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THE SOUND OF FREEDOM: MUSIC AS A TOOL FOR ACTIVISM DURING THE CIVIL  
RIGHTS MOVEMENT

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## **ABSTRACT**

The freedom struggle would not have been possible without music. At every moment of African Americans' fight for justice, music was intertwined with activism. This thesis will briefly provide an overview of the historical role of music in the African American freedom struggle and then focus specifically on the role of music within the civil rights movement. Activists' utilization of music made the fight for racial equality that occurred in America during the 1950s and 1960s possible. Specifically, music was a critical tool for mobilization and helped sustain activists' efforts emotionally and financially. This thesis aims to demonstrate that discussing the civil rights movement without discussing the role of music in activists' efforts is impossible, as music was a critical tool that made activism possible.

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## Introduction

Victor Hugo asserted, “music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to stay silent.”<sup>1</sup> Music gave African Americans a voice to speak out against the injustices committed against them. An examination of the African American freedom struggle reveals that music has always been a critical component in the fight for equality. This struggle is defined as the historical struggle for racial equality. The freedom struggle extends from the days of slavery through the modern day. At any given moment of this struggle, from slave rebellions to anti-lynching campaigns to voting registration campaigns, the primary focus of the struggle changed but the centrality of music never did.

Although music was a critical component at every point in the freedom struggle, this thesis will focus specifically on music within the civil rights movement. Scholars typically define the classical phase of the civil rights movement as the period from 1954 through 1968, beginning with the landmark Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* and ending with the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The dominant form of protest during this period was nonviolent activism. The famous Montgomery Bus Boycott, the student sit-in movement, and the March on Washington were all born out of nonviolent activism during the classical phase of the civil rights movement.

The nonviolent nature of the movement made music especially popular among civil rights activists. Nonviolent activism focused on achieving social and political change through peaceable modes of protest, which included, but were not limited, to refusing to leave seats in

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<sup>1</sup> Jerome N. Frank, “Say It with Music,” *Harvard Law Review* LXI (June 1948): 932

segregated restaurants or on segregated transportation, marches, protests, and strikes. Activists employed nonviolent tactics, but their adversaries did not always have a nonviolent response. Before participating in any form of protest, activists understood that retaliation, violence, bodily harm, and even death, were real possible consequences. Those who participated in the movement were very courageous individuals who risked their own lives in hopes of creating a better world for all. Activists often faced these fearful situations with song as it helped them create a unified front, define themselves, define their goals, and define their adversaries. Activists learned these songs from leaders of the movement in meetings, at conferences, and from nationally published and distributed books and albums. These songs turned into a tool for mobilization, as they both pulled people into the movement as well as helped those who were already involved concisely explain themselves and their work. Music played a large role in helping activists muster and maintain the courage to continue their work and inspire others to join them in the fight against inequality.

Music also helped generate tangible resources to make the movement possible. The songs that activists used during their protests and mass meetings spread as activists began hosting conferences and exchanging ideas. Various civil rights organizations held concerts and sold albums to spread the message of the civil rights movement and to bring new audiences into the fight. These concerts and albums generated crucial funding that helped support activists' efforts. Racism in America, and especially the South, made it difficult for organizations fighting for racial equal to garner the financial support necessary to achieve their goals. Music helped these organizations generate funding to sustain their political work.

The freedom struggle would not have been possible without music. At such key moments in African Americans' fight for justice, music helped support and bolster activism. This thesis

will briefly cover an overview the historical role of music in the overall freedom struggle and then focus specifically on the role of music within the civil rights movement. Activists' utilization of music made the fight for racial equality that occurred in America during the 1950s and 1960s possible. Specifically, music was a critical tool for mobilization and helped sustain activists' efforts emotionally and financially. Further, this thesis argues that music was clearly a significant part of the movement, but this thesis argues that music as both a tool of mobilization and a mode of sustenance played a significant role in making activism possible.

Over the next four chapters, this thesis will demonstrate not only the centrality of music in the freedom struggle, and specifically the civil rights movement, but also the necessity of music through historical evidence, firsthand accounts of the movement, scholarly opinions, and lyrical analysis. For the convenience of the reader, the complete lyrics of all songs mentioned throughout the text are available in their entirety in the appendix. The songs selected are far more than just songs. Each song is a comment on injustice and a rebellion against oppression and a representation of the strength and courage that activists possessed to speak out against a society that failed to acknowledge everyone as equals.

## Chapter 1 :

### Review of Sources

Music within the civil rights movement is a topic of research that scholars have studied from a variety of angles. These sources have been fundamental to the both the research and argument formation of this paper, so summary presentations of the four most influential scholarly books are offered to aid the reader. The following literature reviews detail the authors' basic arguments and major themes throughout each book. This literature review aims to give the reader a better understanding of scholarly work on the topic and aid in the understanding of the argument laid forth in the remainder of the thesis.

Kerran Sanger wrote When the Spirit Says Sing: The Role of Freedom Songs in the Civil Rights Movement in 1995.<sup>2</sup> In this book, Sanger aims to analyze the songs of the civil rights movement to assess what singing did that other forms of more traditional discourse could not offer. The goal of this book is to discuss the role of song as a communication strategy in protest and as a tool of definition used by activists to define both themselves and their world. The author utilizes firsthand experiences and lyrics to demonstrate the power of music within the civil rights movement. The author asserts that music was a tool utilized by activists to communicate, to help to define themselves, and as a source of inspiration and motivation.

The theme of definition recurs throughout the book. The author used lyrics and testimonials to support the idea of music being a defining element, a way for activists to define both themselves and the world around them. Freedom songs helped to highlight activists' "single

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<sup>2</sup> Kerran Sanger, *When the Spirit Says Sing: The Role of Freedom Songs in Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

minded purpose and devotion to one goal”: freedom.<sup>3</sup> Looking more specifically at the lyrics of individual songs, Sanger illustrates how activists expressed freedom as their primary goal. The lyrics of the song *Freedom is a Constant Struggle* helped activists define their commitment “as more intense than that usually made by humans, for conventional wisdom would say life is the ultimate gift and therefore, the ultimate sacrifice.”<sup>4</sup> Some song lyrics implied that activists were willing to give their lives for this cause and the fact that they were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice of their lives shows that they were truly dedicated to the cause. Activists modified the old lyrics of *Keep Your Eyes on the Prize* to better define their purpose: the original song articulated a goal of salvation, while the version that American folk musician Guy Carawan taught to activists promoted a goal of freedom.<sup>5</sup>

These songs not only helped activists define themselves, but also, the world around them. The songs defined elements of their world that they felt were obstacles standing between them and freedom. “In (the song) *Oh Freedom*,” Sanger explains, “all we know about what freedom is by hearing what it is not. The singers defined freedom as ‘no more segregation,’ ‘no more weeping,’ ‘no more shooting,’ ‘no burning churches,’ ‘no more Pritchett’ and ‘no more Jim Crow over me.’”<sup>6</sup> Activists also used lyrics to assert that the environment of the South is the problem. Freedom songs did not place blame on whites and only in certain rare instances did songs call out African Americans’ most brutal adversaries. Instead, the lyrics suggest that the South itself is the issue and that the power of racism was in the “situational elements of the

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<sup>3</sup> Sanger, *When the Spirit Says Sing*, 86.

<sup>4</sup> Sanger, *When the Spirit Says Sing*, 81.

<sup>5</sup> Sanger, *When the Spirit Says Sing*, 86.

<sup>6</sup> Sanger, *When the Spirit Says Sing*, 130.

South.”<sup>7</sup> The songs asserted the South, not the people, was the issue and expressed hope that the situation could be changed.

Overall Sanger provides a strong, well-supported argument. Her information is well organized and very easy to comprehend. Each chapter of the book is dedicated to a distinct role played by music and then Sanger uses various songs to support why she feels music served each specific role. She does a fantastic job of expressing her ideas and then utilizing lyrics to explain her thought process. The way she incorporated lyrics and her explanation of music as a tool of definition was unique and very well executed. Although the basis of this thesis is not grounded in lyrical analysis (as is Sanger’s book), the argument presented in this thesis cannot be successful without at least a minimal incorporation of lyrics. Sanger’s work is a compelling and engaging example of a scholarly use of musical lyrics.

Guy and Candie Carawan’s We Shall Overcome: Songs of the Southern Freedom Movement was another book heavily consulted.<sup>8</sup> Guy and Candie Carawan were two dedicated activists and musicians during the civil rights movement who quickly recognized the power of music within the movement. They were active in the movement not only as activists, but also as teachers and documentarians. Their book, We Shall Overcome: Songs of the Southern Freedom Movement, was published in 1963 as a means of documenting the songs of the movement for the world and for the future. Featuring only a brief introduction, this is a book containing the sheet music and lyrics of some of the most prominent freedom songs of the movement.

In the book’s introduction, the Carawans mention the sit-in movement and then acknowledge that the purpose of this book is to “help document that growth and give support to

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<sup>7</sup> Sanger, *When the Spirit Says Sing*, 132.

<sup>8</sup> Guy Carawan and Candie Carawan, *We Shall Overcome: Songs of the Southern Freedom Movement* (Montgomery, AL: Oak Publications, 1963).

the testimony of those who have seen the movement in action - that it has helped develop a singing spirit that moves the hearts of all who hear it.”<sup>9</sup> Although this book is to serve as a form of documentation, the Carawans are sure to note that the true feeling and emotion of these songs cannot be understood by reading them on a page; these songs needed to be heard, they needed to be experienced. The strength of the power and the emotion of these songs is a dominant theme in their brief foreword. They note how the nonviolent movement has grown, beginning with the sit-ins and blossoming to a nationwide movement from there. They later provide an excerpt from the *1963 War Resisters Calendar* to provide a better context of the civil rights movement. They stated that the singing spirit grew as the movement grew.

Another crucial point the Carawans make in the introduction is that the music belongs to the movement rather than to an individual person. This is an important point because some feel that whoever’s name is on the copyright owns the song. Claiming ownership to the songs ignores the communities from which these songs originated.<sup>10</sup> The Carawans make a clear point, though, that these songs, both the lyrics and melodies, are living pieces of art. Activists are constantly improvising and modifying lyrics and melodies to allow the song to best describe their current situation. Denying everyone ownership and affirming that the songs belong to activists gives the audience the sense that Carawans are serving purely to document these songs so their importance can be remembered. This point reiterates the importance of the songs to the movement, showing that even as this book was being published these songs were growing and changing along with the movement.

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<sup>9</sup> Carawan, *We Shall Overcome*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Shana Redmond, *Anthem, Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 188.

The only song in the book that has a detailed introduction is *We Shall Overcome*. The brief introduction gives a history of the song, tracing it back to an old church song, *I'll Overcome Someday*. The Carawans chronicle how the union workers adapted the song and eventually brought it to the Highlander Folk School. Highlander Folk School originated as a base for striking tobacco and food workers, but after World War II became a hub for activists of the civil rights movement. Guy Carawan credits Zilphia Horton, a leading figure at Highlander, Pete Seeger, and others for adding verses and helping to transform the song into the anthem it became during the civil rights movement. The Carawans' documentation of music provided a crucial compilation of music and lyrics duly considered in this thesis.

Another book on music and freedom struggles used for this project, published in 2014, is Shana Redmond's *Anthem, Social Movement and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora*.<sup>11</sup> Redmond aims to demonstrate how music, specifically selected anthems, were used to emulate the goals of different groups and organizations at different stages of the freedom struggle. She highlights six specific songs that correspond with a specific person or organization and then discusses how that song was important to the Black world of the twentieth century. She chooses the following six songs: *Ethiopia (Thou Land of Our Fathers)* (the anthem of the Universal Negro Improvement Association), *Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing* (the anthem of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), *Ol' Man River* (performed by Paul Robeson on *Show Boat*), *We Shall Overcome* (anthem for civil rights activists), *To Be Young, Gifted and Black* (performed by Nina Simone, in conjunction with the Black Power movement), and *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* (anthem of the African National Congress).

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<sup>11</sup> Redmond, *Anthem*.

Redmond provides an in-depth background of each specific organization, movement, and performer associated with each song to provide context for the reader. Some of her analysis is lyrical. For example, in her discussion of *Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing*, the anthem of the NAACP, Redmond notes the author's use of plural pronouns to create a collective performance: "The use of plural nouns—"our," "us," "we"—prioritizes and privileges assembly and places the history of Black struggle and victory in the hands of a collective."<sup>12</sup> The lyrics also link to African Americans' historical struggle. "Music... was the historical artifact that best articulated the pain and glory of this oppressed race."<sup>13</sup> Not only does Redmond engage in lyrical analysis, she also assessed the musical composition of the songs. The structure of the song also was indicative of the NAACP's goal of cohesiveness: "composition in four-part harmony concretizes the necessity of cooperation in the success of the song's vision and performance."<sup>14</sup> The composition of the song also has historical significance, as Redmond explains: "while the song was written in 6/8, its performance follows a 12/8 phrasing, placing it alongside the Black gospel tradition,"<sup>15</sup> Not only is the song in line with gospel tradition, Redmond adds, but also the "relatively simple melodic lines and strong chord accompaniment mimic the reliance on the oral tradition in Black music."<sup>16</sup>

She undergoes a similar analysis of each of the six songs she selected, and Redmond assesses a different song in each chapter. Her scholarly perspective on the historical role and significance of music spans the freedom struggle, and her analysis of music provides a new perspective considering the role of music in the African American freedom struggle.

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<sup>12</sup> Redmond, *Anthem*, 84.

<sup>13</sup> Redmond, *Anthem*, 85.

<sup>14</sup> Redmond, *Anthem*, 84.

<sup>15</sup> Redmond, *Anthem*, 86.

<sup>16</sup> Redmond, *Anthem*, 85.

The final book that played a significant role in this thesis was Clayborne Carson's In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s.<sup>17</sup> Clayborne Carson chronicled the rise and fall of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, also known as SNCC, in his book In Struggle. Carson aimed to demonstrate how SNCC responded to the ever changing demands of the movement and how radicalism flourished within the organization. Students comprised the majority of SNCC's membership and these students organized themselves in a way that allowed them to make their mark in history. Carson argues that SNCC "mirrored in microcosm the transformation of African American politics during the 1960s."<sup>18</sup>

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was a prominent activist group throughout the sixties. The group got its start following the sit-in movement in early 1960. Activists from the sit-in movement were eager to get more involved, but many were fearful of working under the strict rules and guidelines of other civil rights organizations. SNCC formed with a collaborative atmosphere; the goal was never for there to be a top-down hierarchy like in the NAACP. Many SNCC members had a distrust of structured organizations and authority. There was a committee, but there was no single person in charge of the group. SNCC was open to collaboration with other groups such as CORE, NAACP, and SCLC, but its primary goal always remained to bring people together. SNCC gained power gradually and the group quickly began to raise funds to support their efforts. The Freedom Rides were a defining moment for them. Although they were not specifically responsible for organizing the Freedom Rides, the Freedom Rides helped SNCC develop its militancy. Strong leaders such as James Forman and Ella Baker helped to shape the group and the group made its major focus voter registration in the

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<sup>17</sup> Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

<sup>18</sup> Carson, *In Struggle*, 1.

South. The group succeeded in rural southern areas and helped many African Americans in the South to register to vote through grassroots campaigns. SNCC's downfall came in the latter 1960s, as many members left due to distrust and internal disagreements and the movement shifted from civil disobedience towards Black Power and armed self-defense.

The most prominent theme throughout the book is SNCC's internal struggles, specifically issues that arose out of the organization's lack of authority. The issue of indecisiveness among leaders in the organization ultimately led to internal conflicts. Indecisive leadership was the cause of many problems within SNCC and it was consistently plagued by controversial questions, such as the role and place of white activists in SNCC, the inclusion of communists, and SNCC's stance on foreign affairs. At every stage of its existence, the inability to execute authority affected SNCC's ability to function. Despite the fact that SNCC lacked a firm structure or definitive leadership, SNCC still managed to become a highly successful and influential organization. If SNCC had been more tightly and effectively organized, it could have achieved so much more. Thus, SNCC mirrored the larger scene of politics; its rise and fall coincided perfectly with the larger movement. Loss of crucial leadership on a larger scale, such as the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, was what ultimately led to a shift in movement goals, just as lack of leadership led to the ultimate downfall of SNCC.

Carson provided an in depth description of the entire lifespan of SNCC. His organization is logical as he organized his book chronologically. The information is easy to follow from the birth of SNCC out of the sit in movement until it fizzled with the emergence of the Black Power movement. Although not a very engaging book, it was highly informative and very in depth. The only weakness to note in Carson's work was redundancy. The internal issues with SNCC seemed to come up on every other page. Those issues were crucial because they limited the abilities of

the organization and contributed to its downfall, but Carson just seemed to emphasize these issues at every opportunity that he could. Other than the repetitiveness of SNCC's shortcomings, this work was well-written and easily comprehended.

Carson's work is crucial to the research presented in this thesis. A portion of the thesis focuses on the SNCC Freedom Singers. In order to understand their importance in both SNCC and the civil rights movement as a whole, one must have a complete understanding of not only the Freedom Singers, but also the organization for which they raised funds. Carson's detailed description of every aspect of SNCC's existence gives the reader a complete understanding of why fundraising was crucial to SNCC's efforts and success. SNCC's funding was very limited. Realizing the financial difficulties of SNCC helps the audience to understand why it was necessary to utilize the Freedom Singers as a source of revenue. A complete understanding of SNCC and its needs as an organization allowed me to better relay the importance of the SNCC Freedom Singers and their role in the movement.

Each of these sources helped to shape the research and writing presented over the course of the next three chapters. Although the role and function of music within the civil rights movement has been studied in a variety of capacities, the remainder of this thesis aims to demonstrate how music was crucial the allowing the civil rights movement to occur by demonstrating how music was a tool for mobilization and how it helped sustain activists' efforts. The second chapter of this thesis will further help to establish context regarding the role of music in the civil rights movement as it will outline the historical role of music within the African American freedom struggle.

## Chapter 2 :

### A Brief History of Music's Role in the African American Freedom Struggle

As a singing participant in the movement, I began to notice how well the old songs we knew fit our current situation.<sup>19</sup>

Music has always been a central element of African American culture as a means of maintaining cultural traditions, expressing discontent, and rebelling against inequality. Music provided African Americans with an outlet to express their hopes for equality and their refusal to accept derogatory and abusive treatment. After the abolition of slavery, African Americans faced years of mistreatment and injustice. In 1896, the Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* established that “separate but equal” was constitutional. Jim Crow laws prevented African Americans from equal access to resources, education, and work. Decades of violence and injustice led African Americans and sympathetic whites to take action. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, groups and organizations emerged dedicated to establishing racial equality in America. W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington proposed ideas to help African Americans achieve economic success. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) formed in the early twentieth century and sought to work through the legal system to achieve justice. These are only a few of the efforts made to end racial violence, discrimination, and segregation. These efforts all culminated in the classical phase of the civil rights movement that historians typically date from 1950s through the 1960s. Scholars often mark the beginning of the movement with the landmark Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education*. In 1954, the

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<sup>19</sup> Bernice Johnson Reagon, *If You Don't Go, Don't Hinder Me: The African American Sacred Song Tradition* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 104.

Supreme Court declared “separate but equal” unconstitutional. With the high court declaring segregation illegal, activists sprang into action all over the nation. From bus boycotts to sit-ins, the country was alive with activism.

This chapter explores the importance of music within the African American freedom struggle before and after the classical phase of the civil rights movement. Analyses of the songs *Go Down, Moses*, *Strange Fruit*, and *Happy Birthday*, as well as an exploration of the work of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, will illuminate the multiple meanings and messages of songs for many African Americans. While the period and the issues varied, the centrality of song was always the same.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me,” reads Exodus 8:1 of the Old Testament.<sup>20</sup> The verse is referencing the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt and Moses’ demand of Pharaoh to free them from their bondage.<sup>21</sup> This verse was one of the many Bible verses that African Americans became familiar with upon their arrival in America. When slaves were brought to America, they were forbade from practicing their native African tongues and religions. Slave owners forced slaves to speak English and adopt Christianity.<sup>22</sup> In learning Christianity, slaves found Biblical verses that strongly resonated with their hopes of freedom. The story of Moses and his desire to free the enslaved Israelites was a story that many slaves especially connected with as they found it very relevant to their bondage experience. The verse resonated so deeply with some slaves that it inspired the slave spiritual *Go Down, Moses*. Slave

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<sup>20</sup> Carolyn Calloway-Thomas and John Louis Lucaites, *Martin Luther King Jr. and the Sermonic Power of Public Discourse* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 25.

<sup>21</sup> Calloway-Thomas, *Martin Luther King Jr. and the Sermonic Power*, 26.

<sup>22</sup> Lawrence S. Cunningham, John J. Reich, and Lois Fichner-Rathus, *Culture and Values: A Survey of Humanities* (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2014): 762.

spirituals were songs developed by slaves during slavery and they were a combination of Christian hymns and African rhythmic influences.<sup>23</sup> These spirituals were often laced with hidden meanings as a way for slaves to secretly express their discontent and communicate.<sup>24</sup> In *Go Down, Moses*, the Israelites represented African American slaves, while Egypt and Pharaoh represented the slave master and the institution of slavery.<sup>25</sup>

Slave spirituals were one of the earliest forms of slave rebellion and African Americans' contesting of oppression. Although slave masters tended to strictly limit and monitor slaves' actions, they encouraged singing.<sup>26</sup> Masters interpreted slaves' singing as a sign of their happiness and contentment with their work. Additionally, singing made the slaves appear docile in the eyes of their masters, thus making slaves appear as less of a potential threat.<sup>27</sup> In actuality, singing was a form of rebellion as it allowed slaves to communicate with one another and allowed slaves to redefine themselves. Masters often stifled communication, but slaves were able to communicate with their music, whether they were communicating information or expressing their discontent. Slaves derived the songs that they sang, commonly referred to as slave spirituals, from western hymns.<sup>28</sup> Slaves added their own lyrical and rhythmic flare to songs to allow the music to represent their personal struggles. The songs often included Biblical references that especially resonated with the slave experience. *Go Down, Moses* exemplifies how slaves used spirituals as a form of rebellion.

Slaves used *Go Down, Moses* to direct other slaves to freedom. The most famous method of escape for slaves was via the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad was in

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<sup>23</sup> Cunningham, *Culture and Values*, 762.

<sup>24</sup> Cunningham, *Culture and Values*, 762.

<sup>25</sup> Calloway-Thomas, *Martin Luther King Jr. and the Sermonic Power*, 26.

<sup>26</sup> Kerran L. Sanger, "Slave Resistance and Rhetorical Self Definition: Spirituals as a Strategy," *Western Journal of Communication* (1995), 177.

<sup>27</sup> Sanger, "Slave Resistance and Rhetorical Self Definition," 177.

<sup>28</sup> Sanger, "Slave Resistance and Rhetorical Self Definition," 176.

operation from the mid-1830s through the Civil War.<sup>29</sup> The name derived from the manner in which slaves escaped: people described the escape as if the slaves had vanished underground and their escape was as quick as though they had left on a train.<sup>30</sup> In actuality, the Underground Railroad was an agreement among anti-slavery supporters to aid slaves in their journey into free states and Canada.<sup>31</sup> Underground Railroad “conductors” led slaves to a safe house.<sup>32</sup> Sympathetic whites harbored fugitive slaves in their basements and barns until they transported them to the next safe house. The transports continued until the slaves reached free soil.<sup>33</sup> One of the most famous conductors of the Underground Railroad was Harriet Tubman who earned herself the nickname “Black Moses.”<sup>34</sup> The Moses nickname is a direct reference to the spiritual *Go Down, Moses*, as she often used the spiritual to help convey directions in code to fugitive slaves.<sup>35</sup>

The use of the song by fugitive slaves helped to popularize *Go Down, Moses*, which led to its publication and to its use as a fundraiser for the abolition movement. The song rose to prominence when Reverend Lewis C. Lockwood heard it while he was on a mission at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, in 1861.<sup>36</sup> He was on a mission through the YMCA to help slaves harbored by northern sympathizers.<sup>37</sup> Lockwood overheard the slaves who had made it through the Union lines singing *Go Down, Moses* and he was deeply moved by the lyrics.<sup>38</sup> He transcribed the lyrics and submitted them to Horace Greeley’s *New York Tribune*. After being printed in the *Tribune*,

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<sup>29</sup> William Mitchell, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (London: Woodfall and Kinder Printers, 1860), 12.

<sup>30</sup> Mitchell, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom*, 13.

<sup>31</sup> Mitchell, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom*, 13.

<sup>32</sup> Mitchell, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom*, 13.

<sup>33</sup> Mitchell, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom*, 14.

<sup>34</sup> Vivien Goldman, *The Book of Exodus: The Making and Meaning of Bob Marley and Wailers’ Album of the Century* (New York: Random House Inc., 2006), 147.

<sup>35</sup> Goldman, *The Book of Exodus*, 147.

<sup>36</sup> Goldman, *The Book of Exodus*, 147.

<sup>37</sup> Goldman, *The Book of Exodus*, 147.

<sup>38</sup> Goldman, *The Book of Exodus*, 147.

the song gained popularity among northern audiences. In December of 1861, a New York printer and Boston music company collaborated to publish a sheet music arrangement of the song. The song was originally entitled *Oh! Let My People Go: The Song of the Contrabands*.<sup>39</sup> The title eventually changed to *Go Down, Moses* and it became the first slave spiritual to be printed in sheet music. Royalties from the sales of the sheet music funded the anti-slavery movement.<sup>40</sup>

*Go Down, Moses*, along with many other slave spirituals, mark some of the earliest instances of African Americans resisting oppression. These songs were used as a secret form of communication to help slaves navigate to freedom through the Underground Railroad and the publication of these songs helped to raise money to fund abolitionists' efforts. Slave spirituals were only the beginning of African Americans' utilizing music to help sustain activism. Slave spirituals helped to inspire over a century's worth of music that motivated activists and supplemented activists' efforts. *Go Down, Moses*, along with other spirituals, continued to be sang as ballads calling for the freedom of the oppressed many years after emancipation.

In 1872, *Go Down, Moses* was performed for President Ulysses S. Grant, Vice President Schuyler Colfax, and several congressional representatives. Despite the origins of the song as a slave spiritual, slaves were not the ones performing the song at the White House. The Fisk Jubilee Singers, a renowned group of African American students who toured in the 1870s to help raise funding for black education, performed *Go Down, Moses* at the White House. The group was formed from Fisk University students in 1871 with the goal of "obtaining means whereby they might further the education of their people."<sup>41</sup> The Fisk Jubilee Singers toured not only the

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<sup>39</sup> Eleanor Jones Harvey, "Painting Freedom," *New York Times*, October 30, 2013.

<sup>40</sup> Goldman, *The Book of Exodus*, 147.

<sup>41</sup> "Fisk Jubilee Singers," *Music Supervisors Journal* 8 no. 3 (1922): 16.

country, but also the world, sharing African American music and raising much needed money to support African American education.

African Americans struggled to have equal access to education, both before and after the abolition of slavery. Before abolition, slaves received almost no education outside of a religious education from slave masters. The religious education was used a means to make slaves more obedient and easier to control.<sup>42</sup> Free African Americans fared no better in obtaining an education. Prior to 1865, access to education for free African Americans was extremely limited. Many whites believed that African Americans were incapable of obtaining an education. To test this theory, John Chavis, a free African American, was sent to university in 1792 and observed as an experimental subject to see if African Americans were capable of obtaining an education.<sup>43</sup> His academic performance was excellent and he proved that African Americans were capable of being educated.<sup>44</sup> He was so well educated that he went on to preach until 1831, served as an educator for both blacks and whites, and became a prominent figure in the abolitionist movement.<sup>45</sup> John Chavis was the exception and not the rule. Prior to 1860, only twenty-eight African Americans had ever graduated with a BA degree in America.<sup>46</sup> A few others had minimal medical or teaching training.

During Reconstruction, there were attempts by a number of missionary groups to establish schools for African Americans.<sup>47</sup> By 1870, the American Missionary Association had helped to found seven black colleges and thirteen black schools.<sup>48</sup> Although there was some

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<sup>42</sup> Beatriz Chur Clewell and Bernice Taylor Anderson, "African Americans in Higher Education: An Issue of Access," *Humbolt Journal of Social Relations* 21, no. 2 (1995): 57.

<sup>43</sup> Clewell, "African Americans in Higher Education," 57.

<sup>44</sup> Booker T. Washington, *The Story of the Negro* (New York: Doubleday Pages & Company, 1909), 274.

<sup>45</sup> Washington, *The Story of the Negro*, 275.

<sup>46</sup> Clewell, "African Americans in Higher Education," 57.

<sup>47</sup> Clewell, "African Americans in Higher Education," 58.

<sup>48</sup> Clewell, "African Americans in Higher Education," 58.

success in founding these schools, that success was very limited, especially in the South.

Southern white pressure, lack of northern support, and disagreements with northern troops severely limited the establishment of schools for African Americans in the South.<sup>49</sup> When Union troops were withdrawn from the South during the 1870s, any progress made in the South was almost entirely reversed. There was a large push to limit African American education to vocational training.<sup>50</sup> Despite all of the obstacles, several black colleges were established, including Atlanta University, Howard University, Fisk University, Leland University, Lincoln University, Shaw University, and Wilberforce University. By 1895, these universities produced more than 1,150 African American graduates.<sup>51</sup> The success of these universities demonstrated African Americans' eagerness to learn, but sustaining the universities proved to be difficult.

Securing funding to support African American education proved to be extremely difficult. Both northern and southern states refused to set aside public expenditures to equalize the funding of black and white education.<sup>52</sup> W.E.B. DuBois noted that, "in most southern states, (African Americans) were paying more in public taxation than they were receiving in state and local funding for separate black public schools."<sup>53</sup> This inequality was apparent at every level of education, as the black universities in the South were only able to survive because of philanthropic support.<sup>54</sup> Fisk University was no exception and experienced financial struggles just as many other institutions of black learning had experienced. Fisk, founded in 1866, was one of the first universities in the United States to accept men and women. When the university initially opened, classes were held in old army hospital buildings. After five years, the university

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<sup>49</sup> Clewell, "African Americans in Higher Education," 58.

<sup>50</sup> Clewell, "African Americans in Higher Education," 58.

<sup>51</sup> Clewell, "African Americans in Higher Education," 58.

<sup>52</sup> Clewell, "African Americans in Higher Education," 59.

<sup>53</sup> V.P. Franklin, "Introduction: Cultural Capital and African American Education," *The Journal of African American History* (2002): 175.

<sup>54</sup> Clewell, "African Americans in Higher Education," 59.

found itself in dire need of funding to help make repairs to older buildings and help construct new permanent buildings. Fisk employee George L. White created the Fisk Jubilee Singers to help ease the financial struggles of the university.

Created in 1871, the Fisk Jubilee Singers set out to raise money to aid struggling Fisk University. The original group consisted of nine students and a pianist, and Fisk Treasurer and music director George L. White directed the group.<sup>55</sup> The group had an initial goal of raising \$20,000 and they left for their first tour on October 6, 1871.<sup>56</sup> Their early performances showed that audiences were not necessarily sympathetic to their cause. Early tour stops in Ohio were met with some hostility and violence.<sup>57</sup> Most African Americans of the time were restricted to performing in the minstrel style, a very offensive style of performing associated with the negative stereotypes of African Americans, so white audiences were unsure of how to react to these singers whose repertoire largely consisted of slave spirituals.<sup>58</sup> As the group continued to tour, they began to gain acceptance and praise and the hostility soon turned to standing ovations. The group later expanded to eleven members and their success took them across the Atlantic to Europe. In 1873, they toured through France, England, Switzerland, and Germany and received rave reviews from European critics. They even had the opportunity to sing for Queen Victoria of England.<sup>59</sup> In addition to singing for the Queen, the group was invited to the White House and the World Peace Jubilee in Boston.<sup>60</sup> The Singers exceeded their goal of \$20,000 within three years and those funds were crucial for the university.<sup>61</sup> Fisk used the money to buy a twenty-five acre site for the university as well as construct a new hall, Jubilee Hall, named in the group's

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<sup>55</sup> Hygh Haywood, "The Fisk Jubilee Singers," *The Choral Journal* 12, no. 3 (2013): 18.

<sup>56</sup> Haywood, "The Fisk Jubilee Singers," 18.

<sup>57</sup> Haywood, "The Fisk Jubilee Singers," 18.

<sup>58</sup> Haywood, "The Fisk Jubilee Singers," 19.

<sup>59</sup> Haywood, "The Fisk Jubilee Singers," 18.

<sup>60</sup> Haywood, "The Fisk Jubilee Singers," 19.

<sup>61</sup> Haywood, "The Fisk Jubilee Singers," 19.

honor.<sup>62</sup> The hall was the school's first permanent building and was designated a historical landmark in 1975.<sup>63</sup> The hall is adorned with a floor to ceiling painting of the original singers, a piece of artwork that was commissioned by Queen Victoria as a gift to the university from England.<sup>64</sup>

African Americans desired an education because they knew that education was the key to freedom and citizenship and the Fisk Jubilee Singers demonstrated how music helped to make education a possibility for African Americans. The funds raised from the Singers' tours helped Fisk University erect permanent buildings and saved the university from financial ruin. The Fisk Jubilee Singers inspired other institutions of learning, including Hampton Institute, Tuskegee Institute, and Utica institute, to send similar groups on tour to help raise funding for their schools.<sup>65</sup>

In addition to helping enslaved people secure freedom and being used to fund black colleges, music became a form of protest within black communities. In 1939, Billie Holiday released *Strange Fruit*, a powerful anti-lynching ballad based on a poem by schoolteacher Abel Meerpool. Lynching had its origins in the West as a form of vigilante justice for the small towns that lacked a formal justice system but, after the Civil War, lynching became a tool to help Southerners maintain a racial caste system. Lynchings were especially prominent in the period from 1880 until 1950. From 1882 through 1951, the Tuskegee Institute recorded 4,730 lynchings of African Americans. From 1910 through 1919, there was an average of 62 people lynched per

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<sup>62</sup> Haywood, "The Fisk Jubilee Singers," 18.

<sup>63</sup> "Our History," *The Fisk Jubilee Singers*, Last modified 2015, [http://www.fiskjubileesingers.org/our\\_history.html](http://www.fiskjubileesingers.org/our_history.html). (accessed March 3, 2016).

<sup>64</sup> "Our History."

<sup>65</sup> William H. Tallmadge and Charles Reagan Wilson, "Fisk Jubilee Singers: Spiritual Singing Group," *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* 12 (2008): 229.

year.<sup>66</sup> From 1882 through 1944, Mississippi had the most recorded lynchings, a total of 573.<sup>67</sup> Georgia, Texas, Alabama, and Delaware followed in consecutive order, with their respective total record lynchings being 521, 489, 346, and 280.<sup>68</sup> These numbers only account for the recorded lynchings, so the actual number of African Americans lynched by white supremacists is most likely significantly higher.

The NAACP made the passage of a federal anti-lynching bill a central component of its legal campaign throughout most of the twentieth century. Although there had been several anti-lynching bills introduced in Congress in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, each bill was defeated in the Senate after passage in the House.<sup>69</sup> The most notable anti-lynching bill was the Dyer Bill. Introduced by United States House of Representatives member Leonidas Dyer (a Missouri Republican) in 1918, the bill received favorable feedback from the Senate committee assigned to it and passed in the House in 1922. However, the Dyer Bill faced the same fate that other anti-lynching bills faced as a filibuster killed it in the Senate.<sup>70</sup> Southerners feared an anti-lynching bill as it would make lynching a federal crime, meaning if the federal government felt that southern authorities were not properly persecuting offenders, the federal government could intervene. Because the southern states wanted to keep the federal government out of the south at all costs, southern senators used filibusters to prevent the bills from passing. The threat of a filibuster eventually became enough to prevent anti-lynching legislation from being introduced because filibusters were time consuming. Prominent leaders known for their civil rights activism such as W.E.B. DuBois and A. Philip Randolph spoke out against lynching and the failure of the

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<sup>66</sup> Robert A. Gibson, "The Negro Holocaust: Lynching and Race Riots in the United States, 1880-1950," *Yale-New Haven Teacher Institute*, 2014, <http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1979/2/79.02.04.x.html>. (accessed January 13, 2016).

<sup>67</sup> John Gunther, *Inside U.S.A.*, (Scranton, PA: Haddon Craftsmen, 1947), i.

<sup>68</sup> Gunther, *Inside U.S.A.*

<sup>69</sup> Gibson, "The Negro Holocaust."

<sup>70</sup> Gibson, "The Negro Holocaust."

government to pass anti-lynching legislation. Ida B. Wells was at the forefront of the fight against lynching as she rallied anti-lynching sentiment through the pamphlet *Memphis Free Speech!* and as chairman of the Anti-Lynching Bureau of the Afro-American Council.<sup>71</sup>

African American singer Billie Holiday decided to use her craft of music to aid the anti-lynching movement. Billie Holiday rose to prominence in the late 1930's and she is widely considered one of the best jazz voices of all time. She cut her first record at the age of eighteen, and she continued to have a successful career up through 1959.<sup>72</sup> She was one of the first black women to sing with an orchestra.<sup>73</sup> She also had ample reason to support civil rights activism; her father died after multiple segregated hospitals denied him treatment.<sup>74</sup> Holiday approached her label Columbia and asked to record *Strange Fruit* but Columbia refused. The label feared the southern market's reaction to a song condemning lynching and received negative feedback from CBS. Therefore, Holiday approached Mitt Gabler, a friend with the Commodore Label. Holiday's acapella performance of the song moved Gabler to tears and Columbia granted Holiday a one-session release from contract to record the song with Commodore. The song sold one million copies and charted at number sixteen in 1939, thus demonstrating how the anti-lynching message resonated with a large audience of people.<sup>75</sup>

Holiday's early live performances of the song helped generate a lot of attention as well. She first performed the song at Café Society, New York's only integrated club.<sup>76</sup> Even with the interracial audience, Holiday was terrified to perform the song because of its controversial

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<sup>71</sup> Gibson, "The Negro Holocaust."

<sup>72</sup> "Billy's Storyville," *Billie Holiday*, 2010, <http://www.billieholiday.com/>. (accessed March 17, 2016).

<sup>73</sup> "Billy's Storyville."

<sup>74</sup> David Margolick, "Performance as a Force for Change: The Case of Billie Holiday and 'Strange Fruit'," *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature* 11 (summer 1999): 103.

<sup>75</sup> Margolick, "Performance as a Force for Change," 101.

<sup>76</sup> Margolick, "Performance as a Force for Change," 96.

subject matter.<sup>77</sup> Her first performance received a standing ovation and the song soon became her regular closing number.<sup>78</sup> All service ceased as she prepared to sing, and all lights dimmed except a single spotlight shining on her.<sup>79</sup> The song normally received a standing ovation, but Holiday never obliged. She simply walked off the stage, as the goal of the song was not to entertain but to leave people thinking about the message of the lyrics.<sup>80</sup> The song soon became so popular that Café Society was not only advertising Billie Holiday, but the song *Strange Fruit* itself by putting out ads asking, “Have YOU heard *Strange Fruit* growin’ on Southern trees by Billie Holiday?”<sup>81</sup> The song made such a stir that it caught the attention of several mainstream media outlets. A *Time* magazine article reported that the song was “a prime piece of musical propaganda for the NAACP,” with the lyrics accompanying the printed article.<sup>82</sup> A review by Samuel Grafton in the *New York Post* described the song as “a fantastically perfect work of art, one which reversed the usual relationship between a black entertainer and her white audience: ‘I have been entertaining you, she seems to say, ‘now you just listen to me.’ The polite conversation between race and race are gone.”<sup>83</sup> Her song was one of the most forthright cries against racism that had been made by a black entertainer and the revolutionary nature of her art did not receive entirely positive reactions. Holiday was met with resistance, including both verbal and physical abuse, during some performances of the song.<sup>84</sup> Many radio stations refused

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<sup>77</sup> Margolick, “Performance as a Force for Change,” 93.

<sup>78</sup> Margolick, “Performance as a Force for Change,” 99.

<sup>79</sup> Margolick, “Performance as a Force for Change,” 100.

<sup>80</sup> Margolick, “Performance as a Force for Change,” 100.

<sup>81</sup> Margolick, “Performance as a Force for Change,” 99.

<sup>82</sup> Margolick, “Performance as a Force for Change,” 101.

<sup>83</sup> Margolick, “Performance as a Force for Change,” 101.

<sup>84</sup> Margolick, “Performance as a Force for Change,” 92.

to play it, deeming it too risqué.<sup>85</sup> Holiday crooned her way into the spotlight as a revolutionary figure and her blatant anti-racism message made her the era's voice of black people.<sup>86</sup>

The lyrics of *Strange Fruit* create a metaphor of the South as a tree, with the strange fruit being the product of racial oppression and violence. The lyric "blood at the root" is a reference to the South's history of violence and lynching, and the lyric "blood on the leaves" is indicative of the problem still happening.<sup>87</sup> The lyrics juxtapose the idea that the South is noble and chivalrous against images describing the violence that southerners committed against African Americans.<sup>88</sup> The lyrics "the bulgin' eyes and the twisted mouth" and "the sudden smell of burning flesh" represent how lynching often entailed cruel and inhumane methods of torture not limited to just hanging the victim.<sup>89</sup> Lynching was treated as a family spectacle and families sometimes took pictures with the hanging body.<sup>90</sup> The perpetrators castrated, dismembered, or burned the victim at the stake in front of a crowd of husbands, wives, and children before finally hanging the victim for display.<sup>91</sup> Holiday's lyrics paint a picture of the horrors of lynching and the history of violence against African Americans in the South.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, African Americans lived in fear of lynching. The federal government failed to pass any legislation regarding the matter without a significant debate or hold up occurring in the Senate. Billie Holiday brought the issue to a public stage with her song *Strange Fruit*. The song brought the issue to the attention of the public eye and its commercial success demonstrated how strongly the issue resonated within society. The

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<sup>85</sup> Margolick, "Performance as a Force for Change," 92.

<sup>86</sup> Margolick, "Performance as a Force for Change," 92.

<sup>87</sup> Billie Holiday, *The Diva Series: Billie Holiday*, 2003, by UMG Recordings, MP3.

<sup>88</sup> Holiday, *The Diva Series*.

<sup>89</sup> Holiday, *The Diva Series*.

<sup>90</sup> Philip Dray, *At the Hand of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York: Modern Library, 2007), 11.

<sup>91</sup> Robert Siegel, "Anti-Lynching Law in U.S. History," *NPR*, June 13, 2005, <http://www.npr.com/templats/story.php?storyId=4701576>. (accessed February 23, 2016).

song was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1979 and was named *Time* magazine's Song of the Century in 1999. The power of this song helped bring its political message to a national audience and music would serve a similar function throughout the civil rights movement. Although music has a long tradition as a form of rebellion in the African American freedom struggle, some commentators point to *Strange Fruit* as the beginning of protest music. Ahmet Ertegun, president and founder of Atlantic Records, described the song as "a declaration of war, the beginning of the civil rights movement."<sup>92</sup> Jazz writer and composer Leonard Feather stated that *Strange Fruit* was "the first significant protest in words and music."<sup>93</sup> Although Holiday's *Strange Fruit* can arguably be considered the beginning of protest music, it was most certainly not the end. After the civil rights movement ended, music remained critical in helping to keep the legacy and work of nonviolent activism alive.

The campaign to make Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday a national holiday demonstrated how music remained a driving element to raise awareness in the freedom struggle long after the classical phase of the civil rights movement ended. Martin Luther King, Jr. is renowned as a champion of the civil rights movement and hero of nonviolent protest. He was a critical figure in some of the biggest campaigns of the civil rights movement from the Montgomery Bus Boycott to the March on Washington. In April of 1968, he traveled to Memphis, Tennessee, to help lead demonstrations on behalf of striking sanitation workers. An assassin's bullet struck him in the neck on April 4, 1968.<sup>94</sup> He died less than an hour after the shooting.<sup>95</sup> His death was a major loss to the nonviolent movement and to the civil rights movement as a whole. Many questioned if nonviolence would remain as a viable tactic to fight

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<sup>92</sup> Margolick, "Performance as a Force for Change," 92.

<sup>93</sup> Margolick, "Performance as a Force for Change," 92.

<sup>94</sup> "Martin Luther King Slain: Hit in Neck by Bullet: Police Hunt for Killer," *Chicago Tribune*, December 31, 1968.

<sup>95</sup> "Martin Luther King Slain."

for justice without his leadership. A *New York Amsterdam* article reported, “Since (Martin Luther King, Jr.’s) death there are those who have lost faith in the peaceful ways to gain black equality and black dignity.”<sup>96</sup>

However, not everyone lost hope; many vowed to honor and continue the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. by making his birthday a national holiday. The movement to memorialize King’s birthday started almost immediately after his death. By 1970, many cities and states throughout the United States officially and unofficially observed King’s birthday.<sup>97</sup> Michigan Congressman John Conyers (Democrat) first introduced legislation to make King’s birthday a federal holiday shortly after King’s death, but the legislation was not passed until over a decade later.<sup>98</sup> President Reagan signed the King Holiday law in 1983, but this act was signed only after significant efforts from people and organizations across the nation.

One of the leaders in the effort to make King’s birthday a federal holiday was music sensation Stevie Wonder. He was a leading activist in petitioning Congress to pass legislation memorializing King’s birthday as a holiday. He helped financially support the movement through benefit concerts, such as the concert he held on behalf of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change in 1980.<sup>99</sup> His work supporting the passage of the bill extended far beyond helping raise funds. In 1981, Wonder released the song *Happy Birthday*, first as a single, then on his album *Hotter than July*.<sup>100</sup> Wonder wrote the song about and dedicated it to Martin Luther King, Jr. It aimed to generate support for legislation to make King’s birthday a federal holiday. Although this song never charted on the Billboard Hot 100 (it did chart on the R&B

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<sup>96</sup> “Martin Luther King, Jr.,” *New York Amsterdam News*, January 17, 1970.

<sup>97</sup> “Martin Luther King, Jr.”

<sup>98</sup> Charles Reagan Wilson, Thomas C. Holt, and Laurie B. Green, “Martin Luther King Jr. Day,” *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* 24 (2013): 238.

<sup>99</sup> “Stevie Wonder Pressing Congress for a MLK National Holiday,” *New York Amsterdam News*, October 25, 1980.

<sup>100</sup> “Stevie Wonder Pressing Congress for a MLK National Holiday.”

charts), it was still a crucial element of the King holiday campaign. In October 1980, Wonder held a surprise press conference politely demanding Congress to take action and declare King's birthday a national holiday.<sup>101</sup> He explained at this conference how there were no holidays in America recognizing the contributions of Black Americans and that the creation of this holiday would "symbolize the nation's commitment to peace with honor, universal brotherhood through love and freedom, and unity for all people."<sup>102</sup> Wonder called for a rally to take place on January 15, 1981 to honor King's birthday and rally support for congressional legislation. The rally took place in Washington, D.C. and was highly reminiscent of the famous 1963 March on Washington.<sup>103</sup> More than 250,000 supporters of the legislation marched down Pennsylvania Avenue towards the Washington Monument.<sup>104</sup> The rally featured a number of speakers including Democratic Congressman Walter Fauntroy, Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, Representative Conyers, and Rev. Jesse Jackson.<sup>105</sup> Stevie Wonder, the orchestrator of the rally, also spoke. In addition to speaking, he sang his Martin Luther King tribute song, *Happy Birthday*.<sup>106</sup>

Wonder's song echoed the sentiments of the King birthday bill campaign. Even though scholars typically mark the end of the civil rights movement in 1968, Wonder's lyrics represent the desire to keep the ideals of the movement alive over a decade after the end of the movement. The song speaks of creating the holiday as a day of "full remembrance of those who lived and

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<sup>101</sup> "Stevie Pressing Congress for a MLK National Holiday."

<sup>102</sup> "Stevie Pressing Congress for a MLK National Holiday."

<sup>103</sup> Peter Noel, "Birthday Tributes to Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.: In Washington, D.C. In New York In Atlanta," *New York Amsterdam News*, January 24, 1981.

<sup>104</sup> Noel, "Birthday Tributes to Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr."

<sup>105</sup> Noel, "Birthday Tributes to Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr."

<sup>106</sup> Noel, "Birthday Tributes to Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr."

died for the oneness of all people.”<sup>107</sup> The song discusses the same ideas that Wonder talked about in his press conference. The holiday would serve to acknowledge the contributions of African Americans and to continue the work of civil rights activists, most notably Martin Luther King, Jr. As the song states, “we know the key to unify all people is in the dream that you had so long ago that lives in the hearts of people that believe in unity. We’ll make the dream become a reality; I know we will because our hearts tell us so.”<sup>108</sup> Wonder affirms in his lyrics that King’s dream of peace and justice through nonviolent action can only become a reality if people work together. He suggests that holiday celebrating King’s work will be a day to promote unity and peace. As Wonder asks in his lyrics, “Why has there never been a holiday, yeah, where peace is celebrated all throughout the world?”<sup>109</sup> The holiday would not only serve to acknowledge Black contributions throughout history but also promote the ideals of peace and unity for all that Martin Luther King, Jr. had been striving to achieve. Because the lyrics of Wonder’s song *Happy Birthday* briefly touched on every major point of the bill supporters’ campaign, the song became a central element of Wonder’s campaign as he performed it his rally. Even after the rally, the song was routinely played on radio stations across the country continuing to galvanize support for a federal holiday and the inner sleeve of his album *Hotter than July* featured a pitch for the King holiday campaign.<sup>110</sup> *Happy Birthday* was the social push that the campaign needed. The song aided in the collection of over six million signatures in support of the creation of a federal

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<sup>107</sup> Stevie Wonder, *Hotter Than July*, 1980, by Motown Records, MP3.

<sup>108</sup> Wonder, *Hotter Than July*.

<sup>109</sup> Wonder, *Hotter Than July*.

<sup>110</sup> David Fricke, “Record Reviews,” *Musician, Player, and Listener* (1980): 83.

holiday, which Wonder, accompanied by Coretta Scott King, presented to congressional representatives in 1982.<sup>111</sup>

Wonder's efforts, which were centered around music, had a significant impact in bringing about the passage of the bill which occurred less than two years after the outset of Wonder's campaign. Although there had been efforts for over a decade to make King's birthday a holiday, Wonder's tribute song and rally expedited the process as the demonstration and large-scale distribution of his song on his album brought the issue to a national stage. Even thirty years after the song's debut, it continued to make an impact. On the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the release of Wonder's song, Congressman Conyers introduced a resolution to renew Americans' commitment to continuing the work of Dr. King.<sup>112</sup> Conyers attested that the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Happy Birthday* was the opportune time to renew America's pledge to carry on the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>113</sup> Beyond campaigning to make King's birthday a federal holiday, Stevie Wonder also addressed social and racial injustices such as apartheid in South Africa, famine in Africa, and the African AIDS epidemic.<sup>114</sup> Wonder not only worked to honor King's work, but he also committed himself to continue King's fight against inequality and injustice. Music was central to Wonder's efforts to ensure the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was both remembered and continued.

Historically, African Americans have utilized music to combat injustice and inequality. Spirituals vocalized the discontent of slaves, choirs toured the country to support African

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<sup>111</sup> John Conyers, Jr. House of Representatives, *A Resolution "Celebrating the Life and Work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. During the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Stevie Wonder song tribute to Dr. King, 'Happy Birthday,' and for Other Purposes*, January 13, 2010, Congress Session 111-2, reference vol. 156, no. 3: E26.

<sup>112</sup> Conyers, "A Resolution."

<sup>113</sup> Conyers, "A Resolution."

<sup>114</sup> Conyers, "A Resolution."

American education, Billie Holiday brought an anti-lynching political agenda to the stage, and Stevie Wonder wrote a song to solicit support for the King federal holiday. Slavery was officially abolished in 1865 with the Thirteenth Amendment, but inequality persisted long after passage of that Amendment. As African Americans continued to combat injustice, music remained in their arsenal of tools. During their meetings, protests, and rallies, activists turned to music. African Americans modified slave spirituals to fit the contemporary struggle and despite the time that had passed, the songs still captured African Americans' hope and desire for equality. At every instance throughout the freedom struggle, music was a crucial element to fund initiatives, sustain activism, spread awareness, and unify activists. As Bernice Johnson Reagon noted:

As a singing participant in the movement, I began to notice how well the old songs we knew fit our current situation. Many of the freedom songs we sang we had learned as spirituals, sacred songs created by slaves. Our struggle against racism often found us reaching for connections with those who had during the nineteenth century fought to end slavery in this country.<sup>115</sup>

Even years after emancipation, African Americans found themselves drawing on music to resist inequality. The rest of this thesis is dedicated to explaining how activists utilized music specifically during the civil rights movement. Understanding the history of music in the freedom struggle helps to create the context of music within the civil rights movement as civil rights activists used music as an instrument of mobilization and a way to help sustain activists' efforts.

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<sup>115</sup> Reagon, *If You Don't Go, Don't Hinder Me*, 104.

### Chapter 3 :

#### Music as a Tool for Mobilization

There was always a lot of singing in those meetings... I know what I felt at the time. I'd always loved music and I'd always been active in choirs and quartets and things in high school, but I had never seen music like I saw in Nashville in those mass meetings where it was community music, you know, powerful, powerful community music where everybody sang together...<sup>116</sup>

Civil rights activists utilized a variety of tools to spread awareness and increase participation in the movement and one crucial instrument in their arsenal was music. Although Freedom Songs were “sung to bolster spirits, gain new courage, and to increase the sense of unity,” these songs were far more than just a source of entertainment and inspiration.<sup>117</sup> Because of music’s historical and cultural significance in the lives of African Americans, leaders in the movement quickly realized the power that music held in African American culture. Movement activists decided to capitalize on the power of music, incorporating it into every aspect of activism. Activists used songs in every imaginable situation: “at mass meetings, prayer vigils, demonstrations, before Freedom Rides and Sit-Ins, in paddy wagons and jails, at conferences, work-shops and informal gatherings.”<sup>118</sup> Leaders in the movement utilized music as a tool to increase participation and help convey the goals of the civil rights movement to African Americans in the Deep South.

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<sup>116</sup> Candie and Guy Carawan, interview by Joseph Mosnier, *Civil Rights History Project*, September 9, 2011.

<sup>117</sup> Sanger, *When the Spirit Says Sing*, 27.

<sup>118</sup> Sanger, *When the Spirit Says Sing*, 27.

Guy and Candie Carawan: Acknowledging the Power of Music

Guy and Candy Carawan were two of the leaders in bringing music to the forefront of the civil rights movement. The husband and wife pair met while both were engaged in political work. Candie was born and raised in California and in the late 1950s she became an art major at Pomona College in California.<sup>119</sup> She came into the movement through a student exchange program that brought her to Fisk University in Tennessee.<sup>120</sup> While in Nashville, she quickly became enthralled with the movement and was among some of the first white activists to combat segregation through involvement with the sit-in movements.<sup>121</sup>

Like Candie, Guy Carawan was raised in California, but he had connections to the South, as his mother was a Charleston, South Carolina, native.<sup>122</sup> Guy Carawan found his way to Highlander Folk School in the mid-1950s. Founded in 1932 in Monteagle, Tennessee, Highlander was originally established to help organize black union workers and combat unemployment.<sup>123</sup> Myles Horton, a white man who had grown up in a poor sharecropping family, founded Highlander and envisioned it as a school for the poor dedicated to helping its students develop the capacity for “both individual and collective self-determination.”<sup>124</sup> Highlander helped to organize coal miners, timber cutters, farmers, and mill hands.<sup>125</sup> Later in the 1930s, Highlander shifted its focus to training labor organizers such as the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) representatives because industrial unions were becoming

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<sup>119</sup> Candie Carawan, “Candie Carawan (December 27, 1939- ),” *Listen Here: Women Writing in Appalachia* (2003): 89.

<sup>120</sup> Carawan, “Candie Carawan,” 89.

<sup>121</sup> Carawan, “Candie Carawan,” 89.

<sup>122</sup> Peter J. Ling, “Developing Freedom Songs: Guy Carawan and the African American Traditions of the South Carolina Islands,” *History Workshop Journal* 44 (1997): 202.

<sup>123</sup> Alvin C. Hughes, “A New Agenda For the South: The Role and Influence of Highlander Folk School, 1953-1961,” *Phylon* (1985): 243.

<sup>124</sup> Charles M. Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 98.

<sup>125</sup> Payne, *I’ve Got the Light*, 98.

prominent in the South.<sup>126</sup> After World War II, Highlander became actively involved in the struggle for civil rights. Although Highlander was always an interracial institution, leadership-training techniques at Highlander were designed to help arm blacks with the skills that they needed to lead the struggle so that they would not have to rely on whites.<sup>127</sup> In 1953, Septima Clark learned of the Highlander Folk School from a coworker and she used her former experience as a teacher and NAACP worker to help the school grow as an institution to teach leadership techniques.<sup>128</sup> Workshops at Highlander aimed to bring together local leaders in an environment where they could share their experiences, develop their leadership techniques, and help develop the skills of others.<sup>129</sup> Highlander provided a highly interactive and participatory educational experience. As historian Charles M. Payne explains: “Highlander workshops often began by asking the participants what they wanted to learn and ended by asking them what they planned to do when they got home.”<sup>130</sup>

Highlander’s emphasis on developing leadership techniques was not its only unique feature. The role of music at Highlander set it apart from other organizations of the movement. Zilphia Horton, wife of Highlander’s founder and director Myles, made music an integral part of the Highlander experience. She played a key role in preserving the music of the people of Highlander and providing Highlander workshops with music that gave them an emotional dimension.<sup>131</sup> Carawan’s deep passion for folklore made him eager to learn Highlander’s collection of music and he soon began working as a volunteer to teach activists songs.<sup>132</sup> By the late 1950s, he had earned a master’s degree in sociology from UCLA and made trips into the

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<sup>126</sup> Payne, *I’ve Got the Light*, 98.

<sup>127</sup> Hughes, “A New Agenda for the South,” 245.

<sup>128</sup> Payne, *I’ve Got the Light*, 99.

<sup>129</sup> Payne, *I’ve Got the Light*, 98.

<sup>130</sup> Payne, *I’ve Got the Light*, 100.

<sup>131</sup> Payne, *I’ve Got the Light*, 99.

<sup>132</sup> Ling, “Developing Freedom Songs,” 202.

South to help teach Highlander's music to other activists.<sup>133</sup> Guy Carawan eventually worked his way up to become music director and song leader at Highlander.

Guy and Candie met in 1960 when Highlander hosted a conference for all those participating in the sit-in movements. The conference was held early April 1960 and was designed to teach nonviolent activists songs to utilize during their demonstrations.<sup>134</sup> Candie came to the conference with a delegation of students from Nashville and Guy was teaching songs to the activists.<sup>135</sup> Upon her first visit, Candie immediately became enamored with the music of the movement:

We'd had some songs in Nashville, we'd been in jail and used some singing to keep our spirits up but we didn't have what I would call 'Freedom Songs'. And (Guy) taught us *And Imma Sit at the Welcome Table*, *Keep Your Eyes on the Prize*, and *We Shall Overcome*. And I know for the people from Nashville it was just so incredible to have those songs because they were so perfect.<sup>136</sup>

Candie not only became enamored with the songs of the movement, but also with Guy; the two were married in 1961 shortly after their first meeting at Highlander.<sup>137</sup>

Guy and Candie Carawan both shared a passion for the civil rights movement and both acknowledged that music was a critical tool in helping to make the movement a success. Not only did Guy volunteer at workshops to teach students and activists songs, such as the conference where he met Candie, but he also travelled into the South bringing music into the heart of the movement. In 1959, he traveled to Charleston, South Carolina, to help Septima Clark, an avid activist and champion of African American citizenship schools, supervise the

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<sup>133</sup> Ling, "Developing Freedom Songs," 202.

<sup>134</sup> Carawan interview.

<sup>135</sup> Carawan interview.

<sup>136</sup> Carawan interview.

<sup>137</sup> Carawan interview.

adult classes at the citizenship schools.<sup>138</sup> Citizenship schools were designed to help increase literacy among African Americans and empower black communities. Since all southern states had literacy tests as a requirement for voting, the citizenship schools helped prepare potential African American voter registrants.<sup>139</sup> When Guy came into the citizenship schools, he brought music with him. Guy believed that music was key to implementing democratic change because it “often conveyed the vernacular interpretation of a people’s history in a way that conflicted with the official version.”<sup>140</sup> In his interactions with Clark, Carawan pushed her to incorporate folk music into her classes. His efforts were successful. In February 1960, Carawan reported that five citizenship schools featured singing as a regular feature of their classes.<sup>141</sup> The curriculum of these schools already included voter registration and political organization, but the addition of singing to the curriculum added an element of cultural preservation as well as political mobilization.<sup>142</sup> Many of the students of these citizenship schools were 40 to 60 years old and were the descendants of slaves. Many of these freedom songs were derived from slave spirituals, folk songs, and gospel hymns.<sup>143</sup> These songs were linked to African Americans’ roots, and incorporating them into the curricula of these schools helped to keep them alive.

Some misinterpreted Guy’s passion for music and the movement, as some local African American teachers in the South felt that he scorned black folk culture.<sup>144</sup> Music was one of the few things that African Americans completely owned. Some African Americans feared that Carawan, a white man, would not do justice to the cultural significance of the music and that he

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<sup>138</sup> Ling, “Developing Freedom Songs,” 202.

<sup>139</sup> Katherine Charron, *Freedom’s Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 3.

<sup>140</sup> Ling, “Developing Freedom Songs,” 202.

<sup>141</sup> Ling, “Developing Freedom Songs,” 202.

<sup>142</sup> Ling, “Developing Freedom Songs,” 202.

<sup>143</sup> Ling, “Developing Freedom Songs,” 202.

<sup>144</sup> Ling, “Developing Freedom Songs,” 203.

might ‘whitewash’ it. To combat complaints that he disregarded African American culture and creating a Europeanized version of black folk music, Carawan made the extra effort to put himself into contact with southern African Americans to ensure he had an understanding of the true context of the music in African American culture.<sup>145</sup> Carawan began setting up singing sessions after adult classes. He sang songs from Highlander’s repertoire of music and he encouraged others to sing their own songs. These sessions not only became an environment for musical exchange, but also, a time where people gave testimony to how these songs had influenced their lives. Carawan, historian Peter J. Ling remarked, “reported that they often also gave ‘beautiful testimony’ about how these songs enabled them to ‘overcome their many hardships and come through them still full of love for their fellow men.’”<sup>146</sup>

After their marriage, Candie joined Guy in his commitment to infusing music into the South. Together they worked through the Highlander School to promote music as a tool of activism. Highlander Folk School was the perfect location for the Carawans to use as a home base. After Zilphia Horton passed away in 1956, Guy, and later Candie along with him, assumed Zilphia’s role of maintaining music as critical element of the Highlander experience.<sup>147</sup>

The Carawans built off Zilphia’s work and ensured music remained a central element of the Highlander experience. They played two crucial roles in preserving the music of the civil rights movement: utilizing music as an organizing mechanism and documenting the music of the movement. In his studies at UCLA, Guy began to understand how music could be used as a tool for political organizing. He read that the labor movement used music as an organizing tool.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Ling, “Developing Freedom Songs,” 203.

<sup>146</sup> Ling, “Developing Freedom Songs,” 203.

<sup>147</sup> Carawan interview.

<sup>148</sup> Carawan interview.

This information shaped how he utilized music at Highlander. The Carawans not only organized workshops at Highlander, but also in the Deep South. As Candie Carawan notes:

I think the other thing that's really important in our history is just the workshops that Guy was able to organize to bring together the song leaders of the movement. And I give Myles a lot of credit for this, too. Myles was not a singer himself... but he was very appreciative of how powerful the music can be in supportive movement building and so whenever Guy felt it was time to bring people together in a musical setting, Myles and Highlander gave him the support to do that. Between 1960-65, we were able to organize five or six really key workshops, some at Highlander, but mostly out in the south, in Atlanta and in Mississippi, and Guy was so good about getting on the phone and sending out a letter not so much to specific individuals but to communities and say, 'Send us your song leaders, we're going to share repertoire, we're gonna learn from each other and help this incredible movement, music, that's growing, grow.'<sup>149</sup>

The Carawans viewed music as not only a tool to inspire activists and bolster their spirits, but also a tool of unification. As noted by historian Lawrence Levine, African American people “assigned a central role to the spoken arts, encouraged and rewarded verbal improvisation, and maintained the participatory nature of traditional values and group cohesion.”<sup>150</sup> This function of music in African American culture is what made it highly successful as a tool for organization. The songs in Highlander’s repertoire were mostly modified versions of older spirituals. Activists noticed: “how well the old songs they knew fit their current situation. Many of the freedom songs they sang they had learned as spirituals, sacred songs created by slaves.”<sup>151</sup> This music echoed the struggles of the past, and a hope for a better future, which made it highly effective as a tool for unification.

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<sup>149</sup> Carawan Interview.

<sup>150</sup> Redmond, *Anthem*, 156.

<sup>151</sup> Reagon, *If You Don't Go, Don't Hinder Me*, 104.

Equally as important was the Carawans' role of documenting the music of the movement. The Carawans noted that those participating in the movement were far too busy to document the music themselves. There came a point when the Carawans realized that music was so well incorporated into the movement that they felt working as documentarians was more pressing. The Carawans purchased a tape recorder and they henceforth began recordings songs as well as teaching them. Highlander had some resources to help the Carawans achieve this end. Before the Carawans, Zilphia had also done some work to document songs of the labor movement. Highlander provided Zilphia with the resources to create mimeographed song booklets and the Carawans utilized mimeographed booklets to help distribute music among activists. These booklets proved to be crucial with helping to spread music to activists all over the nation. The Carawans would bring these booklets to distribute among activists at conferences they attended, such as an SCLC conference they attended in the early 1960s.<sup>152</sup>

Mimeographed booklets were not the extent of the Carawans' documentation of the movement. Guy Carawan had personal connections with Moe Asch of Folkways Records and at Oak Publications and he used these connections to make material that could be distributed nationwide and document the movement.<sup>153</sup> Asch, the founder of Folkways Records, proved to be a critical figure in popularizing folk and non-Western music in America.<sup>154</sup> Although not very politically active himself, he was very sympathetic of activism and moved in a circle of people involved in progressive organizations.<sup>155</sup> He acknowledged the importance of music to cultural identity and his appreciation of music was apparent in the diversity of artists who recorded under

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<sup>152</sup> Carawan interview.

<sup>153</sup> Carawan interview.

<sup>154</sup> Harris M. Berger, "Making People's Music," *Journal of Musicological Research* 18 (1999): 374.

<sup>155</sup> Berger, "Making People's Music," 374.

his label.<sup>156</sup> Asch helped the Carawans record the music of the movement so future generations could listen to it and appreciate it.

In addition to recording the music, the Carawans also worked to publish the lyrics and music. Guy's connection with Oak Publications founder Irwin Silber aided them in this endeavor. Silber was highly active in the folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s, writing for the folk music magazine *Sing Out!* and worked with many folk artists of the time, including Bob Dylan.<sup>157</sup> Oak Publications helped the Carawans to publish books of music. Oak Publications produced the Carawans' first collection, *We Shall Overcome* for SNCC.

#### WE SHALL OVERCOME: AN EXAMPLE OF MUSIC IN THE MOVEMENT

The Carawans utilized Highlander and their other resources and connections to build a music culture in the movement. To acknowledge the importance of the hard work of the Carawans and other leaders in the movement to distribute, document, and preserve the music of the civil rights movement, one must understand the significance of song in the movement. To demonstrate how music was utilized as a tool, the remainder of this chapter will closely examine the song *We Shall Overcome*. *We Shall Overcome* quickly became an anthem of the movement, in large part to Guy Carawan teaching it to movement leaders at workshops.

*We Shall Overcome* has complex roots with the lyrics and melody being a compilation of elements of several other songs. The lyrics were based loosely on the black church song *I'll Overcome Someday*, written by Charles Albert Tindley in 1900.<sup>158</sup> Kenneth Morris and Atron Twig published another similarly worded song also entitled *I'll Overcome Someday* published in

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<sup>156</sup> Berger, "Making People's Music," 374.

<sup>157</sup> William Grimes, "Irwin Silber, Champion of the Folk Music Revival, Dies at 84," *New York Times*, September 11, 2010.

<sup>158</sup> Redmond, *Anthem*, 162.

1945.<sup>159</sup> Despite the lyrical similarities between these two church songs and the lyrics of *We Shall Overcome*, the melodies bear no resemblance.<sup>160</sup> The melody of *We Shall Overcome* can be traced back much farther to slave spirituals.<sup>161</sup> The melody of *We Shall Overcome* has been traced back to *No More Auction Block* and *I'll Be All Right*.<sup>162</sup> *No More Auction Block* was a freedom song that dated back to African American soldiers in Civil War.<sup>163</sup> African Americans orally transmitted the song over the years, and the exact origins are unknown. The call and response style of the song as well as some melodic elements are elements that would later be echoed in *We Shall Overcome*. *I'll Be All Right* was a gospel hymn that originated as an African American folk song that had been passed down by word of mouth.<sup>164</sup> *I'll Be All Right* featured syncopation, a common feature of African American music, and the syncopation found in *I'll Be All Right* as well as the song structure would later be incorporated in *We Shall Overcome*.<sup>165</sup> These different musical influences all came together to form the song the world knows today as *We Shall Overcome*.

*We Shall Overcome* gained popularity among labor unionists in the 1940s and Negro Food and Tobacco Union workers adopted the song in 1945 during a strike. Union workers sang it on picket lines while on strike.<sup>166</sup> In 1945, the song eventually found its way to Highlander where Zilphia quickly adopted the song. She made some modifications to the lyrics and her

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<sup>159</sup> Victor V. Bobetsky, "The Complex Ancestry of 'We Shall Overcome,'" *The Choral Journal* 54, no. 7 (February 2014): 32.

<sup>160</sup> Bobetsky, "The Complex Ancestry of 'We Shall Overcome,'" 32.

<sup>161</sup> Bobetsky, "The Complex Ancestry of 'We Shall Overcome,'" 32.

<sup>162</sup> Bobetsky, "The Complex Ancestry of 'We Shall Overcome,'" 30.

<sup>163</sup> Bobetsky, "The Complex Ancestry of 'We Shall Overcome,'" 30.

<sup>164</sup> Bobetsky, "The Complex Ancestry of 'We Shall Overcome,'" 32.

<sup>165</sup> Bobetsky, "The Complex Ancestry of 'We Shall Overcome,'" 32.

<sup>166</sup> Guy Carawan and Candie Carawan, *Sing For Freedom: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement Through its Songs* (Montgomery, AL: NewSouth Books, 2008), 8.

version of the song soon became Highlander's theme song.<sup>167</sup> Guy Carawan, Zilphia Horton, Frank Hamilton, and Pete Seeger are all credited with the musical and lyrical adaptations to the song and their version of *We Shall Overcome* is the version that became an anthem of the civil rights movement.<sup>168</sup> Guy's efforts to distribute and teach the music of the movement led *We Shall Overcome* to become an anthem for civil rights activists.<sup>169</sup> This song exemplifies how music was utilized as a tool in the civil rights movement as it helped connect African Americans to the historical freedom struggle, helped activists oppose racial inequality, helped to unify activists, and helped activists to create a sense of identity.

The first way in which *We Shall Overcome* was an effective tool in the movement was the way in which it linked the 1950s and the 1960s movement to a longer historical African American struggle. Music historian Shana Redmond sums up: "The historico-musical lineage of *We Shall Overcome* travels a long, and at times obscure, passage from its roots in Negro spirituals to its usage as a labor ballad. While the sacred and secular are often in conflict, the mid-twentieth century use of an antebellum religious song fits squarely with the larger canon of Black protest music."<sup>170</sup> Music was a sort of sacred tradition in African American culture. Many elements of black music resonated with universal themes and functioned to support black communities, making it "inevitable that sacred traditions, namely music, aided social activism."<sup>171</sup> This link to gospel, to the freedom struggle, and to the African American historical experience established an emotional connection between activists and the song. These songs connected these activists to a century's long struggle for equality and allowed them to "embrace

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<sup>167</sup> Carawan, *Sing For Freedom*, 8.

<sup>168</sup> Carawan, *Sing For Freedom*, 8.

<sup>169</sup> Redmond, *Anthem*, 161.

<sup>170</sup> Redmond, *Anthem*, 155-56.

<sup>171</sup> Redmond, *Anthem*, 155.

[their] links with [their] past.”<sup>172</sup> The remainder of this chapter analyzes key lyrics from *We Shall Overcome*. The lyrics in their entirety as they appear in the Carawans’ book Sing For Freedom are included in the appendix at the end of the thesis for the convenience of the reader.

“Oh Deep in My Heart I do Believe, We are Not Afraid”: Music as a Mode of Opposition

Music was a nonviolent tactic of protest, but nonviolent is not synonymous with passive. Candie Carawan explained that music had value: “When you’re up against such powers of oppression and you’re not gonna use violence but you do need things that help you feel strong and that show your strength.”<sup>173</sup> Bernice Reagon Johnson, another civil rights movement activist, recalled how aggressive the music was and the aggressiveness of the music is one thing that pulled her into the movement in Albany, Georgia in 1961.<sup>174</sup>

The lyrics of *We Shall Overcome* exemplify the assertiveness of music as a nonviolent tool to protest racial inequality. As an anthem of the movement *We Shall Overcome* was sang in every type of circumstance – jail cells, paddy wagons, marches, sit-ins. The song opens with the lyrics “we shall overcome,” immediately asserting that African Americans believe that they will achieve their goals. The second verse asserts, “we are not afraid,” attesting to two things: the willingness of the activists to do whatever it takes to achieve their goals and their assuredness that they are morally correct. Activists sat in jail cells after being arrested at demonstrations, refusing to post bail because they knew that they were morally right. Freedom Riders endured insults and beatings as they travelled through the South, never fighting back because they refused to sink to the level of their attackers. Nonviolent protesters could not be afraid. They did not fear

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<sup>172</sup> Reagon, *If You Don’t Go, Don’t Hinder Me*, 104.

<sup>173</sup> Carawan interview.

<sup>174</sup> Carawan interview.

the consequences of their actions, which included violent retaliation, jail time, and even death, and they pursued their endeavors with their heads held high and their fears repressed. The first two verses of this song attest to the confidence and tenacity of will of the activists, thus demonstrating how *We Shall Overcome* was a tool of opposition utilized by activists.

### “We’ll Walk Hand in Hand”: Music as a Tool of Unification

A second function of music within the civil rights movement was to unify protesters. Both the lyrics and music of the song *We Shall Overcome* epitomize this function of music within the movement. The modifications made to the lyrics established the song as more of a community song, changing the lyrics from “I” to “we,” symbolizing that overcoming was a collective journey and victory. The Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers of America changed the lyrics during the 1940s, and civil rights activists kept the change emphasizing “the importance of collectivity in the project for freedom.”<sup>175</sup> The lyrics “we’ll walk hand in hand” underscore that victory will require them to travel together to reach their goals. The use of collective pronouns and implication that cooperation and unity was necessary for the goal to be reached promoted unification among activists.

*We Shall Overcome* promoted cohesion as the meter of the song was modified to make it easier for all to learn. Meter is the beat or pulse of music, the rhythmic structure. Charles Albert Tindley wrote the original version in the  $\frac{3}{4}$  meter, but activists changed it to the  $\frac{4}{4}$  meter, also known as common time.<sup>176</sup>  $\frac{4}{4}$  is the most basic meter as it is the simplest and least complex, which “allows for greater participation from new learners, or the musically untrained.”<sup>177</sup> The

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<sup>175</sup> Redmond, *Anthem*, 161.

<sup>176</sup> Redmond, *Anthem*, 162.

<sup>177</sup> Redmond, *Anthem*, 162.

simplicity of the meter made this song easy for anyone to learn and therefore easy for anyone to sing along with. The call and response style, popular in African American music, also promoted unity among activists. According to historian Lawrence Levine, black people “assigned a central role to the spoken arts, encourage and rewarded voice criticism as well as to uphold traditional values and group cohesion.”<sup>178</sup> The participatory nature of music made it an easy way to get people from all walks of life involved in the movement. “Music was represented by the activists as a great equalizer,” music historian Sanger explained. “Singing did not simply allow people of different classes and backgrounds to communicate—it made them equal.”<sup>179</sup> Because *We Shall Overcome* was able to remove barriers between classes and promote cohesion as necessary to the success of the movement, it promoted unity among activists.

#### “We Shall All Be Free”: Music as a Tool to Create a Sense of Identity

*We Shall Overcome* was an anthem of civil rights activists and it was a song they had come to use to represent themselves and their struggle. The lyrics explicitly defined their goals: we shall overcome. They assert that they will achieve their goal with the lines “we shall all be free” and “we shall overcome.”<sup>180</sup> With a clear declaration of their goal and confidence in the outcome of their struggle, singers defined themselves as strong willed and determined. They, then, defined themselves as morally correct, proclaiming faith is on their side by stating, “the Lord will see us through” and “the truth will set us free.”<sup>181</sup> They also defined themselves as desiring to live in peace as they proclaimed “black and white together now.”<sup>182</sup> Although they

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<sup>178</sup> Redmond, *Anthem*, 156.

<sup>179</sup> Sanger, *When the Spirit Says Sing*, 55.

<sup>180</sup> Carawan, *Sing For Freedom*, 9.

<sup>181</sup> Carawan, *Sing For Freedom*, 9.

<sup>182</sup> Carawan, *Sing For Freedom*, 9.

defined themselves as strong willed and determined, they never defined themselves as militant or violent. This self-definition as assertive but nonviolent is crucial as activists wanted to be perceived as aiming to achieve racial equality, not as trying to destroy society. Not only did their proclamation for racial unity help activists to define themselves, but also, it helped them to define those others outside the movement. Just as freedom songs never defined activists as militant, they never described anyone else as militant. In the freedom songs, African Americans did not identify whites as their adversaries. The verse “black and white together” implies that unification and cooperation between the races is important. Moreover, the lyrics equalize blacks and whites, contrasting with the racial hierarchy that supposed one group was superior to the other. Sanger concurs: “The words of many songs also suggested to over hearers that blacks and whites were alike in essential ways, a technique likely to increase white sympathy for the goals of black protestors.”<sup>183</sup> *We Shall Overcome* affirms that there are inherent similarities between blacks and whites and that the races are capable of working together to create a better world. Freedom songs defined whites as potential allies and encouraged them to sympathize with the movement as the songs aimed to create a connection between the races.

Outside of the musical analysis, music became something that African Americans claimed purely as their own, an artistic expression built out of their struggles and experiences. African Americans were proud to claim this music as their own, as something that no one could take from them. The ownership they felt for this music was so strong that negative reactions ensued when activists felt the music was being used out of context. In a speech that President Lyndon B. Johnson gave to Congress asking for a voting rights bill in 1965, he referenced the song *We Shall Overcome*: “It is not just Negroes but all of us who must overcome the crippling

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<sup>183</sup> Sanger, *When the Spirit Says Sing*, 137.

legacy of bigotry and injustice. And we shall overcome.”<sup>184</sup> While Johnson hoped to establish common ground with black activists, he achieved just the opposite. Historian Sanger writes: “so completely did blacks feel ownership for this song in particular that many had distinctly negative reactions to Lyndon Johnson’s use of the words ‘we shall overcome’ in his speech.”<sup>185</sup> Many activists felt that his use of the words tainted them. Johnson was the leader of white America and by “incorporating them within the established order,” he was “undercutting their value as a statement indicating a movement away from that established order.”<sup>186</sup> African Americans hoped to work alongside white Americans, but only if white Americans were willing to make the effort to understand the meaning and significance of the actions in which they were taking part. *We Shall Overcome* was not merely a song, but a statement by civil rights activists defining themselves, the movement, and others outside of the movement.

In sum, music was a critical instrument used during the civil rights movement to promote the goals of the movement and to increase participation. Highlander Folk School became a home base that fostered the use of music in the movement. Beginning with Zilphia Horton in the mid-1940s, Highlander armed activists with leadership techniques and prepared them to help educate other activists in their own communities. Music was one of many tools that Highlander used in its participatory education. Guy and Candie Carawan were critical figures in establishing and preserving the music culture at Highlander and in the movement at large. *We Shall Overcome* came to be an anthem of the movement in large part because of the efforts of the Carawans. The song established an emotional link to African American culture and history, was a way to

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<sup>184</sup> Sanger, *When the Spirit Says Sing*, 40-41.

<sup>185</sup> Sanger, *When the Spirit Says Sing*, 40.

<sup>186</sup> Sanger, *When the Spirit Says Sing*, 40.

assertively but peacefully oppose racial inequality, promoted the unification of activists, and served as a tool of definition for both activists and others outside the movement.

An overarching theme of *We Shall Overcome* is the unification of the races. The song proclaims, “we’ll walk hand in hand” and “black and white together.” This theme was echoed through the work and efforts of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, (SNCC). SNCC’s organizational symbols pictured on the next page make it apparent how strongly the message of *We Shall Overcome* resonated with activists. SNCC not only exemplified the strength of the message of *We Shall Overcome*, but also exemplified the importance of music within the movement. As music was a critical component of Highlander’s leadership development and helped to spread mission of the movement, music was crucial to helping SNCC succeed as an organization. Where the Caravans used music to help mobilize activists and increases participation in the movement, SNCC utilized music as a means to spread awareness and fund the organization’s grassroots voter registration efforts.



Figure 1: SNCC Button (Image taken from Oxford, Mississippi, School District Website)



Figure 2: "We Shall Overcome" Button (Image taken from Zinn Education Project Website)

## Chapter 4 :

### How Music Helped to Sustain Activism During the Civil Rights Movement

I don't have any sense of the civil rights movement existing without the singing we did... there is no separation. –Bernice Johnson Reagon<sup>187</sup>

Within the movement, music was crucial to help unify activists and articulate the message and goals of the movement. This function of music as a rhetorical tool was explored in Chapter Three through a discussion of the work done at the Highlander Folk School and an analysis of *We Shall Overcome*. Leaders of the movement used music to help unify, organize, and empower activists. The power of music was not limited to its ability to encourage activists spiritually and emotionally. Chapter Four will examine how music not only disseminated the goals of movement, but also, actually helped to make activism possible. Music attracted new audiences into the movement and generated funds to financially support the endeavors of civil rights organizations. The SNCC Freedom Singers best exemplify this function of music within the movement.

This chapter explores how music made activism possible. The first part of the chapter explains the history of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and its work. Understanding SNCC's efforts is crucial to understanding why the sustenance that music helped to provide was critical to the success of those efforts. After examining SNCC's activism, the remaining part of the chapter demonstrates how music helped to make that work possible. This

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<sup>187</sup> Bernice Johnson Reagon, "Talk of the Nation," interview by Neil Conan, *NPR*, August 1, 2012.

discussion concentrates on the SNCC Freedom Singers, whose use of music helped generate funding that made SNCC's activism possible.

On June 21, 1963, renowned gospel singer Mahalia Jackson took the stage at Carnegie Hall in New York. Sharing the program with her were the SNCC Freedom Singers.<sup>188</sup> Together, they raised approximately \$9,000 for SNCC.

SNCC formed three years before this particular concert. On February 1, 1960, in Greensboro, North Carolina, four college students refused to leave their seats at an all-white Woolworth's lunch counter. Their small act of rebellion quickly spread into a nationwide student sit-in movement and protests began to happen all over the nation as people were took stand by having a seat. Protesters lined up outside of lunch counters and as police forcibly removed one group of protestors from the seats, a new group was right behind them ready to fill their seats. The movement gained so much momentum so quickly that there was an organizing conference called less than three months after the initial sit-in. The founding conference was held April 16 through 18, 1960 in Raleigh, North Carolina. Ella Baker, a seasoned activist and the executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), called the meeting. Baker wanted to foster student activism and unify the student protesters.<sup>189</sup> The conference was designed to give students the opportunity to "share experience gained in recent protest demonstration and to help chart future goals for effective action."<sup>190</sup> Over 120 black students from fifty-six different colleges and high schools as well as observers from 13 student and social

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<sup>188</sup> Jesse Walker, "SNCC Plans Upping Summer Drive; Jackson Concert Here," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 15, 1963.

<sup>189</sup> Carson, *In Struggle*, 19.

<sup>190</sup> Carson, *In Struggle*, 20.

reform social organizations attended the conference.<sup>191</sup> The organizing of the sit-in protestors led to SNCC's founding.

SNCC held its first official meeting in May 1960. Members wrote this statement of purpose for the organization:

We affirm the philosophical or religious ideal of nonviolence as the foundation of our purpose, the presupposition of our faith, and the manner of our action... Through nonviolence, courage displaces fear, love transforms hate... The redemptive community supersedes systems of gross social immortality... nonviolence nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities.<sup>192</sup>

SNCC's primary goal was to engage in nonviolent direct action. The organization took on a number of projects to execute nonviolent protest including voter registration projects in the Deep South as well as movements to integrate public accommodations. Field secretaries relocated into southern states to help African American citizens register to vote. These endeavors came at no small cost. In order for activists to be able to work in southern black communities, they needed to cover the costs of transportation, housing, and food costs. Music was already a huge component of the civil rights movement as freedom songs could be heard at nearly every meeting, rally, and protest and was highly used tool to mobilize activists, so it was only natural that SNCC turned to music to help financially support their efforts.

The SNCC Freedom Singers transformed music into a profitable endeavor to help financially support SNCC's activism. The idea of using music as a fundraising tool was not a new idea. For example, in the late nineteenth century, students at Fisk University formed a

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<sup>191</sup> Carson, *In Struggle*, 20.

<sup>192</sup> "SNCC Statement of Purpose," *Constitution of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee*, as revised April 29, 1962.

singing group that toured to raise money for their financially struggling university. In the early 1960s, SNCC utilized a similar fundraising strategy when they created the SNCC Freedom Singers. Cordell Reagon formed the original SNCC Freedom Singers in 1962 with Bernice Johnson, Rutha Mae Harris, and Charles Neblett as the primary members with Bertha Gober and Carver Neblett occasionally singing with the group.<sup>193</sup> Another activist who sometimes sang with the Freedom Singers was Dorothy Vails.<sup>194</sup> Each of the Freedom Singers had impressive civil rights activism experience. Cordell Reagon, who was nineteen, was one of the original field secretaries to arrive in Albany and had been a key figure in organizing the activities of the Albany campaign.<sup>195</sup> Charles Neblett, two years older than Reagon, had worked for SNCC's voter registration efforts in the Mississippi Delta, an area where less than seven percent of African Americans were registered to vote. Dorothy Vails, twenty-three years of age, was the leader of the Talladega College Social Action Committee, which collaborated with SNCC to lead student protest. Both Bertha Gober, twenty-one, and Bernice Johnson, nineteen, had been expelled from Albany State College for their participation in the demonstrations in Albany.<sup>196</sup> It was common for presidents of public black colleges to expel students involved in activism as a way of currying favor with white state legislators who decided the institution's annual appropriation. Many of these activists traced their knowledge of music in the movement to the Albany Movement. The Albany Movement was an early desegregation effort in Albany, Georgia, headed by SNCC and a number of other social reform groups. The Albany Movement was a key example of music's influence on activism.

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<sup>193</sup> Reagon, *If You Don't Go, Don't Hinder Me*, 100.

<sup>194</sup> "Freedom Singers' To Tour For Integration," *Chicago Daily Defender*, November 21, 1962.

<sup>195</sup> "Freedom Singers' To Tour For Integration."

<sup>196</sup> "Freedom Singers' To Tour For Integration."

The formation of the Freedom Singers came very soon after the Albany Movement. Albany, Georgia, was a city of 60,000 residents and it had a relatively peaceful history of race relations. A former cotton capital of the South, the city became the financial center of the peanut, pecan, and corn economies of the South.<sup>197</sup> Blacks were the minority, comprising roughly forty percent of the general population. As compared to surrounding areas, race relations in Albany were generally peaceful and African Americans managed to achieve a level of economic success typically unseen in the South.<sup>198</sup> There were significantly more black landowners in Albany as compared to the rest of the South and not all blacks were poverty-stricken.<sup>199</sup> The Clennon King family accumulated a fortune through their extensive real estate holdings and commercial establishments.<sup>200</sup> A nearby army base and black college, Albany State, provided employment and education opportunities.<sup>201</sup> There was not much activism emanating from Albany State after the student sit-in movement. Coupled with the lack of activism among young people was the contentment of the older class; many of them were comfortable with their decent levels of success and the luxuries they were able to afford, and they did not want to risk losing these comforts.<sup>202</sup> Race relations in Albany were not so much amicable as they were a function of African Americans accepting the status quo to live a more comfortable life than most African Americans of the time were afforded.

There was nevertheless potential for activism in Albany. Current events were influencing some leaders in Albany, such as the work being done in Montgomery and Little Rock, as well as

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<sup>197</sup> David L. Lewis, *King: A Biography* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 142.

<sup>198</sup> Lewis, *King*, 142.

<sup>199</sup> Lewis, *King*, 142.

<sup>200</sup> Lewis, *King*, 142.

<sup>201</sup> Lewis, *King*, 142.

<sup>202</sup> Lewis, *King*, 142.

the publicity of the sit-in movement and Freedom Rides.<sup>203</sup> Although many of older members of the black community were content to not support an activist agenda, some younger members of the community were ready to push for a change. In 1961, the NAACP Youth Council wrote a letter to city commissioners demanding the desegregation of public facilities.<sup>204</sup> This letter led segregationists to respond with violence. Whites drove through Albany State campus harassing students.<sup>205</sup>

Charles Sherrod and Cordell Reagon, two SNCC field secretaries, closely monitored the situation in Albany and planned to make the city a center of activism.<sup>206</sup> Sherrod and Reagon entered Albany with a plan of nonviolent action to help break the city's tradition of accommodation. In October of 1961, they visited Albany and began to acquaint themselves with the community and the people of Albany. Younger members in the community quickly followed in suit behind SNCC, including members of the NAACP Youth Council.<sup>207</sup> Sherrod and Reagon returned to Atlanta later in October of 1961 to plan for the second phase of their operation: demonstrations.<sup>208</sup>

SNCC, along with members of SCLC who had collaborated with the organization for this project, left Atlanta for Albany in October 1961 with the intent of starting protests and demonstrations in Albany. SNCC historian Clayborne Carson explained that the Albany Movement, as this project came to be called, was “a coalition of SNCC, NAACP, the ministerial alliances, the Federation of Women's Clubs, the Negro Voters League, and many other groups

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<sup>203</sup> Lewis, *King*, 142.

<sup>204</sup> Lewis, *King*, 143.

<sup>205</sup> Lewis, *King*, 143.

<sup>206</sup> Lewis, *King*, 143.

<sup>207</sup> Lewis, *King*, 143.

<sup>208</sup> Lewis, *King*, 143.

interested in racial reform.”<sup>209</sup> Activists quickly began protesting segregation in the city. The first act of protest occurred when three black students entered the Trailways station dining room and were summarily arrested.<sup>210</sup> This act of defiance scared the white residents of Albany; the trial date of these activists was set for December 11 and elections were to be held on the same day.<sup>211</sup> White residents feared that protesters planned this intentionally to line up with elections and that this indicated that there would be a large African American turnout for the vote.<sup>212</sup> Whites turned out in record numbers for that election, but blacks did not. African Americans were still not completely comfortable taking advantage of opportunities, and there were other plans in the works that were occupying their time.

A set of Freedom Riders was due to arrive from Atlanta in December of 1961 and black residents gathered outside the station to greet them.<sup>213</sup> Albany Chief Laurie Pritchett was also on the scene to monitor the situation. When the Freedom Riders disembarked the train, Chief Pritchett arrested eight of the nine of the riders as well as two bystanders.<sup>214</sup> The arrests of the Freedom Riders was a unifying episode for the African American community. Over the course of the next four days, hundreds of singing African Americans marched to city hall.<sup>215</sup> On December 11, 400 high school students demonstrated before city hall and by December 15, the jails were filled with over 500 protesters. On December 15, the city agreed to hold talks with the protestors and a biracial committee of six was formed.<sup>216</sup> The Albany Movement’s demands were simple: the integration of all bus and rail facilities, the establishment of a permanent biracial committee,

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<sup>209</sup> Carson, *In Struggle*, 58.

<sup>210</sup> Lewis, *King*, 144.

<sup>211</sup> Lewis, *King*, 144.

<sup>212</sup> Lewis, *King*, 144.

<sup>213</sup> Lewis, *King*, 145.

<sup>214</sup> Lewis, *King*, 145.

<sup>215</sup> Lewis, *King*, 146.

<sup>216</sup> Lewis, *King*, 147.

and the dismissal of charges for all demonstrators.<sup>217</sup> The mayor agreed to release just over one hundred of the demonstrators, but negotiations soon collapsed and no compromise was reached.<sup>218</sup>

With the failure of the negotiations, black leaders suggested that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. be invited to Albany. Sherrod and Reagon were adamantly against bringing in King. They wanted to keep the fight local and they knew bringing in King would also bring in federal involvement and huge national publicity.<sup>219</sup> Despite their objections, local demonstrators invited King to Albany on December 16 and he spoke to a full capacity crowd at Shiloh Baptist Church, encouraging the protesters to continue their work.<sup>220</sup> The next day, a crowd of 257 demonstrators assembled and as they marched, they sang the unofficial anthem of the movement, *We Shall Overcome*.<sup>221</sup> Like the demonstrators before them, these marchers were arrested, and the head count of those in jail was now over 700.<sup>222</sup> Dr. King. was among those arrested and he promised not to post bail. Despite this vow, Martin Luther King, Jr. was released on bail Monday, December 18 after he made a truce with local government officials. The local government was eager to end the protesting as soon as possible as it did not want Albany to become a symbol as Montgomery had following the demonstrations there.<sup>223</sup> The terms of the truce included releasing all those in jail on bail (but their charges would not be dismissed and their trials would be at the discretion of the police).<sup>224</sup> There were no concessions made in regards to the protesters

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<sup>217</sup> Lewis, *King*, 147.

<sup>218</sup> Lewis, *King*, 147.

<sup>219</sup> Lewis, *King*, 147.

<sup>220</sup> Lewis, *King*, 147.

<sup>221</sup> Lewis, *King*, 148.

<sup>222</sup> Lewis, *King*, 148.

<sup>223</sup> Lewis, *King*, 149.

<sup>224</sup> Lewis, *King*, 150.

demands regarding segregated public facilities; all facilities remained segregated.<sup>225</sup> Politically, the Albany movement was a failure. Activists in the movement did not achieve much in political gains and they quickly realized that the strategy of filling up the jails was not particularly effective.

Despite the fact the Albany Movement was not a huge success, it was still a critical moment in the development of SNCC. The movement provided excellent training for activists to practice mobilization techniques. Even more importantly, the Albany Movement showed the value and importance of freedom songs as a tool for civil rights leaders. Bernice Johnson, who would later go on to become a Freedom Singer, participated in the Albany Movement. She called the movement a ‘singing movement’ and she observed the special importance of singing at the meetings in Albany. As Johnson described, “After the song, the differences among us would not be as great. Somehow, making a song required an expression of that which was common to us all... This music was like an instrument, like holding a tool in your hand.”<sup>226</sup>

Although songs had always been a part of the movement, protest music possessed greater emotional force. The songs of the Albany Movement became a permanent fixture at SNCC mass meetings and teaching freedom songs became a key point of community organizing.<sup>227</sup> A closer examination of meeting programs from the Albany movement indicates that meetings started with an opening ceremony of song and prayer. An agenda from an Albany Movement meeting from November 15, 1961 indicates that the songs *We Shall Overcome*, *Welcome Table*, *Hold On*, and *Woke Up this Morning* preceded that particular meeting.<sup>228</sup> A SNCC report summarizing the first meeting of the Albany Movement details how music was used to help add an emotional

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<sup>225</sup> Lewis, *King*, 150.

<sup>226</sup> Carson, *In Struggle*, 63.

<sup>227</sup> Carson, *In Struggle*, 64.

<sup>228</sup> Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, “Program for Albany, GA Meeting,” November 15, 1961.

element to the meeting and the movement. Charles Sherrod invited an eleven-year-old member of the congregation up to lead the assembly in *Ain't Nobody Gonna Turn Me Around*.<sup>229</sup> After her song, they adjourned the meeting by singing *We Shall Overcome*. *We Shall Overcome* not only ended Albany Movement meetings, but the phrase was stamped on the bottom of their meeting agendas as well as other print material.<sup>230</sup>

Music was not only critical during the meetings; the protestors carried that meaning and emotion of the music out into the protests with them. An edition of the *Student Voice*, the SNCC published newsletter, detailed how activists used music as unifying agent and tool of empowerment as they protested. The newsletter chronicled the story of a group of Albany youth who took to the streets in the spring of 1963, marching in protest of injustice.<sup>231</sup> Chief Pritchett saw the protest, and demanded that all those involved be arrested immediately. As police vehicles carted the protesters to jail, they all joined in song singing *We Shall Overcome*.<sup>232</sup> “They sang their way to jail... still proud in defiance of segregation and tyranny.”<sup>233</sup> The Albany Movement helped to solidify music as a key organizing tool and permanent component of SNCC’s structure. After the Albany Movement, SNCC created the SNCC Freedom Singers to sustain their organization financially.

#### Sustenance from Music: How Music Fueled Fundraising Efforts

Beginning in 1962, the SNCC Freedom Singers toured the country. The SNCC Freedom Singers set out on tour hosting concerts as “a way of introducing and connecting people who

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<sup>229</sup> John O’Neal, “Weekly Report - to Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Atlanta, Georgia,” December 1, 1962.

<sup>230</sup> “Program for Albany, GA Meeting.”

<sup>231</sup> Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, *The Student Voice*, vol.1 no. 3, November 1963.

<sup>232</sup> Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, *The Student Voice*.

<sup>233</sup> Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, *The Student Voice*.

wanted to find ways to be a part of the Movement, to the culture and energy of activism taking place in many southern communities.”<sup>234</sup> In nine months, the Freedom Singers traveled over 50,000 miles to forty-eight states.<sup>235</sup> Cordell Reagon and the Executive Director of SNCC at the time, James Foreman, spearheaded the group. Reagon had extensive experience within the movement; he worked with CORE on the Freedom Rides, he had been arrested a number of times for his protesting, and he was critical player in the organization of the Albany Movement.<sup>236</sup> Through his work throughout the movement, he had been deeply moved by the power and spirit of music that he had experienced.<sup>237</sup> He began working in Southwest Georgia, and it was there that the power of the congregational style of singing really inspired him.<sup>238</sup> Reagon and Foreman both felt that a touring singing group had the potential to effectively communicate SNCC’s message.<sup>239</sup>

The SNCC Freedom Singers used their music to both raise awareness for their work as SNCC field secretaries as well as to raise critical funding for the organization. Their repertoire of music included the freedom songs of the movement, and proceeds from their concerts benefited SNCC’s efforts. The list of cities they visited on their tour was extensive. The list included: Washington, D.C., Detroit, Michigan, Chicago, Illinois, St. Paul, Minnesota, Denver, Colorado, Madison, Wisconsin, and San Jose, California, to name a few of the stops they made.<sup>240</sup> This meant that young African Americans who had never before left the South now had the opportunity to travel across the United States and support the freedom struggle in the process. On

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<sup>234</sup> Reagon, *If You Don’t Go Don’t Hinder Me*, 100-101.

<sup>235</sup> “Rutha Mae Harris,” *Civil Rights Movement Veterans*. <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/harrisr.htm>. (accessed February 28, 2016).

<sup>236</sup> “In Memoriam: Cordell Hull Reagon 1943-1996,” *The Black Scholar* 27, no. 1 (1997).

<sup>237</sup> “In Memoriam.”

<sup>238</sup> “In Memoriam.”

<sup>239</sup> “In Memoriam.”

<sup>240</sup> “Gregory Tours for SNCC Aid,” *New York Amsterdam News*, April 23, 1964.

their first trip across the country, the SNCC Freedom Singers toured with African American comedian Dick Gregory. Gregory was a famed comedian known for his very open and generous support of the civil rights movement.<sup>241</sup> The group quickly rose to fame and gained national accolade. As the group became more famous, the Freedom Singers' booked larger scale concerts at more prominent venues. In June 1963, they had the opportunity to play at Carnegie Hall, and they shared the stage with Mahalia Jackson, one of the premiere and most famous gospel singers of the time.<sup>242</sup> "Salute to Southern Freedom," as the program was called, raised more than \$9,000 to help fund SNCC's work.<sup>243</sup> Mahalia Jackson was not the only famous singer with which the Freedom Singers had the honor of sharing the stage. In 1962, shortly after their formation, the singers had the opportunity to work with nationally known folk singer Pete Seeger on a program entitled 'Sing For Freedom.'<sup>244</sup> Later in their career, in 1964, they had the opportunity to sing at benefit concert in honor of the Civil Rights bill of 1964 with the Carawans.<sup>245</sup> Perhaps the most famous event the Freedom Singers were invited to perform at was the March on Washington. The group sang *We Shall Not Be Moved* to a crowd of over 250,000, and shared the stage with other famous performers such as Joan Baez and Bob Dylan.<sup>246</sup> The notability of the Freedom Singers is apparent through the prestigious performers they had the chance to work with and the famous venues and events at which they had the opportunity to perform.

The Freedom Singers' popularity was crucial to ensure that they were reaching as large of an audience as possible to spread their message and reach a maximum number of potential donors. The Freedom Singers' connections to these famous performers and events only increased

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<sup>241</sup> "Gregory Tours for SNCC Aid."

<sup>242</sup> "SNCC Sets 3<sup>rd</sup> Concert at Carnegie Hall," *New York Amsterdam News*, November 2, 1963.

<sup>243</sup> Walker, "SNCC Plans Upping Summer Drive."

<sup>244</sup> "Freedom Singers' To Tour For Integration."

<sup>245</sup> "Freedom Singers in Benefit Concert," *Baltimore Afro-American*, February 23, 1963.

<sup>246</sup> Rutha Mae Harris, "Freedom Singer: 'Without Music, There Would Be No Movement,'" interview by Michael Martin, *NPR*, August 8, 2013.

their popularity and in turn increased their power. By having connections to other famous musicians and activists, they were expanding their reach and therefore the amount of people who were hearing SNCC's goals and potentially donating to the organization. The money raised by these concerts supported activism in the communities that SNCC was working to help.

The Freedom Singers not only sang, but also spread the mission of SNCC. The group was always sure to inform audiences of how the money raised from their concerts was being used. Bernice Johnson became the unofficial spokesperson for the Freedom Singers. She explained to the *Chicago Defender*: "We get expenses from SNCC, or at least we are supposed to, but so far we can't draw the money because we are using it to aid the people in Mississippi. However, our little money is not nearly enough, the people down there need food, clothing, and places to live. We're hoping that the people up North will show them that somebody does care."<sup>247</sup> African Americans who were attempting to register to vote in the Deep South were being denied commodity rations and facing economic reprisals. Some whites retaliated against African Americans who were attempting to register to vote by limiting their access to resources, so SNCC's funds were helping to support these voter registrants.<sup>248</sup>

Hosting benefit concerts were not the only way that the Freedom Singers generated revenue for the organization. The Freedom Singers also released an album, *Freedom in the Air in Albany, Georgia*, and sales from the album benefited SNCC volunteers. The advertisement for the album, published in SNCC's newsletter the "Student Voice", explained: "Our field secretaries do not receive 'salaries.' They get 'sustenance' funds, which range from \$40 a week to \$15 – when this is available. We are not asking for munificent funds for lavish equipment: we are asking for funds to feed and clothe those students who believe in mankind's best dreams

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<sup>247</sup> "'Freedom Singers' Here to Raise Funds For Miss. Vote Victims," *Chicago Defender*, January 19, 1963.

<sup>248</sup> "'Freedom Singers' Here to Raise Funds For Miss. Vote Victims."

enough to risk their lives every day.”<sup>249</sup> The album was a documentary of the Albany movement, featuring both the songs and voices of those who made the movement possible.<sup>250</sup> Buying the album also entitled the purchaser to a subscription to SNCC’s newsletter. Again, SNCC utilized music to bring in funding to make their activism possible. The album told the story of the movement and included a subscription of the newsletter to help keep the purchaser up to date with the freedom struggle in the South, while also helping financially support the work of the field secretaries. The efforts of the Freedom Singers brought in crucial revenue that helped SNCC continue their activism work in the South. The Freedom Singers proved to be highly successful. In total, the Freedom Singers netted approximately \$50,000 for SNCC.<sup>251</sup>

SNCC also organized benefit concerts that did not include the Freedom Singers, further demonstrating SNCC’s use of music as a fundraising tool to sustain activism. There were two concerts hosted at Carnegie Hall that benefitted SNCC, but did not include the Freedom Singers in the line-up of performers. The first concert held February 1, 1963, featured Tony Bennett, Thelonious Monk, and Ossie Davis among other artists. The second concert, which took place on November 23, 1963, starred some of the greatest jazz artists of the time: the Dave Brubeek Quartet, the Clark Terry-Bob Brookmeyer Quintet, and the Lambert-Hendricks-Bav-Trio.<sup>252</sup> In addition to the Freedom Singers, SNCC worked with other musicians who were sympathetic to the cause to organize benefit concerts. Although there is no exact dollar amount that these particular concerts raised, it can be assumed that the proceeds were significant, based on the prominence of the acts, the prominence of the venue, and the fact that SNCC held multiple

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<sup>249</sup> Clayborne Carson, compiled, *The Student Voice 1960-1965: Periodical of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee* (Stanford, CA: Martin Luther King, Jr., Papers Project, 1990), 59.

<sup>250</sup> Carson, *The Student Voice 1960-1965*, 59.

<sup>251</sup> Lesile Page Rose, “The Freedom Singers of the Civil Rights Movement: Music Functioning for Freedom,” *Applications of Research in Music Education* 25 (Summer 2007): 62.

<sup>252</sup> “SNCC Sets 3<sup>rd</sup> Concert At Carnegie.”

concerts. SNCC also encouraged Friends of SNCC groups, groups created by northern supporters of the movement, to organize their own rallies and concerts to help support fundraising efforts.<sup>253</sup>

Between June of 1962 and December of 1963, Friends of SNCC activities raised a combined \$359,000 and SNCC used this money to establish voter registration projects in communities in Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, and Virginia.<sup>254</sup> One such SNCC sponsored concert, held on November 23, which included a lineup of Clark Terry, Dave Brubeck, and Lambert, Hendricks, and Bavan, singlehandedly raised \$5,200.<sup>255</sup> Even outside of the Freedom Singers, SNCC utilized music to make their activist efforts possible.

SNCC was not the only organization to successfully utilize the song as a successful fundraising tool. The Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) also achieved a high level of success generating much needed funding courtesy of a touring singing group. “Throughout the 1960’s,” Redmond notes, “the organization maintained its reliance on music as a vehicle of protest. In 1962, CORE released CORE: Sit-In Songs, a collection of revised spirituals... The singers were young members of CORE, many of whom had been jailed in organization and protest.”<sup>256</sup> CORE, like SNCC, demonstrated the dual function of music as both a political strategy and a money making venture. The sales of their album was a huge moneymaker in CORE’s 1962 fund drive. The CORE singers held concerts and booked big names such as Joan Baez, Sammy Davis, Jr., Harry Belafonte, and Odetta, to help generate interest to among a greater audience. These concerts were fundraisers, and they “offered a dramatic forum in which northern audiences could directly hear from southern activists about day-to-

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<sup>253</sup> Indrid Monson, “Monk Meets SNCC,” *Black Music Research Journal* 19, no. 2(199): 190.

<sup>254</sup> Monson, “Monk Meets SNCC,” 190.

<sup>255</sup> Monson, “Monk Meets SNCC,” 191.

<sup>256</sup> Redmond, *Anthem*, 202.

day life on the frontlines of the movement.”<sup>257</sup> Not only did the concerts serve as an opportunity to spread the message of the movement, but people were also paying to be there so the event was generating critical funding as well.

The importance of music in sustaining the civil rights movement is also seen during the Freedom Rides that CORE sponsored in the spring of 1961. During the Freedom Rides, integrated groups tested integration in interstate bus travel from Washington, D.C. to New Orleans, Louisiana. CORE Director James Farmer led the first ride May 4, 1961. The Riders did not encounter violence until they arrived in Anniston and Birmingham, Alabama. Surprisingly, the riders did not endure violence in Mississippi; officials there arrested them instead and held them in one of the most notorious penitentiaries in the country, Parchman Penitentiary, located in Parchman, Mississippi. Parchman’s horrifying conditions led the jailed riders to turn to song as a source of inspiration and hope.

After arresting the freedom riders, the authorities did everything in their power to dehumanize and degrade them. They physically and mentally abused them, subjected them to unnecessarily invasive searches, and insulted them in any way they possibly could. Despite the abuses from the prison guards, the jailed freedom riders used song to maintain their spirits. The unity of the freedom riders and the persistence of their goals made their jail time only an extension of the freedom rides.

Bernard LaFayette, one of the arrested freedom riders, recalls how singing in the jails helped the freedom riders remain committed to activism. The freedom riders sang, “Buses are a-comin’, oh yes. Buses are a-comin’, oh yes. You better you’re ready, oh yes.” The song reminded the guards that there were more activists coming and that regardless of how

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<sup>257</sup> Redmond, *Anthem*, 203.

many people they put in jail they could not deter the activists from fighting for justice. The guards demanded that the freedom riders stop singing, but as LaFayette said, “So we said to ourselves, what are you gonna do, put us in jail?” The singing continued and guards began to threaten to take privileges from the freedom riders such as their mattresses. Ernest Patton, Jr., another freedom rider who spent time in Parchman sang the freedom riders’ response in an interview with PBS: “You can take our mattress, oh yes.” The guards then proceeded to threaten to take the freedom riders’ toothbrushes. Freedom riders were quartered with eight people in a cell designed for two. Maintaining personal hygiene helped ensure that the already uncomfortable situation was at least bearable. The freedom riders were willing to sacrifice comfort for the cause. LaFayette explained how they learned to sing with their mouths closed to avoid breathing on one another... and thus their toothbrushes were taken away.<sup>258</sup> Despite the awful conditions that the freedom riders endured while imprisoned at Parchman Penitentiary, they used music to help bolster their spirits and remain unified in the defiance against segregation and injustice.

Born out of the sit-in movement, SNCC was a prominent organization in the early 1960’s that utilized civil disobedience as a tool to combat segregation. As the movement shifted away from protesting desegregation and took a more political form, SNCC also shifted its focus to voter registration drives in the South. The Albany Movement, although a political flop as it resulted in no tangible gains, did serve to show the value of music in the movement. As the Albany movement faded out, the SNCC Freedom Singers rose to prominence.

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<sup>258</sup> Freedom Riders. Online Video. Directed by Stanley Nelson. PBS, 2011.

SNCC was able to rise to prominence largely because of it was able to execute large-scale extensive voter registration projects. These projects came at no small cost, and SNCC faced financial difficulties. Workers went without salaries to offset the budget deficiencies. In order to help raise funding to afford critical resources that would enable them to continue their voter registration drives, SNCC turned to music. Music was already integral to the organization. From mass meetings to the Albany movement, volunteers used music as a unifying and spiritual element. In an attempt to combat the financial woes of SNCC, SNCC formed the Freedom Singers, to help spread SNCC's mission and raise much needed funding. Both the Freedom Singers and the materials that they produced helped to spread the message of the movement to audiences, but there was a dual function to the music as proceeds from album sales and from the concert ticket sales directly benefited the efforts of SNCC. The rhetoric of the music was so powerful that it drew in new audiences, and new supporters, who helped to build the music through their moral and financial support.

Music served a dual function within the movement: it was an inspirational rhetorical tool and it was a fundraising tool that helped financially support the efforts of activists. The activism during the civil rights movement left a lasting historical legacy and the music of the movement is significant part of that legacy. The music expresses the hopes and fears and ambitions of activists, while at the same time connecting the movement to a larger historical struggle for equality. Activists utilized music to reach a broader audience through concerts and the production of albums, while at the same time generating funding to help make the efforts of movement organizers possible. Music, through both its emotional power and fundraising benefits, made the civil rights movement possible. As Bernice Johnson Reagon

said, “I don’t have any sense of the civil rights movement existing without the singing we did...

there is no separation.”

## CONCLUSION

Music helped mobilize volunteers and sustain activism, both emotionally and financially, during the civil rights movement as music supported and supplemented activists' efforts. Though music was present throughout the entire historical freedom struggle, the role of music as a tool of mobilization and form of sustenance made it critical to the success of civil rights activists' efforts. The Carawans utilized resources at the Highlander Folk School to use music to educate and involve volunteers into the movement, while the SNCC Freedom Singers and CORE used music to raise money and awareness to sustain the work of their organizations. Without music, these organizations and activists would not have been able to be as successful as they were.

Despite the fact that most scholars mark the end of the classical phase of the civil rights movement in 1968, the music of the era is continuing to make an impact today. *We Shall Overcome* was an anthem of the civil rights movement, as it helped spread the mission of the movement and kept activists' spirits lifted. The song aided in activists in the fight for equality as the lyrics echoed the goals of the movement during rallies, demonstrations, and protests, while recordings and publications of the music and lyrics helped generate funding that sustained the battle against injustice. The song preached activists' hope for peace and togetherness as they fought to empower residents in black communities as they sang out, "We'll walk hand in hand someday... we shall live in peace someday, oh deep down in my heart I do believe, we shall live in peace someday."<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Carawan, *Sing For Freedom*, 9.

Nearly fifty years after the end of the movement, *We Shall Overcome* is continuing to support the empowerment of black communities. Established in 1966 and based out of the Highlander Folk School, the We Shall Overcome Fund uses royalties generated from the commercial use of *We Shall Overcome* to support grassroots activism in African American communities by nurturing the use of art and activism against injustice.<sup>260</sup> The Fund supports organizing efforts in the South that lie at the core of instituting cultural and social change.<sup>261</sup> The music of the civil rights movement has survived the test of time and continues to incite change and support the fight for racial equality.

Robert F. Kennedy said, “Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope... which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”<sup>262</sup> Music was the ripple of hope sent forth by civil rights activists; their songs rang out against injustice and gave activists the necessary support to help them destroy the walls of oppression. The movement would not have existed as the world knows it were music not involved. From meetings to rallies to bus rides, music was intertwined with every form of activism. Music drew new audiences into the movement, music was a form of emotional support, and music helped raise critical funding. But most importantly, music echoed activists hope for a better future, and a better world: “Oh deep down in my heart I do believe, we shall overcome someday.”<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> “We Shall Overcome Fund,” *Highlander Research and Education Center*, 2012. <http://highlandercenter.org/programs/we-shall-overcome-fund/>. (accessed March 10, 2016).

<sup>261</sup> “We Shall Overcome Fund.”

<sup>262</sup> “Ripple of Hope: Teacher Resources.” *Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights*. 2016. <http://rfkcenter.org/robert-f-kennedy/robert-f-kennedy-legacy-education-project/tiny-ripple-hope/ripple-hope-teacher-resources/>. (accessed March 31, 2016).

<sup>263</sup> Carawan, *Sing For Freedom*, 9.



## Appendix:

### Chapter 1 Song Lyrics

#### Go Down, Moses<sup>264</sup>

Go down Moses way down in Egypt land  
 Tell all Pharaohs to let My people go  
     When Israel was in Egypt land  
     Let My people go  
 Oppressed so hard they could not stand  
     Let My people go  
 So the God seyeth, Go down, Moses way down in Egypt land  
     Tell all Pharaohs to let My people go  
     So Moses went to Egypt land  
     Let My people go  
     He made all Pharaohs understand  
     Let My people go  
 Yes The Lord said, Go down, Moses way down in Egypt land  
     Tell all Pharaohs to let My people go  
     Thus spoke the Lord, bold Moses said,  
     Let My people go.  
     If not I'll smite, your firstborns dead,  
     Let My people go.  
 God, The Lord said, Go down, Moses way down in Egypt land  
     Tell all Pharaohs to let My people go.  
     Tell all Pharaohs to let My people go.

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<sup>264</sup> Gordon Jacob, "Go Down, Moses," *The Musical Times* 101 (1960).

Strange Fruit<sup>265</sup>

Southern trees bear a strange fruit  
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root.  
Black bodies swingin' in the Southern breeze  
Strange fruit hangin' from the poplar trees.  
Pastoral scene of the gallant South,  
The bulgin' eyes and the twisted mouth.  
Scent of magnolias sweet and fresh,  
Then the sudden smell of burnin' flesh!  
Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck,  
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck,  
For the sun to rot, for the tree to drop,  
Here is a strange and bitter crop.

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<sup>265</sup> Billie Holiday, *The Diva Series: Billie Holiday*, 2003, by UMG Recordings, MP3.

Happy Birthday<sup>266</sup>

You know it doesn't make much sense  
 There ought to be a law against  
 Anyone who takes offense  
 At a day in your celebration

'Cause we all know in our minds  
 That there ought to be a time  
 That we can set aside  
 To show just how much we love you

And I'm sure you would agree  
 It couldn't fit more perfectly  
 Than to have a world party  
 On the day you came to be

Happy birthday to you (x2)  
 Happy birthday  
 Happy birthday to you (x2)  
 Happy birthday

I just never understood  
 How a man who died for good  
 Could not have a day that would  
 Be set aside for his recognition

'Cause it should never be  
 Just 'cause some cannot see  
 The dream as clear as he  
 That they should make it become an illusion

And we all know everything  
 That he stood for time will bring  
 For in peace our hearts will sing  
 Thanks to Martin Luther King

Happy birthday to you (x2)  
 Happy birthday  
 Happy birthday to you (x2)  
 Happy birthday

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<sup>266</sup> Stevie Wonder, *Hotter Than July*, 1980, by Motown Records, MP3.

Why has there never been a holiday, yeah  
 Where peace is celebrated  
 All throughout the world

The time is overdue  
 For people like me and you  
 Who know the way to truth  
 Is love and unity to all God's children

It should never be a great event  
 And the whole day should be spent  
 In full remembrance  
 Of those who lived and died for the oneness of all people

So let us all begin  
 We know that love can win  
 Let it out don't hold it in  
 Sing it loud as you can

Happy birthday to you (x2)  
 Happy birthday  
 Happy birthday to you (x2)  
 Happy birthday

Happy birthday to you (x2)  
 Happy birthday  
 Happy birthday to you (x2)  
 Happy birthday

Happy birthday (x6)

We know the key to unify all people  
 Is in the dream that you had so long ago  
 That lives in all of the hearts of people  
 That believe in unity  
 We'll make the dream become a reality  
 I know we will  
 Because our hearts tell us so

Happy birthday (x3)

Chapter 3 Song LyricsWe Shall Overcome<sup>267</sup>

(musical and lyrical adaptation by Zilphia Horton, Frank Hamilton, Guy Carawan, and Pete Seeger)

We shall overcome, we shall overcome. We shall overcome someday. Oh, deep in my heart I do believe we shall overcome someday.

We are not afraid, we are not afraid. We are not afraid today. Oh, deep down in my heart, I do believe, we shall overcome someday.

We are not alone, we are not alone. We are not alone today. Oh, deep down in my heart, I do believe we shall overcome someday.

The truth will make us free, the truth will make us free. The truth will make us free. Oh, deep down in my heart I do believe we shall overcome someday.

We'll walk hand in hand, we'll walk hand in hand. We'll walk hand in hand someday. Oh, deep down in my heart I do believe we shall overcome someday.

The Lord will see us through, the lord will see us through. The Lord will see us through someday. Oh, deep down in my heart I do believe we shall overcome someday.

Black and white together, black and white together. Black and white together now. Oh, deep down in my heart I do believe we shall overcome someday.

We shall all be free, we shall all be free. We shall all be free someday. Oh, deep down in my heart I do believe we shall overcome someday.

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<sup>267</sup> Guy Carawan and Candie Carawan, *Sing For Freedom: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement Through its Songs* (Montgomery, AL: NewSouth Books, 2008), 9.

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Children's Museum of Pittsburgh  
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*Early Childhood Education Intern*  
Help run the two toddler programs, brainstorm new activities to better engage children in sensory and educational play, organize materials for the programs, organize and collect material for an interactive question board, help staff museum events

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*Donor Relations Overall Chairperson (2015-2016)*  
Head a committee of six captains, serve as the primary contact between the organization and all donors and corporations, obtain and manage all in-kind donations and sponsorship, coordinate all raffle sales for the organization throughout the year, run concession sales during the 24 hour Relay walk-a-thon

The IFC/Panhellenic Dance Marathon 2012 – 2016  
*OPPerations Committee*  
Assisted with the setup, tear down, and maintenance of the 46 hour dance marathon to ensure all environment was safe and clean for all participants

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*OPPerations Captain*  
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