

# The Copyright Consequences of Paul Simon Meeting West Africa's Highlife Muse

**John Collins**

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Auditorium, Music Building  
1114 West Nevada Street, Urbana  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



## Yaa Amponsah

**Are there problems applying modern individualistic notions of copyright to a folk culture? What are they? Collins examines how the royalties paid by Paul Simon for the use of a Ghanaian tune by Yaa Amponsah\* resulted in a number of negative consequences and how this well-intentioned action resulted in a folkloric tax being applied to Ghanaian nationals for the commercial use of their own indigenous folklore.**

\*For his *Rhythm of the Saints* album, specifically the song, "Spirit Voices," Paul Simon used Yaa Amponsah's music.

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