



## PRESS RELEASE

# ROCKY DAWUNI RELEASES NEW ALBUM ON MARCH 31

*"Performing his self-described 'Afro-Roots' sound, a fusion of reggae and Afrobeat groove, few artists have a more positive vibe than Rocky. His show is an incandescent Afro-Roots dance party." – LA Weekly*

*"His influence has been widespread, working with Bono and Stevie Wonder while his songs are consistently featured in popular American television shows. Rocky is one of the rare African artists to break through to a broad audience." – Huffington Post*

International music star and humanitarian activist **Rocky Dawuni** straddles the musical boundaries between Africa, the Caribbean and the U.S. to create an appealing "Afro-Roots" sound that unites generations and cultures. Filled with uplifting and irresistible songs, Rocky's sixth album, and first on Cumbancha, blends inspirations from his diverse experiences while expanding on his identity as an artist, a proud son of Africa and as a true world citizen. Cumbancha will release ***Branches of the Same Tree*** worldwide on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015.

Inspired by the soulful beats of Afrobeat legend **Fela Kuti**, the positive messages and deep grooves of **Bob Marley** and the infectious, sing-along anthems of **Michael Franti**, **K'naan** and **Matisyahu**, Rocky Dawuni's songs blend elements of reggae, Afrobeat and global pop into an enticing new sound. The songs on *Branches of the Same Tree* also reflect influences of New Orleans funk, Brazilian samba, even the lilting sounds of Hawaiian ukulele, seamlessly integrated into a unique and approachable style. The album features appearances by an all-star lineup of guest musicians, including veterans from **Michael Franti and Spearhead**, **Steel Pulse**, **Ben Harper** and **The Innocent Criminals** and **Ziggy Marley**. Already a superstar in West Africa with a devoted international fan base, *Branches of the Same Tree* promises to bring Rocky's music to even wider audiences around the world.

Born in Ghana and based in Los Angeles, Rocky is a galvanizing performer whose infectious grooves and dance-inducing anthems have consistently excited fans. Blessed with easy-going charisma, Rocky has performed and collaborated with **Stevie Wonder**, **Peter Gabriel**, **Bono**, **Jason Mraz**, **Janelle Monae** and **John Legend**, among many others. Named one of Africa's Top 10 global stars by CNN, he's showcased his talent around the world at major festivals and prestigious venues such as The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. and The Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles.

Rocky's eloquence, cultural diplomacy and successful melding of music and activism have led him to become a passionate spokesperson for various global causes. He has joined forces with Product (RED), UNICEF, the Carter Center and the UN Foundation. In 2012, Rocky was appointed the Tourism and Cultural Ambassador of Ghana and World Ambassador for the Musicians Union of Ghana. The same year, he was named a United Nations Foundation Ambassador for the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, alongside actress **Julia Roberts** and chef **José Andrés**.

According to Rocky, "*Branches of the Same Tree* was inspired by the songs and melodies I have heard over the years during my travels. It contains snippets of my personal observations of various cultures and global musical developments." The album's title reflects Rocky's belief that recognition of our shared humanity is the key to peaceful coexistence among all peoples of the world. "When we recognize we are all branches of the same tree we begin to see our common roots," argues Rocky, "this is the cornerstone of true Oneness."

The album's first single, "African Thriller" was released on July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014, followed by the launch of a music video on November 4<sup>th</sup>. Recorded in Ghana and Los Angeles, the song features legendary trumpeter **Osei Tutu** (Hedzole, Edikanfo, Ebo Taylor), **CC Frank** on drums (Fela Kuti) and **Dean Gant** (Anita Baker, Outkast) on keyboards. **Jeremy Sole**, a DJ, producer and host on the taste-defining Los Angeles radio station KCRW, remixed the single and album versions of "African Thriller." The video has been featured on hundreds of global outlets including *Entertainment Weekly*, *MTV*, *Channel O* and *VH1* and continues to gain momentum worldwide.



The album's opening track, "Shine a Light," is a catchy, radio-friendly anthem that incorporates a syncopated New Orleans-style rhythm, Brazilian percussion, a reggae underpinning and a sing-along chorus. As with many of Rocky's songs, the message is inspirational and upbeat: "Light up the darkness / With a positive spirit / Oh let the sun shining in with a wave of a joyful sound / Whether high or low I will not be afraid / To lift my head up reach and touch the sky / Hey, I believe we can / Shine a light so bright / For the world to see."

*Branches of the Same Tree* also demonstrates Rocky's more introspective talents with the ballads "Butterfly" and "Island Girl." The former is a **Bob Marley** composition that was never formally recorded by the reggae legend. Rocky adapted this version from a rough Marley demo, giving it a lilting tropical feel supported by long time **Ben Harper** collaborator **Tom Freund** on ukulele and **Jack Johnson** drummer **Adam Topol**. The simple yet enchanting closing track "Island Girl" also features Tom Freund on ukulele.

The Bob Marley influence is also apparent on Rocky's cover of the iconic Marley and **Peter Tosh** composition "Get Up, Stand Up." Rocky gives his version an Afrobeat touch and sings the lyrics in the Pidgin English vernacular of Ghana. Rocky's commitment to political activism and cultural pride is further demonstrated on the powerful song "Black Star," which features a guest appearance by **Samini**, a rising star in Ghana. "Black Star" celebrates Africa, calling for a new vision from the modern generation of Africans. It reaches for unity and strength among Africans as well as anyone around the world who shares the belief that the roots of mankind can be found on the continent." Rocky sings out, "Remember who you are/ Remember where you are from/ Then you gonna know which way the wind will blow / Educate your mind, dedicate your heart/ That is the only way this victory will grow / Black Star arise show the people what you know."

Rocky's love of Africa and its people can also be felt on the song "Nairobi," which was inspired by a trip he took to Kibera in Nairobi, Kenya during a very tense time in the country. It was right before their national elections, and tribal and political differences threatened the nation's stability and security. Rocky wrote it as a love song for a city, country and people.

Other highlights on *Branches of the Same Tree* include "The Sign," an Afro-Roots track that stresses the awareness of spirituality in our everyday lives, learning to trust one's inner voice and accepting that a higher power guides the course of our lives. "Children of Abraham" is about recognizing shared destiny and choosing the path to peace over any path to war. "It was motivated by my trip to Israel and Palestine," notes Rocky, "that moved me deeply and led me to think hopefully about the possibilities of peace and coexistence. My interaction with the people, and visits to mosques, churches and synagogues inspired the track."

While Rocky explores a variety of new sounds and musical direction on his new album, he does not abandon his reggae roots, contributing two straight up African reggae tracks that will surely please his longtime fans. According to Rocky, "Rock Your Soul" is "a very personal song of love and relationships. It's about how we can transcend life's challenges if love leads our intentions." Meanwhile, "We Never Stop" is "a track to put everyone on notice that roots rockers are back! We love to play music and the feeling of positivity and togetherness that it brings."

Reflecting his maturity as an artist, *Branches of the Same Tree* highlights Dawuni's ability to communicate a universal, uplifting message that crosses borders and reaches out to the hearts of millions.

**For more information, music samples, or to arrange interviews, contact:**

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Press materials, photos, biographies and more available at [www.cumbancha.com/rockydawuni/press](http://www.cumbancha.com/rockydawuni/press).

#### **More About Rocky Dawuni:**

["African Thriller" Music Video](#) / [Rocky Dawuni on CNN's African Voices](#) / [Rocky Dawuni EPK](#) / [Rocky Dawuni UN Ambassador](#) / [Performs with John Legend for Women's Campaign International](#) / [Rocky Dawuni performance with Stevie Wonder](#) / [Rocky Dawuni appointed Ghana Tourism Ambassador](#) / [Best African Artist Award, International Reggae & World Music Awards](#)

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