

**SOUNDBYTE:** "I never was interested in song: U2 came about through a sound." — Bono

## BONO'S SUPPORT FOR PEPFAR HELPED SAVE 27 MILLION LIVES

Photos Emerge From 2002 "Nashville Summit" With Contemporary Christian Musicians *February 06, 2020* by Scott Calhoun



Bono at the Nashville Summit talking to CCM artists about AIDS relief efforts in Africa, Dec. 9, 2002.

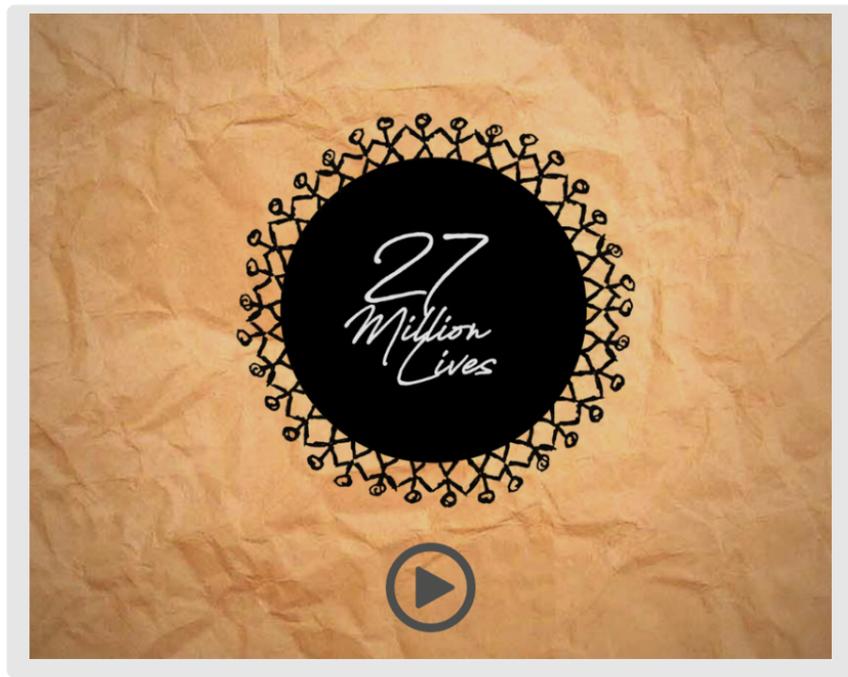
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A new project called "[27 Million Lives](#)" marks the success of PEPFAR, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief in Africa, and calls for continued support. The Global Fund [reports](#) since PEPFAR was created in 2003, it has saved 27 million African lives with help from other Global Fund-supported programs.

Former editor of *Contemporary Christian Music* magazine Jay Swartzendruber credits Bono in the "27 Million Lives" for inspiring CCM artists in the American evangelical faith community to advocate for PEPFAR. Bono's efforts, Swartzendruber said, helped "wake up the church" to the widespread needs African communities faced due to the AIDS crisis in the early 2000s.

A brief clip from a public service announcement Bono made in 2002 to show at Christian music festivals appears in the "27 Million Lives" video, but the audio is not included. Later in the short, seven-minute video, there are photographs of Bono and Michael W. Smith, likely taken in 2002 on Bono's [Heart Of America Tour](#).

Steve Taylor, a Christian music artist and professor of theater and cinematic arts at Lipscomb University in Nashville, speaks in the video on how Bono's messaging through the PSA gave President George W. Bush "political cover and support to do something that had never been done before."



In an extended video interview, Swartzendruber said the Nashville Summit generated a culture of compassion-oriented work for social justice in the Christian artist community, leading musicians to be involved in many other programs too.

“Artists were saying, ‘Yeah, there was this summit with Bono and that sparked a fire in me, and now I work [to end] human trafficking,’” Swartzendruber said. “It was because of that meeting—and that was about AIDS in Africa ... it sparked this whole mindset for Christian activism among the artists, and it’s still happening. It’s a really beautiful thing, and that was 20 years ago that this started.”



When Bono’s Heart Of America Tour came to Nashville on December 9, 2002, he met with leading contemporary Christian musicians in the home of musician and producer Charlie Peacock. Ben Pearson, the only photographer allowed in the room, shared with me previously unpublished pictures he took at the meeting.



Bono speaking in support of PEPFAR at the Nashville Summit with CCM artists on Dec. 9, 2002.

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CCM artists meeting with Bono for a Nashville Summit on AIDS relief for Africa on Dec. 9, 2002.

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Peacock remembers the day well. In an interview by email, he told me how the Nashville Summit came together:

“We had little time to prepare for the event. The possibility of Bono making a Nashville stop had been on and off again. Once we got the go, we worked on the hospitality (which my wife Andi took care of with a handful of volunteers), and getting the guest list together. There were the obvious choices of artists who had committed to social justice and already been in conversation with Mark Rodgers, who was one of Bono’s key players in Washington, D.C., in terms of acting as an aggregator of like-minded people. So, Amy Grant, Steve Taylor, Margaret Becker, Michael W. Smith and others were a given.

There were many people in the room who had achieved mainstream pop success though, representing the hybrid musician that was emerging—primarily through work that Steve Taylor and I had done with Sixpence and Switchfoot, but not to rule out the Jars of Clay moment with “Flood,” or Michael W. Smith’s and Amy Grant’s pop hits—and so the conversation was able to have a moments when we could say to each other, ‘Yes, and when you were off in doing this, we were over here doing this.’ We could all see, via the gathering, that our work was, in fact, communally constructed, as many of us had felt the itch to be God’s musical people in the mainstream at the same time U2 had.”



Amy Grant and Bono.

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Peacock

CeCe Winans and Bono.

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continued:

"I was happy to have a moment to catch up with Bono. We had several friends in common but had never met. We also had common ground through Island Records, since Chris Blackwell had personally signed U2, as well as me.

I worked very hard to get Johnny Cash in the room and had several conversations with his good friend Duane Allen of the Oak Ridge Boys—Duane was committed to driving Johnny to the event. But at the last moment, we found out that Johnny was just too ill to attend. He passed on less than a year later. Nevertheless, Bono was happy to see the people we were able to collect. He wanted people in the room who had cache with the church, and so we invited significant contributors to Christian music as a pop genre, artists with pop hits or people known for specifically creating the music of the church.

I did enjoy the moment when he asked if Larry Norman would be there. It revealed both his knowledge of the roots of 'Jesus music,' and his lack of insider-intel about Contemporary Christian Music, as Larry was out of the loop by that time."



Peacock ended his

Michael W. Smith, Steve Taylor and Third Day's Mark Lee listening as Bono speaks in support of PEPFAR.

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recollections with this:

"For me, our time of collective prayer was important and moving, as we all talked to God about matters of mutual concern, the orphan, the widow, the devastation of AIDS in Africa and the need for clean water and malaria prevention. And then singing the old hymn together was also a very unifying grace to us all. In four hours or so, we generated enough heat to last for several years as we left the meeting prepared to contribute to the African emergency with great urgency and commitment."



Bono leading CCM artists in "They Will Know We Are Christians By Our Love," Dec. 9, 2002.

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In 2003, Switchfoot's Jon Foreman shared with @U2 reporter Angela Pancella a diary entry he wrote reflecting on meeting Bono at the Nashville Summit. Pancella's article ["The Nashville Summit: Behind the Scenes with Bono, DATA, and the Christian Music Industry"](#) includes Foreman's comments:

"There was a strange feeling in my stomach today watching Bono. I recall feeling the same way when I saw the remains of the World Trade Towers the past year. This feeling is hard to put into words but could be compared to that of a tourist sightseeing at a funeral. I came to see Bono. ... I would not have dropped everything and booked a ticket at the last minute to hear a social worker discuss the problems in Africa. I probably wouldn't have attended the same sort of meeting in my hometown.

I am a selfish, star-struck, rich, American, Anglo-Saxon fan of Bono. Bono came to work. He took a couple of hours to talk to a bunch of fans to tell them to use their clout to change the world. ...To feed the poor, to clothe the homeless, to heal the sick, to preach the good news of the kingdom of heaven. Sounds like an odd headline: 'Bono Comes to Nashville to Convert Music Industry.' I was convicted. Guilty. This was my chance to meet my hero; Bono came to work.

Give us grace, oh God, to finish the task at hand."



CCM artists and Bono praying for the work ahead to bring more AIDS relief to Africa.

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