

The song, “si tu parles” has been an extremely important song to our class and was written by Sams’k Le Jah, a musician from Burkina Faso. The context of this song revolves around the political climate of Burkina Faso. Burkina Faso has experienced many transitions of power over the last few decades and, most importantly, the reign of Thomas Sankara. Thomas Sankara was president and beloved by the people of Burkina Faso. Following Sankara’s assassination, his former colleague, Blaise Compaoré, took power and reversed many of his policies. This caused outrage among the citizens and was the ultimate inspiration for Sams’k Le Jah’s music.

As an adamant follower of Sankara’s practices, such as peaceful protest and advocacy through music, Sams’k Le Jah has produced many songs to use as peaceful political tools. The song “si tu parles” expresses Sams’k Le Jah’s ideas of advocacy and that some things are worth fighting and dying for. In this song, he calls for people to speak their minds and shine a light. This explicitly illustrates the intermingling of music and politics in Africa. This song was specifically chosen for our class playlist as we had the great opportunity to meet, interview, and even sing this son with Sams’k Le Jah. While working with him, we were able to empathize and learn about the political climate in Burkina Faso today, as well as learn about the impact positive weapons, such as political music, youth advocacy, and increased political participation, has positively affected the relationship between the government and citizens of Burkina Faso.

Hunter Skidmore