities do not rebuild only through legal agreements or political settlements. They also rebuild through rituals of return: singing again, eating together again, worshipping again, dancing again, trusting again. “We Dance Again” can be read as a reminder that peace requires more than the absence of violence. It requires the restoration of life. It requires the courage to imagine joy after rupture.

Another strong example is “Sauti” by Francis Mercier, Faul & Wad. A massive streaming hit with over 98 million listens, it was released in 2024 and also features the African Children’s Choir, whose presence immediately gives the track a communal and spiritual quality.

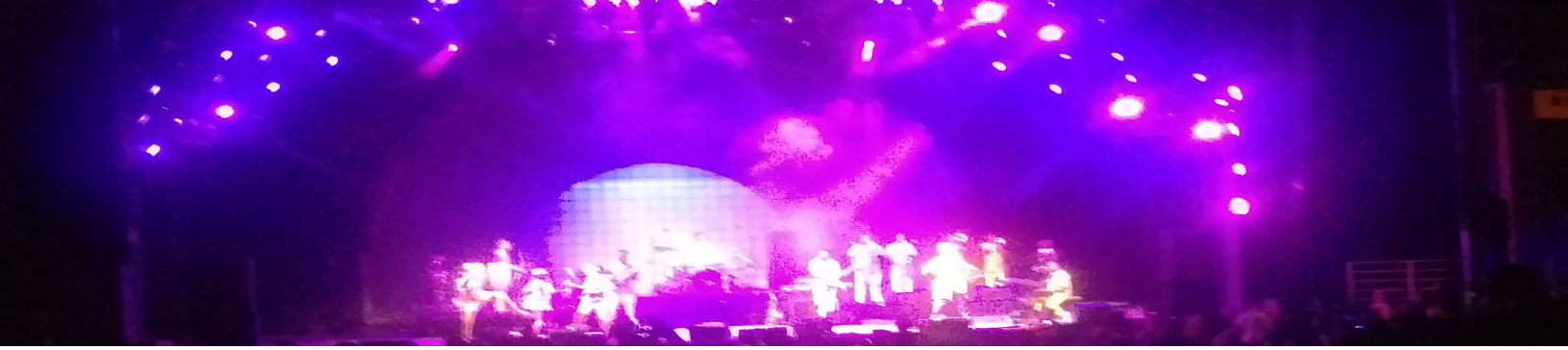
Its lyrics, including “Paseni sauti ili nasi mwimbe” meaning “Lift your voices, so we too may sing,” and “Viumbe vyote vya Mungu wetu na Mfalme wetu” meaning “All creatures of our God and our King,” evoke a call for all of God’s creation to raise their voices together. “Sauti” beautifully connects sound, creation, praise, and collective voice.

The title itself means “voice” in Swahili. That matters. Peacebuilding is often about voice: whose voice is heard, whose pain is ignored, whose story is excluded, whose dignity is recognized. In “Sauti,” voices do not compete with one another. They rise together. The presence of children’s voices is especially moving because children often symbolize both vulnerability and possibility. In a world where children are among the first victims of war, displacement, hunger, and environmental crisis, hearing children’s voices in a song of unity carries moral weight. It suggests that peace is not only about stopping harm today, but about creating a world in which future generations can sing.

Of course, Afro House should not be romanticized as if music alone can resolve war, injustice, or religious conflict. A song cannot replace policy, accountability, interfaith dialogue, or material repair. Dance cannot substitute for food, safety, or justice. But music can do something that formal peacebuilding sometimes struggles to do: it can create emotional access. It can make coexistence feel possible.

This is especially important in interfaith work. Religious peacebuilding often asks communities to recognize difference without turning difference into threat. Afro House does something similar through sound. Many listeners do not understand every lyric. They may not know the language, the cultural context, or the spiritual references. Yet they still respond. They move. They listen. They become curious. This does not erase the need for translation or cultural respect, but it shows that connection can begin before full understanding. Sometimes the body recognizes shared humanity before the mind has caught up.

In this way, Afro House can be seen as a shared sacred rhythm. It is not a religion, and it should not be treated as one. But it can create spaces that feel spiritually charged because they gather people into collective



attention, collective movement, and collective release. They invite people to inhabit a common rhythm while remaining themselves.

That may be one of the most important lessons Afro House offers to peacebuilding: unity does not have to mean uniformity. In the best Afro House songs, different elements coexist. Drums, vocals, chants, electronic production, ancestral memory, club culture, prayer, grief, and celebration all meet without canceling one another out. The music holds tension and turns it into movement. That is also the work of peace.

At its deepest level, Afro House reminds us that peace is not only negotiated. It is practiced. It is sung. It is danced. It is remembered in the body. It is found when people who do not know one another step into the same rhythm and, for a moment, stop feeling alone. From “Jerusalema” to “Khusela,” from “Sauti” to “We Dance Again,” these songs show that collective joy can be more than entertainment. It can be a form of prayer, a form of resilience, and a rehearsal for the world we are still trying to build.