

World music

Feared, ostracised and murdered: how music saved the Tanzania Albinism Collective

They are persecuted in their homeland, but music is now changing their lives. Meet the Tanzanians who play with sledgehammers, chant in Swahili - and dance till they drop



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Sunday 13 August 2017 17.00 BST



'We never thought people would actually hear us sing' ... from left, Elias Sostines, Teleza Finias, Riziki Julius and Amidu Didas. Photograph: Linda Nyland for the Guardian

It is a Wednesday night in a London pub and a group are about to play their first ever gig. It doesn't begin well. Some members start singing the wrong song, the keyboard won't work properly and they don't all finish at the same time.

But then something happens: the audience claps. The four singers look stunned and overwhelmed, and then Teleza Finias, the band's only woman, starts jumping up and down with joy. Amidu Didas, a lanky singer in a woolly Arsenal hat, shakes his arms in celebration, while Elias Sostines and Riziki Julius, the other two members, shout, "Tanzania! Tanzania! Tanzania!" over and over, making the crowd shout it back.

The four musicians are members of the 18-strong Tanzania Albinism Collective, and this is not only the first time they have performed on a stage - it is the first time they have been out of their country. It is also definitely the first time they have been shown appreciation by 100 random foreigners. The collective, who belong to one of the world's most oppressed groups of people, are the team behind an emotional and genre-defying album, [White African Power](#).

The collective were brought to Britain by [Ian Brennan](#), a music producer who has worked with [Tuareg rockers Tinariwen](#) and other marginalised groups, such as [Malawian prisoners](#) and the band [Khmer Rouge Survivors](#). Last summer, he visited Ukerewe to lead a songwriting workshop for people with albinism. It was run by the British charity [Standing Voice](#).

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