

# CONCERTS AS ACTIVISM



# CONCERTS AS ACTIVISM

## Lesson Summary

This session examines the different ways that concerts have been used either to promote political causes, raise funds for charities / campaigns, or became political events in their own right. Students will be asked to look at three different case studies - 'One Love Manchester', 'Northern Carnival against the Nazis', and the 'Acid House' scene of the late 1980s.

## Learning Objectives

- Learn about the different ways that concerts and music have been used to promote equality, diversity, and bonding between communities.
- Think critically about why the media treated these various concerts and causes differently.
- Use creative exercises to think about the causes that you want to support and the ways which you could do so.

### United Nations Sustainable Development Links

- Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
- Reduced Inequality

### Curriculum Links

- GCSE History- AQA paper 'Power and the People'
- Citizenship- KS3 and KS4

### British Council Core Skills

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Creativity and Imagination
- Collaboration and Communication
- Enterprise



# CONCERTS AS ACTIVISM

## Activity one: Group discussion

*No preparations are required in advance*

- Ask the group if they have heard of any concerts which were organised either for charity or political causes, or of any singers/artists/bands who have made political statements.
- Ask them what they think about this- do they think pop stars and bands can teach people about important issues they might not have heard of? Do they think musicians should do this, or is it better left to other people?
- After a short discussion explain to the group that today they're going to look at three different examples of young people using music and concerts to try and change the world.

## Activity two: Reading and Questions

**Requires:** All worksheets

**Preparation:** Ensure that enough copies are printed of the worksheets to allow each case study to be looked at by 1/3 of the group

- Split the students into small groups of 2-4, and assign each group one of the case studies (Acid House, Northern Carnival, or One Love Manchester).
- Ask each group to read through the sources for their case study and answer the questions included on the worksheets.
- Tell each small group that they will be reporting back about their case study to the rest of the students, so ask them to pick one person to feedback.
- After they have had enough time to go through these sources and discuss these questions, ask the groups to come back together to share what they have learned. Ask the spokesperson from each group to explain what the event that they were looking at was, why it was organised, and whether they think the event was a good idea.



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## Activity three: Comparing and Contrasting

*No preparations are required in advance*

- Ask students the following questions:
- The media and local government were very supportive of the One Love Manchester concert, but very hostile towards the Acid Rave parties. Why do you think this was? Do you think this was fair- why/why not?
- What was different about the aims of these concerts? What did the organisers hope to do?
- Which of the case studies do you think made the most important and positive impact?
- Encourage students to respond to one another, and explore disagreements.

## Activity four: Poster Making

**Requires:** Slides 2-5, art materials/ computers with design software, a smart/white board

**Preparation:** Ensure that there are enough materials or computers for each small group to make a poster, write the requirements of the poster on the board.

- In their small groups, students are asked to imagine that they are organising a protest concert or fundraiser for a cause that they think is important. They will create a poster, using both images and text, to advertise their event.
- Inform students that their poster should include (have the group write these elements down or write them on the board yourself):
  1. An event name
  2. A list of bands
  3. A price and location
  4. The cause/campaign/charity it is for, with a brief description of what it is and why it is important.
- Show the group the images of the flyers and adverts from slides 2-5 to give them examples and spark some ideas.
- Ask the groups to think about:
  - What sort of issue will their concert be about? Who are they hoping to help, and why do they want to help them? What problems are there in the world that they think are important to change, and that they want to draw attention to?
  - What sort of outcome do they want the concert to have- is it raising funds for a campaign or charity? Is it a protest? Is it meant to make people think differently about an issue or about bringing groups of people together?
  - What sort of artists/ bands would they want to have at your concert? Why?
  - Where should the concert be held? Why?
  - Would entry be free or cost money? Why?
- Once the groups have created their posters, they should be asked to show their posters to the rest of the class and explain their decisions.

# CONCERTS AS ACTIVISM

## ONE LOVE MANCHESTER

### OUTLINE

On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017, a suicide bomber attacked concert-goers after an Ariana Grande performance at Manchester Arena, killing 22 and injuring over 500 people. This horrific attack targeted young fans attending her Dangerous Woman tour, and on May 26<sup>th</sup> Grande announced on twitter that she would put on a benefit concert to raise funds for the victims and their families.

The concert was intended to raise funds for people affected by the bombing, and tickets went on sale for £40 each- although free tickets were given to people who had been at the Ariana Grande concert earlier in the year. All proceeds were donated to the We Love Manchester Emergency Fund, which was established by the Manchester City Council and the British Red Cross. The city of Manchester ensured that there was free transport for concert-goers.

The concert featured some of the most well-known artists from a range of genres. Ariana Grande, Justin Bieber, The Black Eyed Peas, Robbie Williams, Pharrell Williams, Little Mix, Coldplay, and Liam Gallagher all performed, and were even joined by the choir of the local Parrs Wood High School. It was attended by 55,000 people, and was watched live (at least in part) by some 22 million people in the UK. It raised some £10 million.

### Source 1

***Extracts from Ariana Grande's statement released on Twitter on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017, which announced the One Love Manchester concert.***

My heart, prayers and deepest condolences are the with the victims of the Manchester attack and their loved ones.

The compassion, kindness, love, strength and oneness that you've shown one another this past week is the exact opposite of the heinous intentions it must take to pull off something as evil as what happened Monday.

YOU are the opposite....

We will not quit or operate in fear.

We won't let this divide us.

We won't let hate win....



# CONCERTS AS ACTIVISM

## ONE LOVE MANCHESTER

### Source 1 – Cont.

***Extracts from Ariana Grande's statement released on Twitter on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017, which announced the One Love Manchester concert.***

Our response to this violence must be to come closer together, to help each other, to love more, to sing louder and to live more kindly and generously than we did before.

I'll be returning to the incredibly brave city of Manchester to spend time with my fans and to have a benefit concert in honour of and to raise money for the victims and their families....

This show, more than anything else, was intended to be a safe space for my fans. A place for them to escape to, to celebrate, to heal, to feel safe and to be themselves. To meet their friends they've made online. To express themselves.

This will not change that.

When you look into the audience at my shows you see a beautiful, diverse, pure, happy crowd.

Thousands of people, incredibly different, all there for the same reason, music. Music is something that everyone on Earth can share.

### Source 2

***Extracts from a Review of One Love Manchester.***

Old Trafford cricket ground was awash with pink, with face paint, glitter and a menagerie of animal ears (cats, mice, bunny's and bee antennae). The mood was not so much defiant as celebratory. It was a night when stirring anthems and cheesy uplifting singalong pop took on the terrorists and wiped the dancefloor with them.

In a sense, though, this concert was not really about the music being performed on stage, it was about the place music plays in the lives of free people. It was a gathering in aid of our right to gather, a party about the fundamental humanity of partying.

(Neil McCormick, The Telegraph)

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/what-to-listen-to/ariana-grande-one-love-manchester-concert-live/>



# CONCERTS AS ACTIVISM

## ONE LOVE MANCHESTER

### Source 3

#### *Statements from People who Attended One Love Manchester.*

"We're going to go to this concert, we're going to have an amazing time, we're going to enjoy life, we're going to sing at the top of our voices."

"And we're going to just prove them wrong," he added. "Like, who have you broken? Nobody. You've broken nobody. You've not."...

Mr. Ockerby, who was at the Manchester Arena concert, described sprinting from the arena and only later figuring out what had happened. "We don't want to be scared," he said of his decision to attend the benefit. "We want to forget what's going on. We want to have a good time."

(Christopher D Shea, New York Times)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/04/arts/music/ariana-grande-one-love-manchester-benefit-concert.html>

### QUESTIONS

1. Why was this concert organised? What were its aims?
2. Why do you think Manchester was chosen as the location? Do you think this was the right choice?
3. Why did some tickets cost £40 while some others were free?
4. Why do you think the artists and bands that performed were chosen?





# CONCERTS AS ACTIVISM

## THE NORTHERN CARNIVAL AGAINST THE NAZIS

### OUTLINE

In July, 1978, a concert was organised in Manchester's Alexandra Park by local activists from a campaign called Rock Against Racism.

The 1970s had seen a rise in racist violence and ideas- Enoch Powell, a Conservative MP, was leading a campaign for an all-white Britain and getting a lot of support. The National Front, a group founded by fans of Adolf Hitler and who also wanted Britain to just be for white people, had been gaining votes in elections, and organising violence against BAME communities. In the music scene, racist skinheads were regularly showing up to punk gigs both to start fights with anti-racists and try and win recruits.

Rock Against Racism was formed in 1976 to organise concerts that could bring black and white people together to bond over a shared love of music, and discourage involvement in racist groups and politics. Bands and artists came from a range of genres popular amongst different racial communities, including rock'n'roll, punk, soul, and reggae, and the gigs and carnivals saw black and white musicians perform on stage together, which was rare at the time.

In response to the local growth of racist politics, Rock Against Racism organised 'the Northern Carnival Against the Nazis' which started with an anti-racist rally near Strangeways Prison. The attendees then marched and danced alongside trucks on which local bands and famous acts played, ending with a free concert in Alexander Park. Famous punk band The Buzzcocks played alongside a well-known reggae group, Steel Pulse, and several local artists and groups played too.

The march attracted 15,000 people and over 40,000 attended the concert. It's estimated that the average age of those attending was 15.





# CONCERTS AS ACTIVISM

## THE NORTHERN CARNIVAL AGAINST THE NAZIS

### Source 1

*Extracts from an Article from Women's Voice magazine, 1977.*

In October 1977, National Front leader Martin Webster staged a one-man march in Hyde, protected by an estimated 2,000 police officers. A counter-protest was carried out by 20-year-old Ramila Patel of Bolton Asian Youth Movement, who walked in front of Webster carrying a placard that read (on the rear): 'This man is a Nazi'. Ramila managed to walk about 80 yards before a policeman grabbed her placard and broke it in half.

Following her brave stance against National Front leader Martin Webster, Ramila Patel, aged just 21, addressed the rally at Strangeways that preceded the Northern Carnival against the Nazis at Alexandra Park in 1978.

Recalling her address to the carnival crowd of 15,000 at Strangeways, she says: "It was very moving to see the massive crowd in front of me who were there to oppose the National Front. We were united by our love of music and hatred for racism. At the end of the rally we danced to the music blasting from the trucks in front of us all the way to Alexandra Park. Waving our Anti Nazi League lollipops, the journey from Strangeways to the Carnival was memorable. I will never forget the thunderous welcome from the huge crowd that had gathered in Alexandra Park. It was an emotional moment and I felt an acute sense of solidarity with the crowd."...

**Manchester Digital Music Archive:**

<https://www.mdarchive.co.uk/exhibition/674/we-are-dynamite!-northern-carnival-1978>



# CONCERTS AS ACTIVISM

## THE NORTHERN CARNIVAL AGAINST THE NAZIS

### Source 2

*Quotes from organisers and attendees of the Northern Carnival Against the Nazis, taken from a documentary produced about the event.*

"Steel Pulse had played the London Carnival, they agreed right away. We had a local reggae band, Exodus, from Moss Side... But we wanted the Buzzcocks, because outside of the Clash and the Sex Pistols, they were the biggest punk band...The build up, the two weeks before the carnival, the whole of Manchester was full of badges, full of anti-racist badges. You could walk down Market Street, there wasn't anyone without a badge on. We took over Manchester. It was cool to be anti-racist." **Bernie Wilcox, Organiser**

"I took myself all the way from Langley, Middleton down to Moss Side. The reason I set off, being into Punk music, was the Buzzcocks. I wanted to go down, see The Buzzcocks and see how this goes. When I got there, top day, like a carnival vibe, but I also wanted to know what the speakers were going to be saying, because I was into the Anti Nazxi League thing. It wasn't just 'Oh I want to hear the music... I wanted to know what are these people saying?' " **Kwasi Asanti, Musician and Attendee**

"People were in many cases dancing all the way as the music from the trucks carried up and down the demo... .This was the exact opposite of what the National Front was. We had a slogan which was NF= No Fun. And here was fun on a beautiful Saturday day." **Geoff Brown, Organiser**

"Had those marches not happened, I wonder what would've happened. It was creeping and the National Front did fade after that." **Mick Middles, Writer**

**'The Day It Became Cool To Be Anti Racist'**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= OZBjPCcdps>

### QUESTIONS

1. Why was this concert organised? What were its aims?
2. Why do you think the artists and bands that performed were chosen? Why might the organisers have wanted punk bands and reggae bands?
3. Do you think the concert was a success? Why/ Why not?



# CONCERTS AS ACTIVISM

## ACID HOUSE

### OUTLINE

In the late 1980s, a new sub-culture emerged in Britain. Dubbed 'Acid House', this movement saw young people attending and organising raves in disused warehouses, empty fields, and abandoned buildings across the country. The gatherings were often put on without permission from local authorities or the police, and attracted thousands of young people from a wide range of backgrounds. Often they were very cheap or free to attend.

This became a source of panic for the government and the press, with Margaret Thatcher's government claiming that raves in fields and forests terrorised small, rural communities, while tabloid newspapers would regularly claim that they were rife with violence and drugs. Soon, police raids of raves became commonplace, and party-goers frequently complaining of excessive violence. In 1988, new laws were brought in targeting organisers of illegal raves, who could now be fined £20,000 and be put in prison for up to six months.

Many of the young people involved in the scene became increasingly hostile to the government, and found a new sense of community in these parties which anyone could attend.

### Source 1

*Extracts from an essay written by Simon Parkin, a regular at Acid House events.*

"The eighties were a time of great upheaval in Britain. Thatcher was trying to encourage free enterprise in Britain; her vision of a capitalist society was meant so that the individual could thrive - indeed had to thrive or would otherwise fall by the way side...

For the majority of Britain's youth, times were hard. Whether this can be blamed on Thatcher or not, youth were increasingly seen as a source of fear ... and a law and order problem for the police. But, whereas previous youth culture movements such as Punk or the hippy movement sought to break down or fight the established order, Acid House culture provided another way of dealing with an oppressive society - an option of temporary escapism."

**Simon Parkin 'Visual Energy: Flyer Design and its Relationship to Acid House'**

[http://www.fantazia.org.uk/flyerlibrary/visual\\_energy/index.html](http://www.fantazia.org.uk/flyerlibrary/visual_energy/index.html)



# CONCERTS AS ACTIVISM

## ACID HOUSE

### Source 2

*Extracts from an interview with Norman Jay, a DJ who got heavily involved in Acid House.*

“I was trying to make my mark as a black Briton... I was determined not to be written out of the history of club culture if ever it was documented in this country.”

“My *raison d'être* when I got involved... was to play black music from the black man's perspective in England. Up until then it had been almost the exclusive reserve of white DJs. I deliberately set out to break that on my own terms. We broke a lot of barriers. We were the generation that rewrote the rulebook when it came to DJs and club culture.”

“In that scene, you saw the make-up of the community. Everybody – black, white, rich, poor, straight, gay – and the whole soundtrack that underpinned that was New York/Chicago house. New music for a new era. It was our Woodstock”

Miss Ronen, 'Dissecting the Political Impact of Acid House', *Dazed*

<http://www.dazeddigital.com/music/article/37028/1/the-agony-and-the-ecstasy-acid-house-documentary>



# CONCERTS AS ACTIVISM

## ACID HOUSE

### Source 3

*Extracts from an article in which ravers reflected on how Acid House changed their outlooks.*

“It wasn’t till I fled a party in Dalston... in 1989 that I felt it firsthand. The motivation for my hasty departure was the sudden entrance of a group of cops based at Stoke Newington Police Station who were notorious in the local area for their thuggery. They’d come in, take the numbers off their uniforms and break things up about as violently as you can without firearms, swinging for male and female alike. Say what you like about violence – and this is what the state often forgets when it chooses to apply it – but it doesn’t half focus the mind. If you were looking for a way to galvanise some of the last non-pissed off people in the country... then sending the Territorial Support Group onto the dancefloor was an efficient way to go about it...

What followed was a... lesson in how to turn hedonists into heretics... The government, rather than the people actually involved, started to politicise it by having the police follow them and film them, and by asking questions about it in Parliament.”

**Michael Holden, ‘Thatcher’s War on Acid House’, *Vice***

[https://www.vice.com/en\\_uk/article/8gvp5x/margaret-thatcher-war-on-rave-acid-house-boys-own](https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/8gvp5x/margaret-thatcher-war-on-rave-acid-house-boys-own)



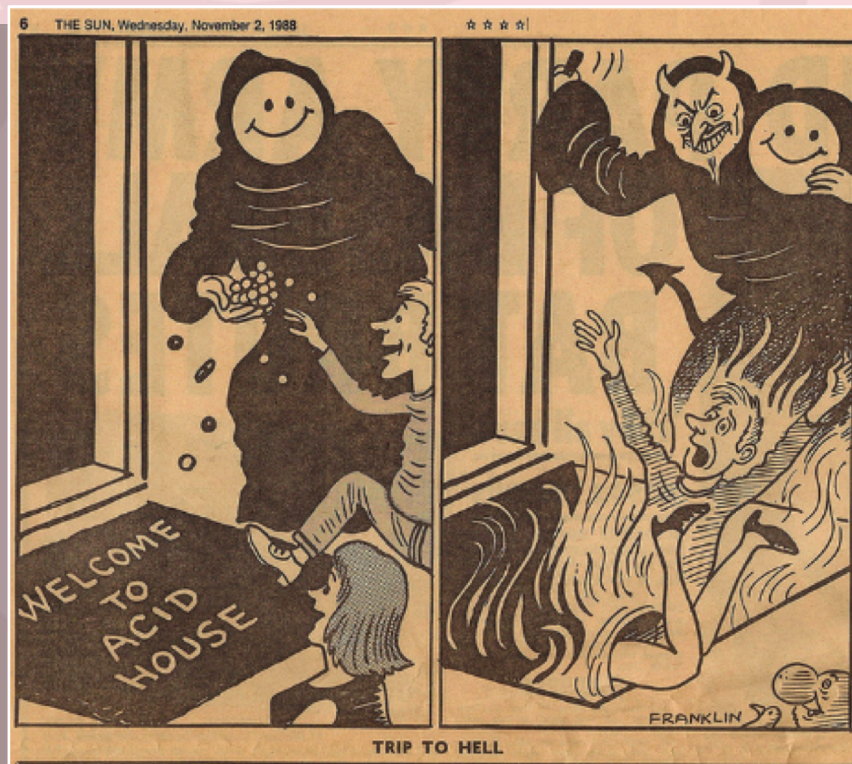


# CONCERTS AS ACTIVISM

## ACID HOUSE

### Source 4

*An anti-Acid House cartoon from The Sun newspaper, November 2nd 1988*



### QUESTIONS

1. Why were these events organised? What kind of events were they meant to be?
2. Lots of people who organised these events said they started as non-political events. Why do you think they become political?
3. Many people who attended these events said that they found them very inclusive - why do you think this was?
4. The police, the press, and the government were hostile to the acid house raves - why do you think this was? Do you think they were right to oppose them?

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Loreto High School Choriton



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