This group focused on the artistic movement of Jazz, Motown, and the Transformation of American Culture from 1959-1975. Our resources include books, music recordings, music transcriptions, documentaries, music videos, scholarly articles, poetry anthologies, visual art, biographies, autobiographies, speeches, journals, children’s books, essays, and Web sites. Some of the resources, such as the jazz transcriptions, may require specialized knowledge in order for them to be useful.

This is a worthwhile study because art offers us a lens through which we can explore the cultural controversies of the time. The years 1959-1975 represent one of the most volatile periods in the history of the United States. The art of this era addresses the issues related to the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War and other social problems, and reflects the changing society and coming of age of the Baby Boomer generation. The artists of jazz and Motown used their art to make political and social commentary, create culture and identity, and advocate for social change.

During this time period, the audience for jazz music had greatly diminished, and many jazz musicians were experimenting with new musical aesthetics, which were dubbed “free jazz” or avant-garde. Many of the jazz sounds that were released on labels such as Blue Note and Impulse! were not generally appealing to a mainstream audience, thus further marginalizing the genre. At the same time, Berry Gordy and the artists at Motown successfully developed a sound that captured the young mainstream market, both black and white. At the dawn of the 1960s, the music industry was still quite segregated. Throughout the ’60s and into the ’70s, artists and producers worked to break down racial boundaries within the music industry. This move was met with opposition from both sides: many white listeners, especially in the segregated southern states, did not want their popular music tainted by R&B influences. Conversely, as the Black Nationalism Movement emerged, many black artists and critics felt that black music (such as the dance music of Motown) was being “watered down” to cater to white audiences. The issue of authenticity is a major controversy to consider when looking at the black music of this period.

Central to black arts during this period was the Black Arts Movement (BAM). It was called the “New Black Renaissance” and although short lived, it would have a far-reaching influence on the social and political environment of America in the 1960s and 1970s. The movement resulted in an explosive creation of art by writers, poets, musicians and visual artists, which educated, motivated, inspired and informed American culture. The Black Arts Movement was considered a sister to the Black Power Movement; both efforts supported the idea of social and political consciousness for African Americans. Reclaiming black roots through the arts and maintaining authenticity in music was a critical element that redefined black identity.

The protest movement that emerged at the beginning of the 1960s garnered widespread support later in the decade as the United States became involved in the Vietnam War, and many of the songs and artworks of this period reflect this theme. The movement began as civil rights advocates staged freedom rallies and marches in an effort to abolish segregation, which was still being practiced in many southern states. Protest songs associated with this movement emerged first in the form of simple folk songs that were sung by crowds of people during these non-violent demonstrations. Urban folk music, usually addressing political themes in poetic topical songs, became popular during the early ’60s. By the end of the decade, nearly every genre of music was expected to make a statement about current issues. Funk
music had emerged (an innovation of James Brown) to evoke the aggression of the Black Power Movement, and even Motown was producing songs about social issues. This collection of resources, although certainly not exhaustive, provides a springboard for the study of music and art in a period that began with segregation and became more integrated as styles merged, Motown crossed over, and issues of authenticity were questioned and explored by critics. The period of 1957-1975 saw rapid change in American society, and the turbulence of the era is reflected in the music of jazz and Motown that was produced during this time.

**Anthologies**


This work is an anthology of non-fiction, fiction, and poetry by black women who were writing during the 1960s. (Rose Mary Brown)

**Clark, Andrew, ed. Riffs & Choruses: A New Jazz Anthology. New York: Continuum, 2001.**

Andrew Clark, editor of *Riffs and Choruses: A New Jazz Anthology*, gives the best description of this anthology, explaining that it is both an anthology and a resource for general consumption, “but it is also intended to be used in classrooms involving a variety of courses in jazz music, jazz history, and writing on the cultural dimension—and approaches to—jazz.” It is a collection of music criticism, fiction, poetry, philosophy, history, autobiography, and the kitchen sink of written responses to jazz.

In the context of jazz as an art form, this anthology contains a wealth of material ranging from jazz definition, history, style, culture, and race to jazz myth, lifestyle, language, literature, and film—and all with an ear to a multiple modal approach of thinking about and experiencing jazz. For instance, the editor “riffs” at the beginning of each of the anthology’s 10 sections with four to eight short, provocative quotes, then “choruses” with the section’s theme and melody before dishing it off to a dozen or more soloists in primary source form to perform their take on the jazz theme. It is a study of jazz in a jazz structure.

In terms of ekphrastic responses to jazz, this anthology is a treasure. Throughout all of it are scattered numerous pieces, both poetry and prose, that connect to specific jazz musicians or compositions. Choruses six through nine, however, cover myth (narrative, romance, fable); jazz life (oral history, autobiography); language (vernacular, argot, hipness); and prosody (jazz made into text) and focus on ekphrasis most intensely. Al Young’s “Chicken Hawk’s Dream” (1966) and Donald Barthelme’s “The King of Jazz” (1977) are two prose interpretations appropriate for capturing students’ short attention spans. The poems of Kenneth Rexroth, Kenneth Patchen, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Sascha Feinstein, Michael Harper and Larry Neal are equally accessible to student readers. Clark’s essay at the beginning of each of these choruses delineates a way into each of the original sources he has grouped and complied—a useful classroom tool for a teacher and a handy guide for the general reader. (David Robinson)


This is a recorded music anthology containing 108 song recordings on six compact discs. It traces the development of black music in America starting in 1916 and ending in 1994. The songs are in chronological order and include nineteen audio recordings of significant speeches or events. Examples include Jesse Owens speaking on the 1936 Olympics, Jackie Robinson on the Eve of the 1949 World Series, President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s Address to the Nation on Segregation and Martin Luther King Jr’s “I Have a Dream” speech. The compact disc collection is accompanied by a companion book, which has a year-by-year timeline between 1900 and 2000 with a few significant historical events as related to civil rights for that year. The book also contains four essays on different aspects of the Civil Rights Movement and its relationship to black music. The noted contributors are David Ritz, Gerald Early, Ingrid Monson and Ernest Hardy, with an introduction by Quincy Jones. The book also contains a large variety of pictures that relate to the progression of the timeline and the articles.

Perhaps what makes this collection valuable is the broad spectrum of music represented in the collection. It can be a useful resource to any teacher who would like to access music from different genres within the realm of black music without having to go out and purchase dozens of CDs. The recordings include both gospel and secular songs, jazz in all forms, blues, pop, R&B, rock, funk and rap/hip-hop. In addition to the music choices, the essays contained within the book are valuable and insightful in their content. Forty-eight of these recordings (42%) fall within the time period of 1959-75, and the music samples represent all genre types within black music of that period. Of the recordings of historical speeches and events, seven of the eighteen (39%) are from the same time period.

Any of the four essays could be useful for assigned readings in the classroom because they present thoughts on the black experience in America, with an eye towards the role of music in that history. While these essays do not necessarily focus on the period of 1959-75, they bring a broader context and history to what led to the changes that occurred during this time period. The content is suitable for any grade level, but the reading level is more likely appropriate for high school students. This may be one of the best collections of black music demonstrating a vast array of the artistry demonstrated in the 20th Century. (Eric Lucas)

Art Criticism


Biography and Autobiography


Black Like Me tells of a reporter from Texas who is curious about living as a black man in the South. He takes drastic measures to make his thought a reality. His doctor gives him medication to darken his skin, and he lives the life of a black man for a few months in the deep South where segregation and racism are at an all-time high.

The time of this work is relevant due to the fact that America was transforming. The time period was the early 1960s before the Civil Rights Movement. Jazz was on the decline, but Motown was on the rise. However, the artists of the prior mentioned art forms were not welcomed in the South.

The intended audiences for this work are those interested in knowing about life for blacks, more specifically black men living in the late 1950s and 1960s in the South. The book is a white man’s firsthand account of life as a black man. As John journeys through the South, he encounters real issues
black men face such as not being able to enter some businesses, whom to look and not look at, where he could and could not sit, etc.

Questions that relate to the time period of 1959-1975 are: Why would a white man be so intrigued to know how black men live? Why would a white man endanger himself, risking losing his life and/or family? Were there any health risks involved with the change of skin pigmentation? Could not John Griffin simply have interviewed black men in the South to get their stories instead of putting his life at risk? (David Severin)


This work is about the life of a prominent leader whose legacy began with The Nation of Islam. The book begins by showing Malcolm as Malcolm Little, Malcolm as Detroit Red, Malcolm as Satan, Malcolm as Malcolm X, and also Malcolm as El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. Themes, motifs and symbols that occur in this autobiography are Malcolm's changing perspective on racism, the similarity between hustling and activism, humanity as a basic right, status symbols, travel and transformation and more.

This work is relevant because Malcolm’s life resembled that of many black men of the time. Black men were trying to find themselves, trying to figure out who they were in a complex and oppressed society. Many were frustrated, committed crimes that led to jail or prison time, and went through a spiritual and self-realization transformation.

The intended audience for this work is those people intrigued by this prolific and profound leader/speaker and his influence on the masses. The content of this narrative basically deals with the transformation of a “street thug” into a major contributor to the Civil Rights Movement. Malcolm X helped transform the American Culture with his differing views about dealing with oppression and segregation by only “nonviolent” strategies.

Issues this work address are ways to implement new and innovative strategies “by any means necessary.” Questions related to this topic are: Why did Malcolm X go to prison? What made him transform in prison? How did he become such a powerful speaker? Why did he change his name from Malcolm Little to Malcolm X, to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz? Why was he killed, and did he really help make a change for the better? (David Severin)

Books & Book Chapters


Legacy: Treasures of Black History is a resourceful and definitive reference book that provides a rich illustrative history of the evolution of blacks in America. This book presents a narrative of the black experience that will benefit the academic scholar, the serious student, or the casual reader interested in learning more about black history and culture in America. More than 500 years of the black experience and its impact on America’s culture and character are explored in the 12 chapters, which trace history from ancient Africa and the slave trade, to the civil war and Emancipation, to Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Great Migration, Civil Rights, the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and Black Leadership since the 1970s. The journey is told through a series of essays written by prominent black scholars and activists and is illustrated by more than 150 historic items, including rare photographs, documents and artifacts from the collection of the Moorland Springarn Research Center based at Howard University in Washington, D.C. This is a collection representing nuances of African American history that had been locked in vaults and rarely seen by the general public.

Chapter 11 of Legacy: Treasures of Black History highlights the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s to 1970s. Often referred to as the Second Black Renaissance, the movement was regarded as a black cultural awakening that prompted black artists, writers, musicians and activists to reject and challenge the Western aesthetic in favor of a new black aesthetic. This new aesthetic would embrace and
inspire black music, poetry, dance, theatre and photography. The book states that “many artists aligned themselves with the Black Power Movement, believing that the purpose of their art was to teach and uplift black people and to strengthen their sense of empowerment.” Through their art, these artists of the Black Arts Movement showcased their creativity and expressed political and social statements to convey the need for a united front against the injustices and disparities in America. This chapter provides priceless primary resources from this period. “Class Notes on the New Negro Movement or Harlem Renaissance” illustrates the firsthand thoughts of artist and educator Lois Mailou Jones, just as the movement was starting. *Moon Masque* (1971) by Jones illustrates how the artist expressed the black American connection to Africa by incorporating the colors and patterns of African textiles and sculpture into her painting. *The Black Arts Repertory Theatre School* (1965) poster and “You Was Dancin’ Need to Be Marchin’…” (1970), a 45 rpm, and a photo of the Advanced Worker’s Band from Amiri Baraka’s collection offer the student or researcher an opportunity to evaluate primary resources associated with Amiri Baraka’s effort to use his art as an expression of political and social views to change and educate black Americans in the 1960s.

This reference in a priceless resource for evaluating primary sources that provide insight into how artists in the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s used their art to express their social and political consciousness and for analyzing what impact their work has had on our current day culture. These artifacts, such as the “Class Notes,” could be used to launch a discussion about the Black Arts Movement. (Rose Mary Brown)


“If these walls could talk, the stories they could tell,” the author begins. Drescher says that his interest in community murals began in 1971 in Chicago. He claims that the walls in San Francisco do talk, that the San Francisco Murals poignantly reveal stories of a kind painted history of its peoples’ dreams, struggles and aspirations. According to the author, one thing today’s murals have in common with Paleolithic French and Spanish cave paintings is their role in the community. The mural paintings of early societies depicted the daily lives of cave dwellers such as those on Aborigines’ and African rock walls, as well as Chinese emperors’ decorative tomb paintings, Egyptian pharoahs’ paintings of black culture, and European biblical scenes. Similarly, today’s murals depict today’s urban expressions of both religious and secular images. The author acknowledges Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, the three great Mexican mural artists, and the way their works depicting the struggles of indigenous peasants and workers were a major inspiration and influence on today’s San Francisco muralists. Drescher notes that the “Three Great Ones” murals enhance the walls of the Art Institute of San Francisco, the Pacific Stock Exchange, and on Treasure Island, a mural painted by Rivera for the World’s Fair, located in the San Francisco Art Institute today. He says that the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Public Works Art Project (PWAP) were forerunners of the WPA Program that sponsored thousands of murals nationwide from 1934 until 1946. He says that today’s community muralists saw the WPA murals on the walls of their schools, when they mailed letters at the post offices, or when they visited Italian restaurants, meat markets and movie theaters. Drescher talks about the major political issues of the 1960s: civil rights, the women’s movement, education and the Vietnam War and how these elements impacted many community artists in their reflections on posters, silk screens, book illustrations, leaflets, and murals for the general public.
Drescher claims that today’s community murals represent the coming together of social, historical and artistic traditions, like the earliest 1960s murals in the United States: in Colorado, California, Chicago and New York. Drescher believes that the murals painted in Oakland in 1968-69 were the beginnings of those murals painted by artistic activists in the San Francisco Bay Area. The movement had come to “everybody’s favorite city,” expressing on its walls the aspirations, problems and hopes of its multiethnic population. The author says that the small geographical space, the 49 miles of San Francisco’s ethnic communities held a concentration of skilled, creative and prolific artists whose work soon made the city one of the leading mural centers in the world. Drescher talks about the processes of painting community murals, saying that at the heart of each one resides the relationship between the artist or artists and the social community that will be the audience for the finished painting. He mentions the methods of transferring the design onto the wall: drawing directly on the wall, designing a sketch that has been drawn to scale (1” to 1’) which is common, or using an opaque projector to trace the lines on to the wall; however the author notes that this part of a project must be done at night, but once the sketch is up the painting begins. Drescher believes that aesthetics is important; therefore everyone must be clear about the purpose of the mural. In San Francisco, mural influences include ethnic location and background of the artist who designs and paints the mural, other artists, folk arts, Tres Grandes (the Three Great Ones), other murals, fine arts, photography, posters, underground comix (comic books and comic strips for an adult readership containing nudity and obscenity), and current political issues.

The author goes on to mention other spectacular San Francisco murals such as the 1986 Lilli Ann Mural at 17th and Harrison streets by Jesus “Chuy” Campusano, Carlos Loarca’s Homage to a Woman, 1978, Manuel Villamar’s Native American Mexicans, and the three buildings canvas by Michael Rios, Carlos Gonzalez and Johnny Mayorga called Aspire, 1980s, a tribute to Carlos Santana. The author also mentions the Venceremos Mural by Ray Patlan that occupies the main stairway wall at the New California College of Law; and many more like the 1960s marchers mural titled Our History Is No Mystery by the Haight-Ashbury Muralist and the faces that occupy the corner of Educate to Liberate, the mural painted by Miranda Bergman and others, and of course the great murals of the East Bay Area. Drescher captures the magnificence of the San Francisco Murals on a journey from 24th Street and Mission Street, down New York Street, turning to go up and down Balmy Alley to the Galleria de la Raza Studio 24 at Bryant Street. I agree with the author: “The walls in San Francisco do talk.” (Roy Fraction)


“Baad Bitches” and Sassy Supermamas: Black Power Action Films by Stephane Dunn examines the sexual identity and the inferior place of black women in film in the 1970s. The book provides a look at how African American women were portrayed as petty “bitches” compared to the black male during that time. It further examines the development of the black heroine in black films. The black heroine in movies offers empowered, self-assured, and tough black women in leading roles, women who were images of the Black Power Movement. Dunn examines moments in this historical period when black women in the media were radical, and their politics influenced the Black Power Movement and feminism.

From the artistic point of view this book provides valuable information that coincides with how black women in music from the 1950s to the 1970s felt about the image they displayed when they performed for whites. Dunn’s book focuses heavily on the “policy of respectability” as an important component for black women during the Black Power Movement. Artists who were highlights in jazz, blues, and rhythm and blues such as Abbey Lincoln, Josephine Baker, Lena Horne, Eartha Kitt, and Nina Simone address the issues of sexual commodification in their own ways. These black women used comedy, resisted eye contact, utilized lyrics, protest, and other elements to achieve their goal of displaying their artistic talents. It was critical for black women during this period to try various techniques to resist unfavorable representation and avoid subjecting themselves to negative stereotypes.

Ideas from this book could be used to teach students about how black women during the 1960s and 1970s were often faced with racism and sexism—a double injustice that prevents equality of the social, emotional, and political aspects of the female artist of the past and even today. (Sharee Seal)
According to these authors, the Philadelphia Murals are fascinating. Each mural has a story to tell in its own right, reflecting the particular interest of its immediate neighborhood. Murals of various kinds have been painted in the city for a long time, but the most spectacular are the two thousand painted since the mid-1980s. The authors say that in order for anyone to appreciate the significance of Philadelphia’s community murals, he or she must have knowledge of the MAP (Mural Arts Program), which exemplifies some of the very best achievements of the national community mural movement that began in the 1960s, as a function of the mass political activism of the time. In the early days, many mural images portrayed urban problems such as drugs, absentee landlords, and racial tensions. Golden, Rice, and Kinney claim that in the 1960s-70s mural artists developed a model for community-based murals that brought both the art and the process outside onto the streets, thereby developing a new kind of public art. It was not until the 1980s that the greatest strength of the Philadelphia mural program emerged under the Philadelphia Museum of Arts’ community outreach program. The 1980s was a decade of institutionalization, when mural projects were incorporated into larger social organizations that could provide administrative funding and support, but this change removed mural painting from its grass roots origins. The authors talk about the superb mural painting organization in Philadelphia that has become the most prolific in the nation and say that Philadelphia is fortunate to have its murals so closely tuned to its communities. The authors go on to share how murals are made, choosing a wall, exploring ideas, creating the design, preparing the wall, transferring the design to the wall, painting the mural, and finally turning the mural over to the community.

Golden, Rice, and Kinney discuss the contributions of artists to community murals under the mayor’s new Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network. The program has added a new dimension to the city’s character and brought inspiration and hope to some of the city’s ailing neighborhoods. The authors state that Philadelphia’s murals draw on a long legacy commemorating the shared events and experiences, and specific themes like popular genres of nineteenth and twentieth century public paintings that live on in contemporary murals. They talk about the other murals that celebrate native sons and daughters who have achieved public fame or made significant contributions to the community, such as musical entertainers (Marion Anderson and Paul Robson), athletes (Jackie Robinson), drug fighter Herman Wrice, social activists, political figures, and the first black woman to serve in Pennsylvania’s state legislature as an advocate for the disenfranchised. Golden, Rice, and Kinney say that the Philadelphia murals have “a certain kind of magic” with the community and that many artists have taken part in the mural programs of Philadelphia, creating works like Euhri Jones’s African Wildlife, David McShane’s People of Point Breeze, The Peacemakers, painted by the Mural Arts program, and The Peace Wall with its magnificent “Dove,” painted by kids at Finnegan’s Recreation Center. There are many more mural walls such as Common Ground and Dream in Flight, painted by Josh Sarantitis and displayed at 30th and Dickinson. The authors describe Cuban muralist Salvador Gonzalez’s Butterfly as magnificent. Ana Uribe’s Tropical Landscape with Waterfall jumps across the street to continue onto a neighborhood home and is breathtaking. Muralist Kent Twitchell’s painting of Dr. J is one of Philadelphia’s best-loved walls. The Wall of Immigration at 2nd and Callowhill Street and The Underground Railroad, by muralist Sam Donovan, are an additional few of the two thousand or more murals in Philadelphia. The authors claim that murals transform. The development of a mural wall begins a budding friendship between young aspiring artists, the muralist, and the community. Golden, Rice, and Kinney invite visitors (us) to come
and appreciate the significance and magnificence of the community murals of Philadelphia. (Roy Fraction)


Mary L. Gray exhibits great passion for the Chicago murals in the explanation of her reason for writing her book titled A Guide to Chicago’s Murals. The author talks about waiting for a performance to begin at the beautifully restored Auditorium Theater. Looking at the dancing figures painted on the proscenium of the stage, the author says that she could see that the classical figures scaling the heights echoed the movements of the real dancers performing below on stage. Gray’s research in the Library of the Art Institute revealed that architect Louis Sullivan and his partner, Dankmar Adler, had designed the Auditorium to function as an opera house, and that Sullivan’s poem titled “Inspiration” provided the theme for the murals. The author’s research also revealed that the Chicago murals began in 1889, and some have survived in the city since that time. Gray acknowledges that the Chicago “murals” (a word meaning wall) were made with the public in mind, and they are noted public expressions. The central area of Chicago, from the river to Twelfth Street, contains many murals that can be visited on foot. These indoor murals can be found in buildings, in clubs, theaters and banks. These murals were the first in the series of buildings of related size and scale that form the “great wall” facing Grant Park, and they play an important part in determining the present character of South Michigan. These murals not only have survived through the decades, but they also saw the founding of many of Chicago’s cultural institutions, such as the Art Institute, the Chicago Orchestral Association, the Field Museum, and the University of Chicago, according to the author. The Auditorium Theater, the largest and most innovative of its day, seats four thousand with its superb acoustics, sight lines, and architectural murals. Gray talks about how the theater and its complex were saved and restored by Roosevelt University and private funds, leading to its current landmark status and the survival of Louis Sullivan’s and Dankmar Alder’s masterpiece of unique and exquisitely painted architectural murals.

The author emphasizes the beauty of the architecture of the mosaics and stained glass panels that lead to auditorium. Gray writes that the three large mural paintings are integrated into the interior, dominated by four elliptical gilded arches with swirling foliate patterns and tiny carbon filament bulbs that are part of the décor. The glimmering bands on the vaulted ceilings and curved balconies connect and illuminate each mural as it illustrates a theme of growth and decay—the two great rhythms in nature. The Fine Arts building’s tenth floor houses the Oil on Canvas, one of eight panels, which is the famous mural of Tragedy and Comedy. The author talks about the great city murals that are displayed in clubs (The Cliff Dwellers Club, League Club, and Union League Club) and hotels (Hilton, Tower, and Palmer House) of Chicago, the NBC Building’s History of Chicago Schools at 412 North Kedzie Street, commissioned by the Chicago Department of Public Affairs, and the children’s mural titled Engine 44 Firehouse. Lozano Library’s mural Chic-Chac, completed in 1990, and the Pullman Library’s The Forces of Pullman Labor, 1995, which depicts the neglect of workers’ welfare, were commissioned by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. Finally, the mural at Cook County Hospital titled Orange Harvesting and Banana Harvesting, 1940 depicts scenes of workers in the North and South. The author clearly reveals her passion for the great Chicago murals of public expression in her book. I have seen only several of these great walls, and I agree with the author Mary L. Gray that they are magnificent. Surprisingly, more murals were painted in Chicago during the Great Depression than at any other time in its history, according to Gray. Franklin D. Roosevelt formulated the New Deal; its most important mission was to put people to work. The federal government became the major sponsor of public art and the Federal Art Project (FAP) of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The author states that this was the largest such program ever attempted anywhere. The project was inspired by the Mexican government’s sponsorship of muralists during the previous decade. The Illinois Art Project was based in Chicago. It put three hundred qualified unemployed artists to work decorating public buildings. Artists painting murals outside were directed to focus on the “American scene,” to speak directly to the people, and reflect a faith in the future.
According to the author, there are roughly 200 mural locations in greater Chicago, and about two-thirds of them have survived. A few have been restored, and others will be restored in the coming years; twenty-six are lost or have been destroyed. Gray says that the most visible murals in Chicago are the outdoor community murals, part of a movement born in Chicago in the late 1960s, when William Walker and a group of African American artists decided to use the wall of a building on the South Side as a canvas for their expression of the black experience. The author states that this was the time of civil rights activism, and the artists wanted to create a positive image of their community.

William Walker, John Pitman Weber, and Eugene Eda organized the Chicago Mural Group in 1970, and the mural idea quickly spread to other cities. Today the Chicago Mural Group continues to paint socially significant murals that might change the lives of people in the community. (Roy Fraction)


Since our nation’s inception and the fiery rhetorical style of Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael, during the Civil Rights and Black Power Era, black Americans have been among the most vocal, eloquent and longstanding proponents of American democracy, according to Peniel Joseph. Chattel slavery in 1865, when blacks were moved around, bought and sold at will, and the Jim Crow-era that followed, caused the relationship of black Americans to democracy to be unhappy. Joseph reminds us that racial, political and economic inequality continued to be an issue, from the speeches of Frederick Douglas, extolling the paradoxical nature of Fourth of July celebrations in a nation scarred by slavery, to W.E.B. Du Bois’s groundbreaking work as the founder of the NAACP. The author states that it is important to keep in mind that the struggles for civil rights were not confined merely to isolated incidents involving strong supporters of racism in the South, but likewise crucial struggles in the North for racial justice and school desegregation were particularly acute for blacks living outside of Dixie. Martin Luther King’s dreams, Malcolm X’s castration of America for not putting the democracy theory into practice, and Stokely Carmichael’s Black Power Era reveal an all-consuming heroism—a belief in self-determination and racial and cultural pride; the challenges of American society remain vital to continuous debates over race, war and democracy, according to the author. Joseph claims that it was at the neighbored level that activists blended radical and revolutionary rhetoric with political pragmatism, where Black Power’s quiet side emerged. He says that Black Power-era politicians, such as Maynard Jackson and Harold Washington, embraced the movement, with real but moderate perspectives that were adjusted to prevailing realities.

As a result, the author says, the real and symbolic struggles that animated much of this postwar black activism have culminated in Barack Obama’s presidential election. Joseph claims that for most Americans, Obama’s ascension to the pinnacle of political power vindicates King’s vision of a color-blind democracy. He states that the image of the nation’s first African American president-elect instantly reverberated around the world as a triumphant testament to historic struggles for racial justice. However, Obama’s election also called into question the civil rights era’s understanding of domestic race relations and the continued viability of the politics of racial solidarity echoed by Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael. Joseph states that the conservative pundits put the matter more crudely, arguing that Obama’s election would end the politics of “racial grievances” practiced by professional agitators like Jessie Jackson and Al Sharpton. The author says that the truth about Obama’s climb to the top of American politics does not so much illustrate the end, but rather the evolution of black politics. Americans old enough to have lived through the 1950s and 1960s collectively marveled at Obama’s election, a sight many believed they would not witness in their lifetime. Joseph states that the powerful symbolism attached to Obama’s election can do little to end generations of racially based poverty or restore income and wealth lost during slavery and Jim Crow. Nor can it wipe away national scars of slavery and
lynching. What Obama’s election does do is offer hope in the concept of democracy, a hope that African Americans, more than any other group, have always taken to heart. (Roy Fraction)

**Lynskey, Dorian. 33 Revolutions Per Minute: A History of Protest Songs, from Billie Holiday to Green Day. New York: Ecco, 2011.**

The title for Dorian Lynskey’s book, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, provides the reader a clever structure by which to study and explore the history of social and civil rights movements that have bonded people together, beginning in 1939 and carrying through to 2008. He breaks down the sixty-nine-year span into five parts: 1939 to 1964; 1965 to 1973; 1973 to 1977 (Chile, Nigeria, Jamaica); 1977 to 1987; 1989 to 2008. Billie Holiday’s “Strange Fruit” is the first song listed. Instead of providing the lyrics for the reader’s analysis, Lynskey sets up the environment in which one may have first been presented with Holiday’s song, as well as the history behind the song and reactions common at the time: “That is about the ugliest song I have ever heard…Ugly in the sense that it is violent and tears at the guts of what white people have done to my people in this country.” Lynskey quotes Nina Simone as reacting to Billie Holiday’s song. “Up to this point,” he continues, “protest songs functioned as propaganda, but ‘Strange Fruit’ proved they could be art.” Lynskey continues to cover social and political movements across the world by detailing the history and inspiration behind such iconic songs as Nina Simone’s “Mississippi Goddam” and the struggle for civil rights, Country Joe and the Fish’s “I-Feel-Like-I’m-Fixin’-to-Die Rag” and the Vietnam War, and Max Romeo and the Upsetters’ “War Ina Babylon” and the state of politics in Jamaica in the 1970’s. There are also numerous pictures and photographs in Lynskey’s book of a political/entertainment nature, for example, an image of the Dixie Chicks on the cover of *Entertainment Weekly* during a controversial period when front woman Natalie Maines criticized then President George W. Bush. Also available is a copy of the cover of *Life* magazine depicting wounded Kent State student John Cleary after the National Guard opened fire at a demonstration, inspiring Neil Young’s song “Ohio.” (Andronike Giannopoulos)


Often the past informs the present, and the protest songs and freedom songs of the Civil Rights Movement are no exception. Artists from the civil rights era have left a legacy for the future. Malkin uses interviews with musicians from the current time frame to look at what motivates them in using their art to inform their listeners about topical events of today. One example is his interview with Michael Franti, front man for Michael Franti and Spearhead. “We can bomb the world to pieces, but we can’t bomb it into peace” is a line from one of Franti’s songs, and Franti explains its origins from a concert for peace during the Bush Administration. “We had a meeting before the show and Pam Africa was speaking, and she said something that was almost like ‘We can bomb the world to pieces, but we can’t bomb it to peace,’ but she said it over about ten sentences. I just condensed it into one phrase.” Other artists interviewed include Ani DiFranco, Steve Reich, Rickie Lee Jones and Tom Morello.

The audience for John Malkin’s book is anyone interested in what motivates young artists today to follow in the tradition of socially conscious music. For teachers, this book (and its accompanying compilation CD) would allow one to use contemporary artists and songs to connect back to the Freedom Songs of the civil rights era, as well as to the politically based songs of artists such as James Brown or Marvin Gaye. For example, the Indigo Girls discuss the spirituality behind their songs, and how that spirituality reflects the civil rights era, making a strong connection to the way the civil rights era helped transform the past and helps inform the present. Rickie Lee Jones hearkens back to the 1960s as well, and links her opposition to the Iraq war to both the Civil Rights Movement and the anti-Vietnam protests. The book gives clear insight into the motivations of each individual artist and his or her own political ideas about the contemporary world of the 2000s. (Loren Preuss)

This book is a biographical examination of many jazz artists that the author places in the Hard Bop and Soul Jazz styles between 1954 and 1965. His is more of a broad-brush approach to a large number of artists representing these styles, rather than a more in-depth examination of a few artists. Mathieson declares as much in the introduction, indicating that his intent is to examine a larger number of artists whom he feels are under represented in other writings on the subject.

The 1940s and early 1950s saw the decline in the popularity of big band swing jazz and the introduction of two new styles of jazz: bebop and cool jazz. Both of these styles became popular because they explored new ways to present jazz but also allowed for more artistry in the music through virtuosic soloing. The two most notable of these artists are Charlie “Bird” Parker (bebop) and Miles Davis (cool jazz). By 1954, bebop had become the “old” music, and the younger musicians, seeking new artistic expression, started to break through with a cutting-edge sound: hard-bop. John Coltrane was one of the early leaders in this movement, and Miles Davis was one of the few bebop/cool jazz artists who successfully made the transition. During this same time period, jazz artists were also pursuing a gospel-oriented sound called soul jazz.

While this book examines both hard-bop and soul jazz, it is valuable because of the examination of the artists who were in the soul jazz movement, in particular, Jimmy Smith, who was the groundbreaking soul artist on the Hammond B3 as a jazz instrument. Elements of church symbolism and feeling in jazz existed before Jimmy Smith (aka Horace Silver’s “The Preacher”), but Jimmy Smith helped bring both gospel and soul into the jazz genre in the 1960s through a gospel feeling in his songs (such as “The Sermon”) and helped to develop a sub-style of jazz with other jazz artists of this time period (Charles Mingus’s *Blues and Roots* album is one notable example in the early movement, and Stanley Turrentine in the later period). (Eric Lucas)


*Motown: Music, Money, Sex, and Power* is a history of Motown, with Barry Gordy as the protagonist. According to some reviews of this book, the author, Gerald Posner, seems to be widely respected for his research skills, most notably in this case, scouring court archives in Detroit to reveal details of how Motown’s founder, Berry Gordy Jr., created and shaped the hit factory. For Posner the history of Motown is the history of Gordy, and he is meticulous about documenting the actions of his main character. One prominent reviewer called this book “the best single compendium of stories about Gordy and his business dealings with family and friends.” In other words, this book gives us an inside look at Motown.

Weighing-in at 384 pages, the book is a hefty read for the casual fan. Posner’s writing style can be dense at times as well, and his citations (though impressive), can be tedious. Given these facts, this work seems much better suited for “hard core” Motown fans who may have already sampled previous works on the subject, maybe even works by Posner. This book should provide such fans with specific answers on a broad range of related subjects. Given its impressive references, music scholars might enjoy this work as well.

For my purposes (the impact that the Vietnam conflict had on jazz and Motown artists), Chapter 19 (“Skipping the Revolution”) and Chapter 20 (“Cracks in the Wall”) provide some real insight into the absolute control that Gordy had over his artists, who were simply not allowed to address the impact of the war that affected black Americans so deeply. This book provides specific examples of artists attempting to flee outside of these boundaries and being reprimanded for their actions. This theme of how little jazz and Motown music actually directly addressed the war in Vietnam continues to surface in my research.

In Chapter 20 however, “Cracks in the Wall,” Posner recounts how Gordy’s absolute control began to slip away. Much of this portion focuses on the importance of Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye in
breaking the Motown machine. These are, of course, the same two artists that Professor Early focused on in our class discussion regarding this subject. (Ben Gracey)


Many people know that freedom songs were an integral part of the Civil Rights Movement, but the more elusive idea is connected to the question of “why” were freedom songs so important. It is this question that Kerran Sanger sets out to answer in her book “When the Spirit Says Sing!”: The Role of Freedom Songs in the Civil Rights Movement.

In her introduction, Sanger asserts, “The freedoms songs of the Civil Rights Movement were examples of purposeful communication that enabled civil rights activists to set forth a definition of themselves and their undertaking that gave impetus to movement activities.” Her thesis is that freedom songs were one part of the process by which blacks in the 1950s and 1960s began to redefine themselves as people. Sanger quotes Bernice Reagon, whom she refers to as one of the major song leaders of the Civil Rights Movement: “I sat in a church and felt the chill that ran through a small gathering of Blacks when the sheriff and his deputies walked in. They stood at the door, making sure everyone knew they were there. Then a song began. And the song made sure that the sheriff and his deputies knew that we were there. We became visible, our image enlarged, when the sounds of the freedom songs filled all the space in that church.”

Sanger explores four main ideas connected to the “why” of freedom songs. First, she investigates the use of freedom songs as a powerful and purposeful communication strategy. Secondly, she explores the freedom songs as overt expressions of the goals of the movement as a whole, and as expressions of a new, vibrant definition of self. The third topic speaks to the defining of a new worldview that balanced idealism and pragmatism. Finally, she shows how the freedom songs then became a blueprint for taking action toward breaking down all of the barriers of racism and negative identity.

Sanger’s book is aimed at explaining the “why” of freedom songs to those interested in going beyond the routine acceptance of the basic canon: that freedoms songs were important to the Civil Rights Movement. The book provides the reader, through examples drawn directly from the testimony of those who were there singing the songs, with an authentic view of the power of transformation to be found in music. While freedoms songs were not explicitly connected to the work of jazz and Motown, the freedom songs’ ability to create a new definition of what it meant to be black in America is directly linked to the Black Arts Movement. We hear echoes of the freedom songs in Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln’s We Insist! Freedom Now Suite, especially in the strongly spiritual piece, “Triptych.” It also connects to the message and spirituality of Marvin Gaye’s “What’s Going On.” Perhaps the most explicit connection to the way in which African Americans redefined themselves as black might be through James Brown’s “Say It Loud—I’m Black and I’m Proud.” By drawing on the legacy of the 19th century struggles for freedom from slavery, freedom songs become the stepping-stones to the transformation of African American culture during the civil rights era. (Loren Preuss)


This book is about the beginning of Miles Davis’s career as a jazz musician. It deals with the start of the Miles Davis Orchestra of 1948-1950 and talks about the word “Cool” and the musical style. Included in this work is information about Miles Davis’s musical beginnings and about other musicians that have inspired and motivated him and with whom he also collaborated. Some of those musicians were Bix Beiderbecke, Stan Getz and Ralph Burns, Dave Brubeck and his octet, Billy Strayhorn and Duke Ellington, etc. Some of his earlier compositions were: "Ev'rything I love," "Thriving on a Riff," and "Donna Lee."

This work includes the formation of Davis’s band. It also shows collaborations with various musicians on arrangements by Gil Evans, Gerry Mulligan, John Lewis, John Carisi and Miles Davis. Some compositions are “Moon Dreams,” "Boplicity," "Jeru," “Godchild,” and "Venus de Milo,” to name a few.

The intended audience for this work is people interested in knowing more about the innovative style(s) of Miles Davis. The basic, relevant content of this work shows the humble beginnings of a man from East St. Louis, MO. This work is related to the topic of the core of jazz as it continued to evolve.

Some questions that surface are the following: Who taught Miles how to play jazz? Why did he choose the trumpet? Where was he trained? How was his first band formed? A few issues addressed in this book deal with race and segregation and jazz as an art form. (David Severin)


*Talkin' 'bout a Revolution* is a comprehensive guide to the relationship between American music and political and social change. It begins with the dawn of American history and then moves to the book's key focus—20th-century music. The book offers a multidisciplinary discussion that is broad and diverse, and illuminates how social events impact music as well as how music impacts social events. Weissman delves deep, covering everything from current Native American music to the music of the Vietnam era (most important for my purposes), and beyond. The scope of the book is truly impressive.

Weissman and Backbeat Books must have intended this work for two major audiences: a) as a text for college classes relating to music and social change / politics (in the introduction, Weissman actually admits that this was the primary purpose for beginning this project); and b) as a book for music fans outside of academic circles who would enjoy an examination of this topic painted with a broad brush and covering the gamut of American History. I say this because the language is accessible and because the writing lacks the depth that a more scholarly work would include. The book takes a kind of “machine gun” approach where few influences are left unaddressed, but where just as few are taken further than skin deep.

From my perspective, this is not a criticism of the work at all. In fact, reading this book was a great way to begin my examination of the impact that the Vietnam conflict had on various genres of American music at the time, and more specifically, the impact that it had on jazz and Motown artists. Given the organization of the book and the detailed table of contents (ten chapters with over 100
subheadings listed during the course of those ten chapters), I could easily find material related to my focus and get the ball rolling on this project.

Throughout this book, Weissman addresses the relationship between music and social change. He does so by taking a broad approach to American music, instead of focusing on a specific style of music such as folk, jazz or hip-hop. He addresses them all! He also includes sections dedicated to specific demographics that he feels bear mentioning, including Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, African Americans and women.

For my subject (and the lens with which I am viewing my subject), I found the following sections quite helpful in answering some of my basic questions and in prompting me to ask more questions regarding the impact of Vietnam on music: Chapter 7—“The Politics of the Sixties”; Chapter 9—“Iraq and Vietnam”; and Chapter 10—“Music and Social Change.” (Ben Gracey)


This book is about soul music. It shows three of the most soulful, musical innovators of the 1960s: Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, and Curtis Mayfield. Stevie Wonder was literally a musical prodigy. He performed his first concert at the age of 12. Aretha Franklin learned how to sing at an early age as well in church. She began recording as a gospel singer and then moved on to secular music. Curtis Mayfield’s soulful style also made an impact. He went from popular songs to songs with messages and meaning. He gained much fame and success with his composition of the soundtrack for the movie Superfly. He was known for R&B, soul and funk. He was a performer, songwriter, and producer. All three of these artists produced many songs and a plethora of albums. They explosively transformed and influenced many musical genres.

This work is intended for audiences interested in knowing how various artists influenced their fields and why they were considered innovative. The basic, relevant contents of this work show how these artists became trendsetters. Because the topic deals with jazz and Motown between the years of 1959-1975, this work shows the lives of a few innovative artists in that time period.

Some questions this work addresses are: What made these artists stand out above the rest? How, when, and where did these artists began their careers? What were the issues facing the artist at that time? (David Severin)

**Yudkin, Jeremy. Miles Davis, Miles Smiles, and the Invention of Post Bop. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008.**

This book is both a biographical examination of Miles Davis and a comparison and contrast of the music and the jazz styles of Miles Davis. It examines his early works and cool jazz style (1949-1959) and his post-bop/modal and fusion periods in the sixties.

Miles Davis is perhaps one of the most interesting post-swing era musicians to study because he not only had a long career but also used a variety of styles that he played as he continually reinvented himself and his music. This book contains biographical elements about Miles Davis, but it is more valuable because of its analysis of the musical styles throughout his early (1949-1959) and mid career (1960-67).

The first four chapters discuss Miles Davis’s early style and development of the “cool jazz” movement. It specifically looks at his Birth of the Cool (1957), Bags Groove (1954) and ‘Round Midnight (1957) albums. Even though Birth of the Cool was released in 1957, the recordings were made in 1949 and 1950. The successive chapters begin with his Kind of Blue (1959) album and his first major style change towards modal playing. The book concludes with a track-by-track analysis of the Miles Smiles (1967) album and his shift to yet another style, fusion jazz, which fuses jazz and pop/rock styles of music.

This book is designed for serious analysis of Miles Davis’s music, especially if there is a desire to contrast the artistic development of his early and mid-period styles. The albums covered in the book include analysis of thematic elements (of both the album and individual songs), rhythmic analysis, chord analysis and solos (including many transcribed solo examples). The most specific attention by the author
is on the *Miles Smiles* (1967) album as a whole, with two chapters devoted to a track-by-track analysis with each chapter focused on one side of the album. Included is analysis of song form, thematic material and solo excerpts. (Eric Lucas)

## Children’s Books


From the Newberry Honor winning author Susan Campbell Bartoletti, *They Called Themselves the K.K.K.: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group* is a historical non-fiction book written for young adults that details the creation of one of the most prolific and horrifying “social” clubs in history, the Ku Klux Klan. The book, written so that it is easily accessible for readers as young as fifth grade yet engaging enough for adults due to its interesting historical content, tells of the origins of the Ku Klux Klan from their start in Pulaski, Tennessee, in 1866 to “2009 when the Southern Poverty Law Center, located in Montgomery, Alabama, counted 932 active hate groups in the United States.”

The book is composed entirely of personal accounts transcribed from oral histories, congressional documents and other primary sources, or personal interviews. It also includes detailed etchings and photographs of Ku Klux Klan activities such as Klan marches in Washington D.C., cross burnings as late as 2006, depictions of hooded figures, lynchings and Jim Crow propaganda. At the conclusion of the book is a Civil Rights Time Line that begins in 1863 with former President Lincoln’s issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation and concludes with the historical moment of Barack Obama’s election as the first African American President of the United States.

This book can be used in the classroom and applies to our Institute as an excellent source depicting the civil rights struggle that influenced and can be heard in jazz, Motown and blues. While the question is constantly brought up and reexamined as to whom a musical piece is written for, inspired by and marketed to, one needs to question the political and social motives behind the music, including the events that shaped the people who bought the records. (Andronike Giannopoulos)


This is a powerful children’s book that depicts the slave trade through details and graphic black and white illustrations. The book contains 64 narrative paintings that look like pen and ink sketches in black and white. The paintings show the inhumanity of the slave trade with crystal clear images of chains, whips, disease, and more. The paintings also show the power of the human spirit to overcome such adversity by depicting looks of hope in the eyes of slaves as well as scenes of slaves singing. When viewing these paintings one can almost hear the power of the songs coming through the pages. Pairing this work with some of the early African American Gospel songs could enhance the experience for the viewer.

*The Middle Passage: White Ships / Black Cargo* is marketed towards children ages 9-12 though one could argue that the book is more appropriate for an older audience. The paintings are graphic and could be interpreted by audiences of any age. Many reviewers of this book caution against just placing it in the hands of a child without having a discussion regarding is contents. As a high school educator I believe the book has great value for my students. The work is portrayed in pictures, not words, so students must apply their knowledge of humanity and history to make their own meaning of the work.

Though *The Middle Passage: White Ships / Black Cargo* was not published until 1995, Web sites claim that the work began in 1974 and was actually created during that year. Tom Feelings was a very prolific author and illustrator from 1960 through the mid 1970s but seems to have stopped creating books
after 1974. One reviewer stated that Feelings was working on *The Middle Passage: White Ships / Black Cargo* for 20 years. There is not an obvious change in artistic style during the 20 years if the artist did indeed work on the book for that length of time. The amount of time in which the work was created does not impact its use in the classroom, but may show the level of emotion the work incited in the creator. This particular work shows the creator’s emotional connection to his creation much like the music coming out of Motown did during the late 1960s and early 70s when artists were beginning to use their craft as a form of self-expression and social commentary. Motown found success with the single “Dancing in the Streets,” which at the time was released at as a dance song but found success when connected to social commentary on the riots in Watts and Detroit during the mid 60s. Motown had continued success when Marvin Gaye released *What's Going On*. Steve Wonder, a top seller for Motown, moved from love ballads to personal expression on political and social issues in his 1972 album *Music of My Mind*. It is clear that the artistic expression of not only music was changing and moving into the realm of social commentary.

*The Middle Passage: White Ships / Black Cargo* has many possible applications in the classroom. For teachers teaching history, the book provides a visual tool to reinforce readings on slavery. For writing teachers, the visuals give a good topic to write on. For literature teachers, the book gives a good depiction of a time that will allow students to create a picture in their minds for future readings on the topic. For all teachers, the book is an effective conversation starter. (Carrie Brandon)

**Documentary Films**


*Soul Deep: The Story of Black Popular Music* is an informative and engaging documentary series featuring six episodes (1 hour each), each exploring a different facet of black popular music during the latter half of the 20th century, with most episodes specifically relating to the time period of 1959-1975. The fifth episode, “Ain’t it Funky,” provides an overview of the funk revolution, which James Brown started in the mid-60s and which was carried on into the 70s by artists such as Sly & the Family Stone, several Motown artists, and Parliament.

The documentary is especially effective in describing how the aesthetic of funk music helped to convey the attitude and values of the Black Power Movement. The rhythmic groove of funk, established and defined by James Brown, features a heavy emphasis on the downbeat (“Hit the first beat of the bar and hit it hard”), in contrast to the prevailing sound of rock and pop music at the time, where the accent was on the backbeat (beats 2 and 4). After the downbeat, funk rhythms tend to be syncopated and punctuated, creating a gritty, aggressive soundscape. The lyrics of funk songs often promote the ideals of racial pride in an uplifting and energetic manner. “Say it Loud: I’m Black and I’m Proud” by James Brown became an anthem for the Civil Rights Movement and redefined the identity of black Americans.

The film describes how in 1968 James Brown was forced into a political role when he gave a performance in Boston on the night following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. In the aftermath of this national tragedy, Brown appealed to blacks to remain civilized rather than resorting to violence to express their rage over the incident. This performance was televised nationally and did help to restore order. As funk evolved into the 70s, Sly and the Family Stone further developed the funk groove by employing thumping and slapping techniques on the electric bass. Bootsy Collins joined the James Brown band briefly and further innovated the electric bass style, bringing it to the forefront of the musical texture of funk. Even Motown jumped on the funk bandwagon as it ventured into the realm of protest music with hits such as “Ball of Confusion” by the Temptations and “What’s Going On” by Marvin Gaye. Stevie Wonder embraced the funk aesthetic as he singlehandedly created masterpieces such as “Superstition” by layering synthesizer riffs, drums, and voice. In the mid-70s, George Clinton (aka Dr. Funkinstein) took
funk to a new level by incorporating elaborate costumes and sets, humor, and unparalleled showmanship in his extravagant stage shows.

The *Soul Deep* series was produced by BBC for British television, and unfortunately it was not released to the public on DVD. There may be some bootlegged copies available online from individuals who recorded the programs from the television broadcasts in 2005. Most of the episodes have also been uploaded to YouTube in 10-minute segments. Although it is somewhat bothersome to navigate the YouTube excerpts, it is possible to view entire episodes in sequence through this medium. It is worth the effort—*Soul Deep* is an excellent resource to examine the issues of the civil rights era through the lens of black popular music. (Karen Helseth)


*Freedom Riders* is a full-length documentary on the 1960s Freedom Rides from the North to the South to integrate interstate travel by bus. The documentary was released as a 50-year anniversary piece that combines original 1960s images and current oral histories and interviews with individuals involved in the Freedom Rides. The documentary contains speeches from original 1960s newsreels, clips of time period print and media adds, clips from John F. Kennedy's inauguration address, commentary on time period speeches, original speeches of lesser known SNCC and CORE members, as well as videos of the training the Freedom Riders went through. All of the footage from the 1960s is cut together with current interviews and oral histories from current scholars and the original Freedom Riders.

The audience for this documentary is middle school and high school students as well as the general public who are interested in history. PBS produced the documentary as an educational film marketed to the general public, much as the history channel markets its documentaries on historical events to a mass audience. The documentary can be purchased as a DVD from PBS or can be seen online at PBS.org. The availability online increases the target audience to anyone who has an interest in the history of the Civil Rights Movement. The documentary does contain some violent scenes, but only images that were available and distributed during the time period. The documentary can be used with younger children with some conversation about the content.

*Freedom Riders* connects to the themes of the NEH seminar on two levels. First and foremost the documentary gives a broad understanding of race relations during the 1960s and the conflict that was occurring in America. It is the conflict that inspired many forms of art during this time period. Many artists were specifically creating art that they were marketing as social commentary. Other artists may not have been marketing their work as social commentary but were using their art as a mode for working out what they had been experiencing. Artists who were not attempting to invoke any social commentary may have linked this idea to their art. Music of the time took on new meanings that may not have been ascribed in a previous time period. It is hard to hear “Dancing in the Streets” and not think of riots in the cities because of the time period in which the song was released. It was the conflict of the era that contextualized the art of the era.

Secondly, *Freedom Riders* is infused with music of the era. There are several oral histories regarding music and its impact during the Freedom Rides. Many spiritual songs were sung during filming of the oral histories. One Motown song was also sung during the filming of the oral histories: “Someday We Will Be Together.” This song was originally a 1961 Johnny and Jackey song recorded on Tri-Phase, but it became a Motown song in the mid 1960s when Motown purchased Tri-phase. The song became best known when Diana Ross sang it as her first solo hit in 1969.

*Freedom Riders* is useful in the classroom to offer students an overview of the Civil Rights Movement. The use of primary sources within the documentary makes this a solid source of information
for students. The documentary is also a strong tool for teaching about oral histories and the power of oral histories in telling the story of another time. (Carrie Brandon)


Charles Mingus Jr. was an integral part of American jazz. He was unquestionably an innovator and a musical “beast,” as many jazz musicians might define him. They might even say, “Many cats could play the bass, but Mingus played the bass.” He composed. He was a bandleader. He was also a civil rights activist.

This DVD illustrates some of Mingus’s most electrifying performances in Europe: in Belgium, Norway and Sweden. Mingus is shown in live performances as well as rehearsals, and his skills as a composer and bandleader are easily revealed and demonstrated. The DVD also shows how he deals with challenges, for example, the loss of his trumpeter, who became ill during the tour.

This work is intended for audiences interested in knowing how Charles Mingus transformed the jazz era. The basic, relevant contents of this work show a bass virtuoso in his prime; from the late 1950s-1960s Mingus was an obvious jazz icon. Questions addressed are: Who was Charles Mingus? When did he start playing? What were the reactions to him, his music and band, in Belgium, Norway and Sweden in 1964? (David Severin)


*The Sixties: The Years That Shaped a Generation* is a documentary produced for PBS. It is approximately two hours long and presents an overview of the major political and cultural events that occurred primarily during the last three years of the sixties. It focuses on three major themes: the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Counterculture. Although the documentary is not specifically about music, its soundtrack features many of the popular songs of the era and puts them into cultural context.

The film includes a thorough overview of the Vietnam War and the conflicts it created within the United States and abroad. It covers the 1968 presidential election in detail, including the assassination of Robert Kennedy and the political aftermath of this tragedy. It includes excellent footage related to the Civil Rights Movement, describing the 1968 Memphis garbage workers strike and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. among other events, and it details the formation and progression of the Black Panthers. Also included is footage of the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival and 1969 Woodstock festival.

*The Sixties: The Years That Shaped a Generation* would be appropriate for high school students. Due to some brief graphic war footage, it would not be a good choice for younger students, who might also have difficulty understanding and relating to the issues presented in the film. It would be an excellent introduction to a unit covering the music of the sixties, especially for students who had not yet studied this period of history. This film would give students a good understanding of the reasons behind the social unrest in the sixties and would put the music of this era (especially protest music) into context, guiding
them to an understanding of how musicians and songwriters of the time used music to express their views on contemporary social issues in a persuasive way. As with many of its documentaries, PBS has a Web site to go along with this film, which features many additional resources for students and teachers: http://www.pbs.org/opb/thesixties/index.html. The documentary is available on DVD or VHS from pbs.org or Amazon. (Karen Helseth)


The History of Rock ‘n’ Roll is a ten-part documentary that covers rock ‘n’ roll history from its beginnings in the 1950s to the Lollapalooza festival and early “grunge” in the ’90s. The series allows viewers to experience historic moments and figures in the development of rock ‘n’ roll alongside the historical developments of the period that helped to shape the music. The series contains hundreds of exclusive interviews with period artists, producers and songwriters, footage, and in-concert performances from throughout the time period covered. Examples of chapters include “Good Rockin’ Tonight,” which chronicles 1950s rock ‘n’ roll; “My Generation,” which covers Woodstock and the protest music and drug culture associated with the late 1960s; and “Punk,” which explores the British and American punk scenes and discusses how the decline of the cities in England and America led to this new form of musical expression.

The “Sounds of Soul” chapter of this series provides in-depth analysis of what “soul music” is from the artistic perspective of black musicians and discusses the importance of gospel and other church music and their influence on soul music. This chapter focuses on a number of soul solo musicians (including Ray Charles, James Brown and Smokey Robinson), groups (The Four Tops, The Supremes and The Temptations) and other influences on the 1960s soul music (Motown and Berry Gordy, the importance of the Apollo Theater and civil rights).

This documentary segment allows musicians, teachers, and researchers to gain a valuable perspective on the early soul artists of the very late 1950s up through the development of funk music in the 1970s. Its value as a research tool lies in the number of interviews with artists involved in the development of soul music and the Motown Sound (such as Smokey Robinson, Abdul “Duke” Fakir of the Four Tops, and George Clinton of Funkadelic) and the number of vintage video recordings and still photos of musicians in concert or in the studio (such as The Supremes, The Temptations and The Jackson Five). The video segment also includes a number of interviews with contemporary black musicians (such as Patti LaBelle, Luther Vandross and the group Salt-N-Pepa) and considers how the early soul artists have influenced the music that followed. (Eric Lucas)


This compelling documentary examines the Civil Rights Movement through the lens of the protest songs that were sung during the marches and demonstrations to end segregation in the South. The songs are in the forefront of this production, and the film uniquely contains footage of contemporary musicians performing their own interpretations of the songs in studio sessions that are staged specifically for this documentary. The modern performances pay tribute to the songs, and to the individuals who sang them as they carried on the fight for freedom in the 1960s.

The narratives and footage presented in the film offer an excellent overview of the major events and tragedies of the civil rights era. Even a viewer who is already familiar with these stories may be moved to tears by the sobering images of brutality and injustice featured in the documentary. The film begins by explaining the significance of music within black culture—it was the means of communication, and singing helped blacks maintain morale in spite of hardship. During the Civil Rights Movement, freedom fighters (both black and white) found solidarity through group singing of the songs featured in the film. Even as they were being arrested and thrown in jail, they continued singing.

Each featured song represents a specific landmark event in the movement. The stories are told through narrative, footage of individuals who participated in the events recollecting their experience, and
vintage footage of the events as they were happening. Some of the key events covered are the Montgomery bus boycott, the Greensboro sit-ins, the Freedom Rides, the March on Washington, and the Memphis garbage workers’ strike. The states of Alabama and Mississippi are featured prominently in the stories, as this region was the most dangerous to infiltrate by the freedom movement. The film focuses on the principle of nonviolence that was promoted by Martin Luther King Jr. and practiced by his followers, and juxtaposes this ideal with the violence and bigotry these protesters encountered from law enforcement officers and public officials in the segregated South. The film ends powerfully, by memorializing countless lesser-known victims that were murdered in the fight for civil rights. (Karen Helseth)

**Strange Fruit.** Directed by Joel Katz. San Francisco: California Newsreel, 2002. DVD.

The documentary *Strange Fruit* examines the background and legacy of the song “Strange Fruit” made famous by Billie Holiday. Intended for a general audience, the film starts with the origins of this ekphrastic poem by Abel Meeropol as a response to a photograph of a lynching publish by photographer Lawrence Beitler in 1930. It then documents the history and impact of the song through the anti-lynching campaign and the Civil Rights Movement. The film concludes with a montage of recent hate crimes on how all-too-relevant “Strange Fruit” remains to this day.

One of the most powerful moments in the film is the reading Abbey Lincoln gives of the poem. The emotion she carries in her expression conveys just how haunting and bleak the words alone are and how the words can stand by themselves. The film includes various performances of the poem as a song, and shows how the song has been responded to, artistically and socially, building the documentary into a multi-lens view of the poem and song as art, history, social statement, commentary, and cultural touchstone. All of this has been accomplished through interviews with musicians, historians, producers, family and friends of Meeropol, and music critics as well as photos, recordings and film.

The documentary discusses the question of origins of the song as well as its significance to the Civil Rights Movement. It explicates how the song is a rarity in music in that it doesn’t use the tropes of minstrelsy common to most popular music in its appropriation of African American devices, and how it is the first in protest songs to use original music, not merely new words to old Irish ballads. (David Robinson)

**Essays / Scholarly Articles**


This article interprets the facts about the history of the Black Arts Movement in 1964. It states that an allegation of integration was made in 1964, regarding the shooting of the civil rights representative James Meredith during a voter registration drive in Memphis, Tennessee. The author believes that it was an attempt to demean the Civil Rights Movement. This attempt to degrade the Civil Rights Movement sparked other activists to call for stronger and more militant tactics in the struggle for equality and equal rights in America. A young man by the name of Stokely Carmichael continued the march for civil rights through his decision to call for a stronger response in the struggle called the Black Power Movement. I think that Stokely Carmichael attempted to accelerate and “bull-doze” the struggle of the Civil Rights Movement. Looking back in time, I can agree with the author that the Black Power Movement created a battle between the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voter Rights Act of 1965. The article references the burning of Watts in Los Angeles, and the riots that broke out across the country, in 1968, after Watts and after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. City police and National Guardsman mobilized in an attempt to address the issue of cities that were once again in flames. The article states that the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) with its interracial membership attempted to address some of the issues, but these groups were unable to handle
the massive change occurring across the country. Membership in these groups over time became
predominately black, and in 1966 the Black Panther Party was founded. Its mission was to restore black
pride and dignity in the inner city and to defend those who suffered harassment by police.

The article references W.E.B. Du Bois and his statement about the beauty of the black race. It
states that not all Americans saw or felt the necessity of celebrating and training themselves to see the
beauty in the “black race.” The article discusses the riots and violence across the country and on
university campuses, giving the appearance that the access to freedoms supposedly guaranteed by the
Constitution had gone. It points out that what was true politically was equally true in terms of the arts.
Now black art announced, defined and promulgated a black aesthetics and black culture of it own.
However, many did not see black art as a bid for inclusion in a multicultural America, but more as an
expression of a culturally distinct people with racially based politics. Bigsby states that black art and
black theater became an inspiration and a declaration of independence, a cultural wing of Black Power for
African Americans. The article states that African Americans vowed that all black arts must reflect and
support the Black Revolution, and any art that did not discuss and contribute to the revolution was
invalid.

The article talks about the Black Revolution as the spirit of essays, poems, fiction and plays, the
announcement of a “new creed” defining the relationship of The Black Arts Movement and the Black
Power concept to the African American’s desire for self-determination and nationhood. It was the
collective consciousness and unconsciousness of black Americans. The movement helped to provoke a re-
examination of the black past. It prompted the establishment of the black press and publication of a
number of writers, according to the author. I agree with Bigsby that perhaps the movement instilled pride
in those who felt that they had won their civil rights. The Black Arts Movement contributed to black
creativity, the employment of black actors and directors, the creation of Black Studies Programs in
universities, black history courses in schools, as well as the charting of the history of the black
community. In conclusion, the article states that black art engages in a serious exploration of black history
and culture and that black art has become a vital aspect of private development and public education
today. (Roy Fraction)

Clague, Mark. “What Went On? The (Pre-) History of Motown's Politics at 45 RPM.” Michigan

Mark Clague, an associate professor of music at the University of Michigan, writes about the
earliest instances of politically charged music at Motown. Contrary to most accounts, which have
Motown avoiding politics at almost all costs, Clague argues that Motown recorded political songs early
and often. “This oft-told tale explains how the company, in a turbulent 1960s political environment that
included a war abroad in Vietnam and a war at home in the quest for civil rights, carefully avoided
entanglements, lyrical or otherwise, with such controversies to protect its business interests.” Clague
places the first Motown release with a political statement with the 1961 release of an all-white doo wop
group’s song “Greetings (This is Uncle Sam),” a song with a story about a young man being drafted to go
off to war. This release pre-dates the usual story that it was Marvin Gaye’s hit “What’s Going On” a
decade later that marked Motown’s entry into the world of politics. Clague points out that the follow up to
“Greetings (This is Uncle Sam)” was a song recorded by a white solo singer, Mickey Woods, entitled
“Please Mr. Kennedy (I Don’t Wanna Go),” another draft-related song. Clague further asserts, “It seems
strategic that these initial Motown critiques of the draft were recorded by white artists, thus
circumnavigating any anger that might be provoked by associating black voices with sounds of social
protest.”

Motown is sometimes wreathed in mystery and mythology, and this article opens up the full
record of Motown’s involvement in putting out more politically charged music than is generally known.
Motown and its music machine certainly wanted to craft music with a story to tell, and both of the
aforementioned songs, as well as others mentioned in the article, certainly fit the bill. The article gives the
reader insight into how, despite the myths, Motown was recording and releasing songs with a social and
political message. Were the songs transforming? Certainly, the early releases weren’t among Motown’s
bigger hits with a political message, such as the Temptations’ “Ball of Confusion” or Marvin Gaye’s “What’s Going On,” which certainly did have an impact on the conscience of America. (Loren Preuss)


The author of this essay identifies Charles Mingus as one of the most original and influential jazz composers of the twentieth century. By creating the second-largest volume of jazz work after Duke Ellington and combining his unusual style of composing and playing with a blend of improvisation with orchestration, Mingus has set himself apart in the jazz world. Jones argues that Mingus's music incorporated a wide range of styles, from Ellington's big band sound, to gospel music, to early New Orleans jazz bands, yet at the same time, he incorporated modern sentiments and an avant-garde feeling into his music.

Much of this article is devoted to the spiritual nature of Mingus’s music as an artistic form. The author cites that one of the strongest influences on his music was traditional black church music, which he came to in his early childhood. The most significant demonstration of this influence manifested itself in Mingus’s 1959 album *Blues and Roots*, which includes the song “Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting” and others that represent the soul and essence of music and worship in the black church and exemplifies the influence of the Holy Rollers. Other elements of church worship in these songs include Mingus and other band members shouting, "Lord, I know" during the songs, blending their voices with the instruments into a high-pitched moan, and hand claps that might be heard during a worship service.

Charles Mingus has such a large body of work that covers a variety of styles, and this article allows for the focus on one of those styles: the church influenced soul jazz that became popular from the late 1950’s through the end of the 1960’s. While other prominent black jazz artists were exploring spirituality through free jazz (notably John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman), Mingus chose to pursue those spiritual explorations by being grounded in the black church experience. He is also important to examine because while most other soul jazz groups were writing for organ trios or small ensembles, Mingus wrote for medium-sized big bands, which allowed him more voices with which to communicate. Songs from his *Blues and Roots* album are still performed by jazz ensembles today. (Eric Lucas)


This discussion captures the effects of urban canvas mural projects in the urban community that were used to articulate dreams, express frustration and, most importantly, consider strategies for change. The authors state that in cities across America, out-door urban canvas paintings have brought public art to the urban landscape. The article talks about the public paintings that began to exist and become a part of the cityscape, which brought art to many people in disadvantaged neighborhoods across the nation. These urban canvases were thought provoking and could stimulate the causal passerby to consider the content and the context of the message depicted in the artist’s mural. According to the article, most cityscape canvas murals embodied social and political messages in the design that reached the frustrated, infuriated, and perplexed black audience. The artists who worked on these murals believed that the social possibilities for the urban canvas were endless, and that they could inspire an entire community with their collaborative art projects. The article explains that these mural arts projects using the urban canvas could establish communal bonds where poverty is frequent with racial, social and economic divides.
The article goes on to explain how these urban artists believed that they could build social and intellectual capital in “at risk” youth, and that they could enhance the physical perception and quality of the urban neighborhoods. However, the urban canvas art mural movement usually rose in times of turmoil. For example, in the sixties it became a form of street protest, particularly in the African American and Chicano neighborhoods where urban canvas art could save lives and renew hope. The article emphasizes that these painted urban canvas murals were a medium that had a tremendous power to challenge injustice, equalize disadvantage, and reduce acts of social disorder. The article states that community-based public art on the urban canvas, or street art of the 1960s as it was called, infused a sense of black power and black pride within the black community. Mural canvas arts projects in the sixties mobilized urban communities and articulated the dreams of the people, expressing their concerns and attempting to portray and consider strategies for change.

The increased popularity of city murals on the urban canvas in these urban landscapes coincided with the political activism of the decade. These urban canvases depicted black pride, civil rights, the woman’s movement and even the farm workers’ revolution. The article references the year 1964, when Malcolm X called upon African Americans to begin a cultural revolution. Lohman claims that Malcolm X told African Americans that the culture of street art murals was an indispensable weapon in the freedom struggle, and in the strengthening of communities and individual self-determination.

The author states that the artists of the Civil Rights Movement used their works on the urban canvas to arouse a social and historical consciousness. The urban canvas art projects were grand, dramatic narratives and often-heroic parts of an important aesthetic cultural movement. Finally, the article referenced the work of William Walker (1967), who is regarded as the first community-based urban canvas artist, and one of the first painters to depict black culture on a large scale in color, in a public place called the Wall of Respect in Chicago. William Walker painted a portion of the original wall; however sixteen other artists contributed to the effort and completion of the Wall of Respect.

Painting on the urban canvas became a way communities could document history, express cultural diversity and social activism. I have seen the urban canvas called the Wall of Respect; it portrays the radically dangerous time of the sixties. (Roy Fraction)


This scholarly article gives a sociological examination of the Black Rock Coalition (BRC), an organization of black musicians advocating for the acceptance and respect of black performers within a culture of music that is traditionally defined as white. Maureen Mahon’s research is based on a series of interviews of musicians who are members of the BRC, and she questions them about their cultural upbringing during the civil rights era. She draws the conclusion that integration of schools beginning in the 1960s was a primary factor that contributed to the breakdown of race-related boundaries of musical taste amongst the youth of this generation.

Mahon begins the article by acknowledging that rock ‘n’ roll is a “fundamentally black American music form” which by the mid-1960s had become regarded as a white musical culture, whereas other styles of music were considered to be the territory of black musicians and audiences, a trend which has continued into the post-civil rights era: “…a taste for rock music classifies an African American as someone who has either misunderstood which music is appropriate for his or her consumption or has deliberately abandoned black culture by investing in what is perceived as a white music form.” She points out the irony that even white music executives have certain expectations that black musicians produce music that sounds “black,” and will not release it if it is “not black enough,” so the authenticity of black music is not necessarily defined by the black music community.

The article goes on to investigate the influences of school integration on the musical tastes of the members of the BRC, most of whom attended integrated schools in the 1960s or 1970s, either through bussing programs or relocation to white neighborhoods. Mahon suggests that this cultural phenomenon exposed the youth of this generation to white ideals, behaviors, and tastes, causing many young black Americans to develop a preference for rock music performed by white musicians. In Mahon’s account,
the BRC operates as somewhat of a support group for intellectual black musicians who support the 
synthesis of white and black musical styles, without rejecting their black culture: “…they formed an 
organization in order to address the racialization they encountered as black rock musicians, represent their 
concerns to a wider public, and reinforce among themselves the validity of their project to reclaim the 
right to rock.”

This article helps the reader understand how social classes were defined within the black 
community during the civil rights era, and how the “uplift” of the black race, which was the general goal 
of the movement, created an environment where black identity faced transition as blacks assimilated into 
white culture in hopes of finding richer opportunities. The interview excerpts are quite compelling and 
accessible, and help to shed light on this cultural change. (Karen Helseth)


Neal, Mark Anthony. “Nina Simone: She Cast a Spell—and Made a Choice.” Seeing Black.Com, 
2011).

Reagon, Bernice Johnson. Interview by Maria Daniels, WGBH Boston, July 2006.

54-58.

Nina Simone was a renowned singer, pianist, a composer/songwriter and civil rights activist. In “I 
Ain’t About to be Non-Violent, Honey,” Dorothy Randall Tsuruta provides a profile of Nina Simone 
through a description of Simone’s music, an analysis of the common themes of her songs and a discussion 
of the forces that influenced her race and gender consciousness. The article is an avenue for the Simone
aficionado to explore events that impacted many of Nina Simone’s professional and personal decisions regarding her activism. Ms. Tsurata explains how an episode at the age of eleven first revealed Ms. Simone’s activist spirit. At Nina’s first public appearance, her parents were forced from their seats to give a white family priority seating. This event caused Nina to step up and would serve as a point of reference for years to come, as she wrote “Mississippi Goddam” in response to the 1963 killing of four girls in a Birmingham church and “Why (The King of Love is Dead)” to give America a piece of her mind after Martin Luther King’s death. Simone wrote “Backlash Blues” with Langston Hughes about the white backlash and disenfranchisement against gains made by black Americans, and other songs such as “Revolution,” “Old Jim Crow,” and “I Wish I Knew How It Would Be to Be Free,” through which she exercised her freedom of speech and embraced the Civil Rights and Feminist Movements through her music.

Ms. Tsuruta discusses how Nina Simone’s music resulted from personal experiences that showed her as an “everyday black person,” which helped her to connect with her audience by exposing her own hurt, pain and anger. At a time when Ms. Simone’s beauty was highly scrutinized because of her dark complexion and African-like features, she remained the “royal highness of refinement, grace, dignity and elegance” and later wrote “Four Women” as a commentary on the vulnerability of black women and black men to white standards of beauty. Ms. Simone wrote “To Be Young, Gifted and Black” in tribute to Lorraine Hansberry, whom she credits with starting her political education, and as a statement that black men and women should seek self-affirmation instead of perceiving themselves to be more like white Americans.

Nina Simone used her music as commentary on and reaction to the injustices against black men and black women in the 1960s. The messages she conveyed were not always well received by black or white America. In her anger, Nina Simone emigrated from America to France and in later years criticized black America for letting activism die out.

A teacher could share the importance of Nina’s story with students to remind them of the importance of exercising their first amendment rights. Ask students if they would step forward at a time when others stood in complacency. Discuss the first amendment rights and have the students write about a personal experience or about another individual they feel took a stand. Have students read the article as a primary source introduction to Nina Simone in order for them to understand what motivated her as an artist and as an activist. Then have the students further research and analyze the cultural and historical context in which Nina Simone wrote her songs, particularly the Black Arts Movement and the Black Nationalism Movement. The students can then apply the research and evaluate what messages about black life and challenges to black pride Ms. Simone communicated by analyzing the lyrics to her music.

(Rose Mary Brown)

Films


Liner Notes


Any admirer of Abbey Lincoln’s music or someone researching Abbey Lincoln as an artist/activist during the 1960s would agree that the liner notes to Abbey Lincoln’s *Straight Ahead* provide a revealing description of her musical transformation when she found and connected with her authentic artistic voice. Nat Hentoff, a jazz historian who wrote the notes, comments on Ms. Lincoln’s
newfound capacity to become part of her songs by pointing out the singer’s power, emotional range, tone quality and phrasing. He elaborates by mentioning the impact of her relationship with Max Roach on the development of her music and emphasizes how the liberation of her singing was connected to her involvement as an activist and to a renewed and urgent pride in herself as a “Negro” woman.

Hentoff continues by remarking that “for a number of years, Abbey Lincoln wasn’t sure of her identity, and her singing was shadowy.” Lincoln felt that she was being molded into a nightclub singer who was expected to be sexy and alluring and that she was becoming a “musical mannequin.” Ms. Lincoln shared with Hentoff how she was told not to sound too “Negro” when she spoke or sang and was expected to sing “titillating standards and phony folk tunes.” Her association with Max Roach would lead to her decision to recapture her individuality. With her newfound identity Ms. Lincoln expressed, “I’m not holding back anymore…and it’s an awful good feeling to come out into the light.”

*Straight Ahead* is composed of seven songs performed with a variety of noted jazz musicians: Max Roach on drums; Eric Dolphy on reeds; Coleman Hawkins on tenor saxophone; Mal Waldron on piano; Booker Little on trumpet; and Julian Priester on trombone. Hentoff comments that the album illustrates Ms. Lincoln’s penetrating combination of “yearning poignancy and tensile strength.” “When Malindy Sings,” based on a poem by Paul Laurence Dunbar, reveals Ms. Lincoln’s ability to blend high spirit with a mocking playfulness. When she sang “In the Red,” Booker Little observed how Ms. Lincoln was no longer afraid of freeing herself musically and was learning to do what Billie Holiday had done so well in “improvising the feelings of the song and not just the notes.” Hentoff lauds Lincoln’s “instrumentalized” singing in “Blue Monk” and in “Left Alone,” a Billie Holiday song. Charles Mingus said, “She lives it, every minute of it.” The remaining two selections, “African Lady” and “Retribution” showcase other sides of Ms. Lincoln’s newfound identify. In a conversation about Abbey Lincoln following the recording session, Booker Little summarized: “She’s got all that force now because she’s learned not only about herself but about how many different shades of beauty and un-beauty there are.”

The profile of Abbey Lincoln in the liner notes provides insight into her transformation and re-identification as an African American female jazz artist and how this transformation impacted her political and cultural activism during the 1960s. The lyrics and arrangements of the selections reflect the social and political culture of the decade and the performance and collaboration of Ms. Lincoln and the other musicians showcases the development of the jazz art form. (Rose Mary Brown)


Max Roach and Oscar Brown Jr.’s *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite* album features Roach, Abbey Lincoln, Coleman Hawkins, and Babatunde Olatunji. The Liner notes provide a summary of the context in which the project was developed and the political and social culture within which the project materialized. This is an excellent primary source for either a student or researcher interested in Max Roach or in jazz in the early 1960s. The work was originally intended to be performed in 1963, on the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation. Jazz critic and historian Nat Hentoff explains how, as the movement for civil rights was being inspired by the use of direct, mass action and nonviolent techniques such as the student lunch counter sit ins in Greensboro, North Carolina, and African nations were declaring their colonial independence, the interests of jazz musicians were “unprecedentedly” being stimulated by the social movements. Max Roach was a jazz drummer who was affected by the American Civil Rights Movement for integration and by national autonomy for the countries on the African continent. Roach began to express this new consciousness in his jazz compositions, and in 1960 he released the album *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite.*

*We Insist! Freedom Now Suite* is composed of five selections that represent a historical progression through African American history. The work moves from slavery to Emancipation Day and then to the struggle for civil rights in America and African Independence during the 1960s. Hentoff describes the first selection, “Driva Man,” as a personification of the white overseer in slavery times who often forced women under his authority into sexual relations. He expresses how Abbey Lincoln performs the lyrics with “fiery strength and clarity.” In “Freedom Day” Roach and Brown communicate the emotions of expectancy, wonderment and disbelief in the period following the Emancipation
Proclamation. Hentoff comments that Lincoln’s performance projects a “bursting impatience,” and he celebrates the solos performed by Booker Little (trumpet), Julian Priester (trombone) and Max Roach (drums). The third selection, “Triptych: Prayer, Protest, Peace,” Hentoff says “makes demands on a singer which are fierce and exhausting.” Prayer expresses the cry of an oppressed people and is approached in a spiritual gospel style. “Protest” symbolizes the release of rage and anger that has been compressed in fear. Ms. Lincoln connects with the listener as she screams to express the release of amassed fury, hurt, and bitterness. “Peace” is expressed in a feeling of relaxed exhaustion when all has been given for freedom. Through “All Africa” the musicians express a newfound interest in African pride and heritage. Ms. Lincoln chants the names of African tribes as Olantunji answers her by relating a saying of each tribe. This leads directly into the final selection, “Tears for Johannesburg,” which sums up the album’s message that there is still cruelty against Africans in South Africa and there are still civil rights battles to be won in America. Hentoff expresses the “wounding” laments of Ms. Lincoln and the ensuing solos of the musicians as a reminder that Freedom Day is still coming in many places.

According to Ingrid Monson, this work “occupies a space somewhere between mainstream jazz, modernism and the new thing.” She comments that throughout the work Roach and his band draw on long-standing symbols of African American cultural identity and immediate historical contexts to weave a “web of musical interrelatedness” which generates a deeper expressive power. She further notes the aspects of the work which emanate from the avant-garde stylistic trends of the 1960s exemplified by the absence of a piano in the ensemble, collective improvisation, the wordless spiritual in “Prayer” and the screaming in “Protest.” This work is considered to be a premier example of a jazz piece with explicit political meaning, and the politics of the piece would generate for Roach and Ms. Lincoln considerable social commentary that would affect their work in the years to follow.

A teacher could have students review the liner notes for background and then provide the actual song lyrics, with guided notes, for students to analyze and comment on how the artists use the music to communicate the messages within the lyrics. (Rose Mary Brown)

**Music Recordings**

**Brown, James. “Say It Loud—I’m Black and I’m Proud.” King Records 6187, August 7, 1968. Single LP.**

The song “Say It Loud—I’m Black and I’m Proud,” addresses prejudice toward blacks in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. The lyrics are used to empower African Americans to develop positive and uplifting feelings about their image. The song is a tribute to all black people and is a significant part of the Black Power Movement and the Civil Rights Movement. The lyrics provide an open window to how blacks should view themselves so that they boost self-confidence. The words powerfully suggest that there is a crisis with America’s treatment of African Americans, but the key to these issues comes from unity and solidarity of the black community.

From an artistic aspect, Brown speaks to the audience through lyrics as he places demands on black listeners to pay attention and be proud of the color of their skin and their ethnic background. He states, “Look a here. Some people say we got a lot of malice. Some say it’s a lot o’ nerve. I say we won’t quit moving till we get what we deserve.” Brown empowers blacks to continue the fight for justice and equality. Music is a form of expression that has liberated black people from despairing times. It provides a broad range of conversation that can lead to social, economic, and political justice. Black music is rooted in delivering a message to its people and stimulating them to do something. Brown’s song covers two areas of music, revivalist and commercial. “Say it Loud—I’m Black and I’m Proud” revitalizes and restores hope in blacks during a difficult time, and it advertises to the black community the value of being proud of skin color, race, and culture.

Teachers can use this song with a video clip from YouTube, to teach students about how music lyrics can provide messages to an audience and can create change in a community. Analyzing the words
for meaning and connecting the music with the time can generate questions and debate about issues. (Sharee Seal)


Cantata originally recorded on August 30 and 31, 1971, at Corbett Auditorium at the University of Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, and released in 1972 (Atlantic).

“Truth is Fallen” (the song) marked Dave Brubeck’s attempt to address the growing conflict in Vietnam. (Ben Gracey)


This recording was part of the next change in Miles Davis’s music in the late 1960s towards fusion and ties in to the book above on Miles Davis. (Eric Lucas)


*The Times They Are A-Changin’* is an album of folk songs about social and political issues, written and recorded by Bob Dylan in 1963. The songs tackle a variety of issues, including racism, unemployment, outsourcing of labor, and war. This album marks the peak of Dylan’s early period as a protest song performer. He finished recording this album shortly before the assassination of John F. Kennedy, an event that convinced Dylan that it was futile to attempt to change the world’s problems through song, causing him to move away from topical songwriting.

Two songs on the album relate specifically to the Civil Rights Movement. Both are commentaries on actual murders of blacks by white men that occurred in 1963, but the two songs have very different messages. “Only a Pawn in their Game” was written in response to the June 1963 assassination of African American civil rights activist Medgar Evers by white supremacist Byron De La Beckwith. Dylan suggests that the guilt in this crime goes beyond the man that pulled the trigger, but rather the racist society that would perpetuate the type of hate that would compel a man to commit such an act is at fault: “…but he ain’t to blame, he’s only a pawn in their game.” From Dylan’s perspective, the poor Southern whites are manipulated by politicians and law enforcement officers to carry out crimes that will thwart the efforts of the Civil Rights Movement to abolish segregation. “Only a Pawn in their Game” was written not long after the murder, and before the trials. As it turned out, Beckwith walked free after two trials because the all-white juries could not reach a verdict. He was finally convicted in 1994 after it was proven that he had boasted about the crime in KKK meetings, which provided enough evidence to re-open the case. It also appears that Dylan’s premise in the song isn’t quite right. At the time of the murder, Beckwith was not a member of the KKK (although he would later join). He was involved with the White Citizen Council, a non-militant white supremacy organization, but disagreed with their non-violent methods; thus, he was acting on his own volition when he murdered Medgar Evers. Nevertheless, Dylan’s point about the corruption and manipulation by white leaders is valid, and although the KKK was not responsible for this murder as Dylan implies, they certainly did perpetrate many similar crimes.

“The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll” recounts the story of Hattie Carroll, a black barmaid that was killed by a drunken wealthy tobacco farmer, Billy Zantzinger, at a party in Baltimore, Maryland, in February of 1963. The first verse tells about the murder—Zantzinger hit Carroll with a cane, and was arrested for murder after Carroll died of her injuries. The second verse characterizes Zantzinger as young, wealthy, arrogant, and vulgar and explains that he was released on bail “minutes” after being charged. The third verse portrays Carroll as a gentle, hardworking servant with ten children (in reality she had eleven), who barely spoke to her white masters, and had done nothing to provoke the attack. Each of these verses ends with the common line, “Take the rag away from your face, now ain’t the time for your tears.” In other words, as sad as this story is, it will get worse. The fourth verse unveils the real crime. Because of his family’s standing in the community, Zantzinger’s lawyers were able to pull some strings in the court system and waive the jury trial. Zantzinger served only a negligible sentence of six months in a county jail, which he was able to schedule at a time that was convenient for him. Dylan’s verse chastises
the presiding judge for allowing the court system to virtually dismiss a violent and unprovoked murder. The song closes with the line, “Bury the rag deep in your face, for now’s the time for your tears.” Although Dylan does not bring up the racial ramifications of this case, race did play a role in the incident and possibly the sentencing. Zantzinger had reportedly been hurling racial slurs at Carroll and the other servers at the event, whom he also assaulted. There were also implications that racial biases played a role in the court’s handling of the case.

Bob Dylan, only 22 when he recorded this album, had come to be seen as the political voice of the young generation. After he recorded The Times They Are A-Changin’ but before it was released, he was given the Tom Paine award for his contribution to the Civil Rights Movement. Although he was a clever wordsmith when writing songs or poetry, Dylan was not comfortable speaking in public. At the award ceremony, he was nervous and intoxicated, and delivered an awkward and controversial acceptance speech, for which he later issued a rambling explanation. Perhaps it was Dylan’s distaste for the pressure of being seen as a spokesperson that led to his decision to move away from political songwriting, and eventually into the genre of folk rock. Nevertheless, the irony and cynicism portrayed in The Times They Are A-Changin’ represent Dylan’s songwriting at its best, and some of his early works are among the strongest protest songs of the civil rights era. (Karen Helseth)


The lyrics from “Young, Gifted and Black,” invoke images about the motivation and determination of African Americans to improve their social, economic and political conditions during the 1970s. The music lyrics provide a spiritual and emotional message about the willpower of blacks to overcome the struggle with injustice. In this remake of Nina Simone’s version of “Young, Gifted and Black,” Aretha Franklin gives this song a gospel and soulful feel. The power in her voice reinforces the assertion of black pride. The spiritual represents the force and tradition of African Americans’ source of power to succeed during this time.

From an artistic point of view, the words in “Young, Gifted and Black” provide spiritual fulfillment and lend hope for a better tomorrow for African American people. This spiritual sound is a critical element of black gospel music during the 1970s. African Americans were faced with segregation and humiliation; therefore gospel music and the church were a foundation for black faith. Further, after the death of black leaders and the overwhelming number of hangings of black men in the South, blacks embraced the church. Gospel music was an inspiration, support, and healing for the many lost lives.

Aretha Franklin’s voice provides a religious experience as she addresses black people, especially black youth, about being young, gifted, and black. She delivers a sermon-type message in her music that encourages black youth to hold on to their dreams. The power in her voice offers the idea that the dreams are still in reach. Franklin’s tone provides a route for emancipation from the economic and social deprivation of African Americans. Her voice illustrates urgency when she sings the line, “We must begin to tell our young, there’s a world waiting for you.” Franklin is delivering a call to and anticipating a response from the older blacks in the community, almost mandating and instructing that it is the responsibility of the mature blacks to motivate, encourage, and inspire the young blacks of that time. (Sharee Seal)


What's Going On was clearly meant to ruffle some feathers, but strangely, the first sounds of the album aren't of uprisings or demonstrations, but rather of a successful social festivity ("This is a groovy party, man!"). Gaye's choice to emphasize humanity at its most charitable rather than paint bleak pictures of destruction and disillusionment is characteristic of the album that follows. Gaye's observer role is bemused rather than indignant, grounded instead of judgmental. And so appropriately, the titles of the first two songs sound like questions. "What's Going On" sees Gaye suggesting to "father" and "mother" (not so much literal parental figures, but rather symbols of authority and the status quo) that "war is not
the answer, 'cause only love can conquer hate." The opening track's good-natured debate with the powers that be segues directly into the camaraderie sob-song of "What's Happening Brother," in which Gaye assumes the role of a Vietnam veteran returning home and asking an old friend where the scene is, as the man's disconnect from American pop culture has left him feeling displaced.

It is this theme surrounding the war in Vietnam that makes this work the cornerstone of my examination of the artistic impact of the war on jazz and Motown. This entire album was reportedly inspired by the return of Gaye's brother from Vietnam, and I have found no other work that focuses so succinctly on this subject. Not that this was the only subject of the work, but the lingering conflict in Vietnam hovers in the background in most of the songs on this LP. Everything about this album speaks to the seriousness of the project. The images of Marvin on the cover and on the inside sleeve portray him in a long black coat (in one picture, he is actually standing in the rain). Gone are the photos from his earlier albums with the big, almost carefree smile. His expression on What's Going On is pensive—thoughtful. This serious mood carries over to the album slip as well. All of the lyrics from What's Going On are printed inside. In addition, all of the artists who contributed to each track are listed as well. Both of these elements were not common on the Motown label, which tells us something about what Gaye intended here: This was art. It wasn’t meant simply to be enjoyed. It was meant to be studied and talked about.

Marvin Gaye made a leap with this album, both musically and personally. He embraced the social responsibility that Barry Gordy had discouraged for so long, and asked people to truly LISTEN to this music. In terms of intended audience, Gaye was speaking to THE WORLD on this album! While many of the themes no doubt spoke more directly to a black audience, racial unrest, poverty and the environment were universal in appeal. The irony of course is that Gordy did not predict the extent of their appeal. The album that he questioned in terms of marketability became a timeless masterpiece. (Ben Gracey)

This is an important album showing Mingus’s tie into the black gospel church music of his youth and roots. (Eric Lucas)

This is a previously unreleased CD recording and provides fresh material to examine for both Monk and Coltrane. (Eric Lucas)


This compilation is a four-compact-disc boxed set of seven previously released albums from Philips Recordings, with track details and liner notes that put these recordings in historical and cultural context. The set focuses on celebrating and chronicling from 1964-66 “Simone’s most significant career stretch as it occurred.” It displays how impossible it is to categorize her music and shows the amazing range of her talents, not just as a major-league musical gypsy, but as someone who can bend genres with the stamp of her sheer genius. The liner notes, written by Ashley Kahn, describe Simone’s identities as civil rights diva, piano prodigy, label star, and enduring enigma: Four Women in one.

Four Women aims for the general audience—especially the listeners who are new to her and want to ingest her brilliance in a 75-song inoculation. The package includes plenty of colorful photos, collage, history, biography—punched up with loads of quotes from Simone and those musicians and admirers who are in awe of her—to help the nascent Simone listener understand the reason behind her veneration and why she surpasses the trinity to be four-in-one.

These Phillips recordings are simply a sublime body of art from the mid-sixties that bridges pop and jazz—and every other genre—capturing the spirit of the times in a way that only Simone can. It
answers who she is, what she was trying to do, and how she fits when she doesn’t fit. It answers how a jazz chameleon can still maintain her integrity and identity. (David Robinson)

-------. “Mississippi Goddam.” In The Best of Nina Simone. Chicago: Philips, 1969. 600-29. LP.

This classic protest song by Nina Simone was performed in concert at Carnegie Hall in 1964. Ironically in the style of a show tune, the song offers encouragement to continue the fight for civil rights in spite of tragic setbacks. Simone proclaims, “You don’t have to live next to me, just give me my equality.” (Karen Helseth)


Song helped fuel the Civil Rights Movement, often bolstering the courage of the participants in marches, sit-ins and other gatherings. Sing For Freedom: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement Through Its Songs is organized in a way that allows the listener to follow the path of the Civil Rights Movement with recordings of both the singers who were there, interspersed with recordings of civil rights leaders’ speeches. The album’s opening song, “We Are Soldiers in the Army,” was sung by the Montgomery Improvement Association’s trio. Divided into eight sections (explained in the liner notes), the list of performers includes the aforementioned trio, the Nashville Quartet from the American Baptist Theological Seminary, the SNCC Freedom Singers and others. Speakers including Reverend Ralph Abernathy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. provide the testimony.

Part of the Smithsonian’s Folkways Collections, this recording is eminently listenable. The songs capture the power, promise and transformation present in the Civil Rights Movement through recordings made by the song leaders and singers during the era, rather than being re-creations after the fact. Guy and Candie Carawan, who recorded these songs, recall, “In 1964 in Atlanta, Georgia, there was a gathering of song leaders/activists from across the South. It was called a Sing For Freedom workshop. This was one of a series of music workshops that helped to spread the growing repertoire of the movement. Guy... had help from cultural organizers from both SNCC and SCLC...” The songs on this recording capture the Civil Rights Movement and its reliance on music to help motivate and move people in the moments as they were happening. (Loren Preuss)


This recording is a great example of the gospel organ playing of Jimmy Smith and also an example of the church/preaching influence on soul jazz. (Éric Lucas)


The story behind this Edwin Starr classic helps us understand the artistic impact of the Vietnam conflict on jazz and Motown artists from divergent angles. Here’s how. “War” was actually first released as a track on the Temptations album Psychedelic Shack, in March 1970. The track's direct message, summarized by its chorus ("War, what is it good for? Absolutely nothin'!") struck a chord with the American public and resonated with growing public opposition to the war in Vietnam. In fact, fans from across the nation, many of them college students and other young people, sent letters to Motown, requesting the release of "War" as a single. True to form, Barry Gordy didn't want to risk the image of its most popular male group. The Temptations themselves were also apprehensive about releasing such a potentially controversial song as a single. And so the label decided to withhold the release of "War" as a single, a decision that Norman Whitfield (the writer of the song) fought until the label came up with a compromise: "War" would be released, but it would have to be re-recorded with a different act. Edwin Starr became that act.

Upon its release in June 1970, Starr's "War" became a runaway hit, and held the #1 position on the Billboard Pop Singles chart for three weeks, in August and September 1970. Notable as the most successful protest song to become a pop hit, "War" became Edwin Starr's signature song. Rather than
hindering his career (as it might have done for the Temptations), it actually buoyed Starr's career, and he adopted the image of an outspoken liberal orator for many of his other early-1970s releases, including the similarly themed "Stop the War Now" from 1971.

This story illustrates two notable phenomena that help us understand the artistic impact of Vietnam. First, it is a perfect example of the methods used by Barry Gordy to try and kill, shape or guide any music that attempted to address serious subjects such as the debacle in Southeast Asia and goes a long way towards explaining why more music did not come out of Motown that seriously addressed the issue of the war. The second lesson of “War” is the extent to which it proves the tremendous demand by the public for works that did address the war. The fact that Gordy’s hand was more or less forced by thousands of fans that swamped his office with letters is some indication of the increasing pressure upon artists to talk about Vietnam, to produce works about it. The fact that the song held the #1 position on Billboard for three weeks reinforces this point. (Ben Gracey)


“Ball of Confusion (That’s What the World Is Today)” is a hit single released in 1970 by the Temptations, which tackles a plethora of social issues that were relevant as the turbulent sixties gave way to a new decade. This song marks a period when the Temptations had departed from the romantic ballads and pop-oriented dance numbers that had made them famous in search of a more modern, ethnocentric aesthetic. Until then Motown had generally avoided producing songs about controversial topics, but by the end of the 60s political activism was such a large part of the culture of young America that in order to be taken seriously, even pop groups needed to make a political statement.

“Ball of Confusion” is aptly named, in that it does not focus on one specific issue but rather comes across as a laundry list of social problems in the United States. Some of the topics represented are urban flight, segregation, drug abuse, air pollution, high taxes, political corruption, unemployment, overpopulation, and the Vietnam War. Needless to say, with so many topics in one song, it is impossible to go into much detail about each topic, so basically the message is that these issues are plaguing our society, making it seem as if things are spinning out of control. There is a sense of uncertainty about the future.

The solo electric bass establishes the beat at the beginning of the song. Soon, the guitar enters, using pitch effects to create psychedelic overtones. When the drums come in, a moderately slow funk-oriented groove is established. The chord structure of the song is a nod to James Brown—the same chord is used for all of the lyric portions of the song, with chord changes for emphasis only on the instrumental breaks. The lyrics are very cleverly written, with catchy rhymes: “segregation, determination, demonstration, integration, aggravation, humiliation, obligation to our nation.” The vocals are delivered in a rapid-fire, aggressive manner, occasionally punctuated by the bass vocalist singing two octaves lower than the primary range of the melody, “and the band played on.” The only time the entire group sings together in homophonic harmony is for the line “round ‘n’ round ‘n’ round we go, where the world’s headed, nobody knows” in the middle of the song, summing up its real message. (Karen Helseth)


Stevie Wonder’s 1973 album addresses a number of social issues, including drug abuse, poverty, racism, and other conditions of the inner city. (Karen Helseth)

**Musical Scores**

This is a helpful resource for both solo musicians and music educators or scholars who wish to study Coltrane’s virtuosity as a soloist. It contains note-by-note transcriptions of twenty-seven song titles that John Coltrane recorded. Some songs are solo transcriptions of charts he recorded with other period artists (e.g., “So What” with Miles Davis) and the rest are selected from many of his own recordings throughout his career. The work also contains reference materials such as biographical information on Coltrane and comments about the recording sessions.

This resource is valuable to musicians and scholars who are studying the artistic and virtuosic nature of John Coltrane’s music. Not only does this collection provide note-by-note transcriptions, but also it contains comments within the score that are not normally written on the music (such as “delay” or “rush”) that indicate ways that Coltrane played a passage. Also included are a Notation Guide of all jazz specific notation in the score and Suggested Alternate and Altissimo Fingerings needed to perform the solo.

The research value of this collection is as a visual reference tool for analysis of the songs included, especially when there is a desire to compare and contrast the earlier work (pre-60s) of John Coltrane with his later groundbreaking works and style of performing (1960 to his death). (Eric Lucas)


Periodicals (Magazines & Newspapers)


This Time magazine article from 1969 reports on a new phenomenon that had begun to arise in the normally disciplined American armed forces. The report states, “The combination of domestic turbulence, an unpopular war and the new spirit of black militancy has produced ugly incidents in which American fighting men turned upon one another.” The article cites several examples. For instance, at Camp Lejeune, N.C., about 30 Negro and Puerto Rican Marines attacked 14 whites in July 1969. One of the white Marines died. At Fort Bragg, N.C., racial antagonisms erupted into a brawl between 200 white and black soldiers. At Hawaii’s Kaneohe Bay air station, some 100 black and white Marines, just returned from Vietnam, fell upon one another after a colors ceremony. Seventeen were injured.

Kirshenbaum’s explanation: “Before the war went stale and before black aspirations soared at home, the black soldier was satisfied to fight on an equal basis with his white comrades-in-arms in Viet Nam as in no other war in American history. But now there is another war being fought in Viet Nam—between black and white Americans.” This growing tension began to breed solidarity among African American troops, similar to those bonds that were forming among African Americans on the home front.

Time reports:

In remote fire-support bases near the Cambodian border, blacks register their complaints as a group. Tanks fly black flags. At Danang, Black Power Leader Ron Karenga's followers have designed a flag: red for the blood shed by Negroes in Viet Nam and at home, black for the face of black culture, and green for youth and new ideas. Crossed spears and a shield at the center signify "violence if necessary," and a surrounding wreath "peace if possible" between blacks and whites.

This source represents one more example of the increasingly blurry separation between the events of the Vietnam conflict and the racial issues that were being debated and discussed on the home front. It became
increasingly difficult to separate the war from the Civil Rights Movement. Consequently, many American jazz and Motown artists who weren’t necessarily addressing the war directly in their work were addressing it indirectly in works relating to the fight for black equality. This article was clearly attempting to reach mainstream America with the message that events in Vietnam were becoming increasingly bizarre. By September 1969, public opinion was turning against the war, and the tone of this article is consistent with that fact. (Ben Gracey)

**Photography**


*The Civil Rights Movement: A Photographic History 1954-68* is a compilation of 150 photos taken by more than 50 different photographers. The images show the injustice through use of separate water fountains and police brutality as well as the hope through the March On Washington and the integration of schools by the Little Rock Nine. This compilation offers something for everyone interested in this short period of American History.

The book has a target audience of young adults to adults who have an interest in photography. The work is sold as a coffee table book. The book appears on the Civil Rights Movement Veterans Web site as a recommended photographic or image source.

Photography is designed to capture an image in such a way that the story of the image can be told by a viewer. Photography much like music creates images or stories within the mind of its audience. Viewing photographs much like listening to music is a very personal experience. Many of the original photographers represented in this book were merely trying to capture a historic moment, but Steven Kasher is compiling these moments to tell a much larger story. Kasher operates like Steve Wonder, beginning with his *Where I'm Coming From* and *Music of My Mind* albums in how he is using art to tell the social justice story or message he feels the world at large needs to hear. This compilation connects to a larger trend in the art community from the late 1950s to today of using art as a medium for social commentary and the artist’s personal feelings about events. This is a story without an ending. The book ends with the death of Martin Luther King and the Poor People’s March but the audience knows there is more to the story. It is similar to listening to a single track in a themed musical album; you know there is more to come.

Photographs invoke thoughts and feelings in an audience that can then be used for a number of purposes. Perhaps the audience will tell the story that they hear. Perhaps the audience will find meaning through the photograph for a story they have already heard. Perhaps the history that is written will come alive when paired with the image. Specifically connecting this book to the music of the time period would be very powerful as well. Students could be asked to pair photos with songs of the era that tell the story of the photograph. Specific examples of jazz that can be connected would be using “Strange Fruit” when looking at depictions of lynchings to help students visualize the impact that seeing such an event has. Listening to Marvin Gaye’s “What's Going On” while viewing pictures of police brutality would be a powerful tool for understanding such images in the broader social context of the time. (Carrie Brandon)

**Poetry**


Nikki Giovanni’s *Black Feeling, Black Talk, Black Judgment* is a book of poetry that express her thoughts about African Americans in the 1960s. The book of poems is divided into three sections that reference Giovanni’s thought about black feeling, discussion, and judgment. This volume of poems provides an insight about the economic, political, and social perspective of African Americans during the 1950s and 1960s. The poetry electrifies a generation of young blacks who sought a revolution against the injustice of the time period. These poems promote black cultural awareness and community development through enforcing black power.

Three poems that will be addressed from an artistic view are “Black Power,” “A Litany for Peppe,” and “Revolutionary Music.” Giovanni’s “Black Power” is a tribute to “all the Beautiful Black Panthers East.” She provides a visual image through her words about police brutality, which was a significant concern during the 1950s and 1960s. The lines “When this cop told Tyrone move along buddy—take your whores out a here,” provide a look at the treatment of both black men and women. In this case Giovanni warns that blacks would be “standing talking” and the police could haul them off to jail. “A Litany for Peppe” digs into the idea of black power after Martin Luther King was killed in 1965. The poem invokes revolutionary thoughts in the line that states, “Blessed be machine guns in Black hands, all power to grenades that destroy our oppressor Peace, Peace, Black Peace at all cost.” Clearly, Giovanni provides an image of the anger and fury felt by blacks after the killing of Martin Luther King. It appears that this poetic line refers to a rallying of the black troops to start a revolution that invokes black power.

Finally, evaluating “Revolutionary Music” from the artistic perspective, Giovanni focuses on the importance of musical lyrics in various songs. She quotes, “I got the feeling baby I got the feeling,” “hey everybody let me tell you the news,” and “think,” referring to the power in black music which was a motivation for the Black Power Movement. The black artists and their music that Giovanni references in this poem elicited a response from black people to fight for change. Clearly, black artists were sending a message in their music to the black community. Giovanni asserts that revolutionary black music is essential to providing consciousness and creating change during this time. (Sharee Seal)


Like the poem/song of the same name, Joy Harjo’s “Strange Fruit” is an ekphrastic poem responding to a lynching. It tells the story of Jacqueline Peters, an African American activist lynched by the Ku Klux Klan in Lafayette, California, in 1986—in her imagined voice—or Harjo is imagining herself in Peters’s place and mixing the details of Peters’s murder with her own life. Either way, in simple language and first person point of view, Harjo’s imagined Peters utters a reasoned and nightmarish plea against the grotesque “hooded ghosts from hell on earth.”

Harjo’s poem echoes the original Abel Meeropol’s “Strange Fruit” but uses a voice from beyond the grave as the poem’s center and not the original’s ironic voice of the observer. Both poems act as commentary on lynching and racism in America; however, the specificity of Harjo’s poem to a particular lynching works to heat up the narrative and places the reader’s neck deeper into the noose with the ease that comes from putting oneself in the character’s shoes. And what horrible shoes these are.

Both poems rely on irony, but Harjo’s isn’t as subtle as the original “Strange Fruit.” While Meeropol’s version employs rhyme, rhythm and almost a haiku-esque simplicity to lead the reader to a turn-of-thought about just what this strange fruit is, Harjo can allude to the original, take the metaphor and symbol further into the horror of lynching and America’s racism in the post-civil rights age. The
original works as a haunting song—Harjo’s works as a demented dance. In terms of ekphrastic art
inspiring more art, Harjo’s “Strange Fruit” deepens the trend and keeps the injustice pricking at our
collective conscience. (David Robinson)


The poem “Love Your Enemy” by Yusef Iman is an easy-to-read poem written in a statement /
answer format in which a wrong committed is stated, then the wrong is answered with a repeated chorus
of “love thy enemies.” This 38-line poem includes a number of images from the civil rights struggles in
Birmingham including but not limited to church bombings, water hoses, and biting dogs. The poem
begins with the wrong of the slave trade and continues through 1960s civil rights events. Rather than
follow only the teaching of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke of “love thy enemy,” Iman ends by questioning
readers about when they will love themselves. The poem is written the third person in the voice of the
persecuted.

“Love Your Enemy” was first released in 1966 in Iman's book Something Black. It was re-
released in an anthology of poetry titled Gospels in Our Own Image: An Anthology of Poetry Based on
Biblical Texts. It is clear that Iman was influenced by the Gospel of Luke and was looking at the events of
the times through this lens. Iman may also have been influenced by poet and preacher Clarence Jordan,
who in the 1940s and 1950s wrote the “Cotton Patch Gospels,” which were admitted to be a translation of
the New Testament. Specifically he translated the Gospel of Luke in a style very similar to Iman's own
style. This follows the musical tradition of taking that which is spiritual and making it secular to appeal to
a larger audience or to expand upon a message, much like the Fitz Jubilee Choir, a school gospel choir,
did in order to raise money to save their school. The secularization of church music and messages was
one of the themes discussed during the NEH Institute and helped black artists to “cross over” to
mainstream audiences for their work. Iman may have been following this idea to get his message out to
the masses.

Iman's poem is very clear in its use of imagery from the time period much like the music of the
time and uses language that is accessible to a large audience. The simplicity of the piece makes it a primary
source of civil rights art and a text that can be taught across a broad range of grade levels. The poem
evokes the imagery of the time but also the question that plagued many individuals during the era of how
to come to terms with events of the time and find an inner peace and self-love. For students this poem can
be used to teach the history of the time period, but also to pose the question of how far have we come.
(Carrie Brandon)


McCown, Clint. “The Night Marvin Gaye was Shot By His Father.” In Dead Languages: Poems.

In this 90-line narrative poem, Clint McCown starts with the memory of how he and his friends
learned of Marvin Gaye’s death during a NCAA semifinal game “when the stark news dragged / across
the bottom of the screen.” He muses across time, over 50 years of his life span thus far, then back to the
reaction he and his friends had to the tragedy. He reflects on how life works, the danger of success, the
arithmetic of death found in the daily mundane details. He avoids easy nostalgia and regret with this
backward glance that illuminates the present.

This artful poem aims with simple language to connect the meaning of Marvin Gaye’s death to
the narrator’s own life (and hence our own by proxy) and develops a cogent and philosophical context for
life and death. Although this is less an ekphrastic poem and leans more toward elegy, it does include
several surprising twists and moments of wit and beauty amid the normal clutter and ruins of the day-to-
day.

In the context of Motown, this poem shows how connected the poets of Hitsville are to their
audience, how the performers are revered for their lucid understanding of the human condition, how
skillful the artists of Motown are in capturing complex truths in everyday moments, how this secular and commercial music can be transformed into healing ritual: “We found a tall horse / standing in a dark pasture and pulled/ the tangles from its mane. We sang / ‘Heard It Through the Grapevine’ / loud enough to light / the distant farmer’s window, / and put ourselves together again.” This poem answers the question of what music is with a glimpse into the human psyche lit from the light of Marvin Gaye’s stardom. (David Robinson)


Speeches


“We Shall Overcome” is a speech given by Lyndon B. Johnson to a full Congress on Monday March 15, 1965, one week after the attempted Selma-to-Montgomery March. Johnson made the speech in response to the TV footage shot in Selma on the day of the march, which had ended in police beatings of protestors who were marching. The graphic images that were seen on TV and in print media clearly depicted the brutality inflicted by police officers on protestors. Lyndon B. Johnson did not see these images as a reflection of what America represented, and he wanted to offer a vision for the future as well as an apology for the present condition in Selma. The message of the speech is a clear call for a bill in Congress to allow equal rights for voting. The speech is now considered one of the top 100 speeches to use when teaching oratory skills.

The intended audience for this speech at the time was Congress as a whole as well as the American voter. Lyndon B Johnson was a politician and was setting his platform for voting rights and taking a side in the Civil Rights Movement. The speech, like many of Dr. Martin Luther King's speeches, included references to God, church, and classic Negro spirituals. Through the use of these references Lyndon B. Johnson may have been trying to increase the number of audience members who would support his message and vote for him in coming elections. Given the style of writing, the current audience for this piece would be scholars, most likely middle school age and above, studying the Civil Rights Movement, voting rights, and/or oration.

Lyndon B. Johnson's speech connects with the NEH Institute’s theme in many ways. Most clearly the speech references a Negro spiritual as many songs that became popular during this time period secularized spirituals. There seems to be a strong trend during the 1950s through the early 1970s to pull the church into the secular culture and secular issues of the day. Another general trend in art during this time period was for artists to use their art as a mode of commenting on events around them. Lyndon B. Johnson clearly used his oratory skills to comment on the event in Selma and to pass his judgment upon
the outcome of the event. Artists, who have much less control of public policy, used their art also to comment and pass judgment on events or policies of the time period.

In the classroom this speech is useful in teaching a number of lessons. The speech is shorter than most political speeches, making it a primary source that can be covered in a single lesson. It also is very clear in its references to events and images. The speech likens the quest for voting rights to America's quest for freedom from Britain with a reference to Lexington and Concord. Lyndon B. Johnson did use imagery and simile in his speech, but his images were not as complex as those of other prominent speakers of the time, making the speech more accessible for younger students. The speech can be used as a conversation starter for a discussion on the event in Selma, the larger Civil Rights Movement, or even a discussion on the separation of state and church. English teachers can use this as a primary source to teach parts of speech and use of imagery. (C Brandon)


King, Martin Luther, Jr. “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence.” Delivered to a congregation at Riverside Church, New York City, on April 4, 1967.

This speech is a classic and, placed in the proper context, really helps to illuminate my search for the artistic impact of Vietnam on jazz and Motown. In an effort to maintain support among more militant blacks, mainstream civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. began to address the problems of the black lower classes living in the nation's cities. By the mid-1960s, King had begun to move toward the political left. This speech is an excellent snapshot of this evolving strategy. In it, he says there was little purpose in being allowed to eat in a restaurant if you had no money to pay for a hamburger. He urges a radical redistribution of wealth and political power in the United States in order to provide medical care, jobs, and education for all of the country's people. And he speaks of the need for a second "March on Washington" by "waves of the nation's poor and disinherited," who would "stay until America responds ... [with] positive action." The time had come for radical measures "to provide jobs and income for the poor."

Most importantly for my research purposes, King denounces the Vietnam War as "an enemy of the poor," and describes the United States as "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today," and predicts that "the bombs that [Americans] are dropping in Vietnam will explode at home in inflation and unemployment." This contention that the indigent were negatively impacted at a disproportionate rate by the war was one that had been put forth by Malcolm X as well. Mostly, their arguments asserted that more poor African Americans were being sent to Vietnam than their white counterparts. In addition, they both pointed to the negative impact of the war on the economy, and how that also impacted black Americans more than white Americans. Black nationalists and members of the Black Power Movement often concurred with this assertion.

The King speech at Riverside Church represents an evolution in his approach to civil rights reform that was greatly impacted by the escalating Vietnam conflict. Given that my subject seeks to examine the artistic impact of the Vietnam War on jazz and Motown, this speech helps to shed some real light on my question. It does so by offering insight into the strengthening connection between the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement and the war in Southeast Asia. Once this connection is established, one could argue (I do anyway) that themes in music that relate to civil rights often carry a duel meaning and implicitly address the Vietnam conflict as well.

The audience that King sought to reach with this speech was certainly universal—white, black, women, men, rich, poor, middle class, voters, elected officials, etc. By 1967, King was a well-established figure, covered by a wide range of news sources. The Riverside Church speech was widely reported, and certainly with the blessing of King, who by this time was addressing issues beyond race, but with an eye towards race. This is one such example. (Ben Gracey)
Visual Art / Posters


*Remember... Uncle Tom Says Only You Can Prevent Ghetto Fires* is a political poster produced by Ron Cobb of Los Angeles in 1967. The poster depicts an older African American man pointing at his audience with his right finger while holding a hoe up in his left hand. In the background one can clearly see a large-scale fire and what could be smoldering buildings. The poster resembles the 1947 National Forest Service poster of Smokey the Bear with the famous line, “Only you can prevent forest fires.” In *Remember... Uncle Tom Says Only You Can Prevent Ghetto Fires*, the word “remember” is clearly shown at the top of the poster with the phrase “Uncle Tom says only you can prevent ghetto fires” at the bottom.

During the 1960s there were more than 20 riots in cities throughout the USA. In 1965 Los Angeles experienced the Watts Riot. Detroit experienced its own major riot in 1967, the year the poster was released. Ron Cobb has not released any text that explains his motivation for producing the poster, and he moved out of political comics and into the movie industry in the 1970s, at the same time relocating to Australia.

This work follows two trends in music. The first trend would be the idea of “covering.” Covering is when you take a body of art presented by another artist and make it your own through modification. It could be argued that this work is a cover of the U.S. Forest Service campaign. The second trend is a trend seen in all art forms: the creators use art to express their feelings regarding an event or topic. This work most likely presents the artist’s opinion regarding the riots that were occurring around the U.S. during this time period.

This poster follows a Motown hit that many believed commented on the riots in the U.S. Martha and the Vandellas released “Dancing in the Streets” in 1964. If nothing else the song and the poster certainly can be taught together when teaching about the riots during the 1960s since they draw on similar imagery. The song refers to a city in which riots had broken out although the riots began after the song’s release. The song did hit the top 5 in the UK charts in 1969, indicating that it was still widely influential during the mid- and late-1960s. Though the song was not intended to be political in nature, it did begin a trend at Motown that was followed by Stevie Wonder and later Marvin Gaye in using music to state political messages.

The poster has a number of historical images that could lead to a variety of possible meanings. The words also may have various possible implications. The poster can be used with different grade levels as a conversation starter for a unit on the riots of the 1960s. In presenting this work teachers should inform students of the meaning of the term “Uncle Tom,” the symbolism of the hoe, and the history of riots in the U.S. The poster can also be used to teach how political cartoons are used as a vehicle for messages or commentaries on current politics. The meaning of *Remember... Uncle Tom Says Only You Can Prevent Ghetto Fires* can be a political message encouraging more violent protests that were directly opposed to the moderate middle class who at the time were referred to as “Uncle Tom's” by their more radical counterparts. (Carrie Brandon)

Web Sites


Over a 25-year period, picker James Allen has uncovered an extraordinary visual legacy: photographs and postcards taken as souvenirs at lynchings throughout America. He has turned them into a Web site and has published them in book called Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America through Twin Palms Publishing. The Web site includes four parts: Overview, Movie, Photos, and Forum.

The eight-minute movie, narrated by James Allen, frames the collection by examining the relationship between the photographer and the lynching—how photographers were more than bystanders and had often posed and composed in silvery tableaus these horrific moments. He explains how in this collection, “even dead, the victims were without sanctuary”…because “in America everything is for sale—including its national shame.”

The photo gallery, as well as the movie, includes the Lawrence Beitler photo that inspired Abel Meeropol to write the poem “Strange Fruit,” which was later turned into a song most often associated with jazz singer Billie Holiday. This Web site is as haunting as the song Holiday and other jazz singers perform. It is a lens that shows the distant past and not so distant past. (David Robinson)


Faith Ringgold was an artist during the 1960s Black Arts Movement who was inspired to use her art as an expression of her views on race, gender and class equality in America. In 2010, the Neuberger Museum in Purchase, New York, showcased an exhibit of sixty of Ms. Ringgold’s political paintings, posters and murals of the 1960s. The catalogue for the exhibit, The American People, Black Light: Faith Ringgold’s Paintings of the 1960s, focuses on two series and would provide an introspective look into American race and class relations for 1960s historians, teachers or students. The American People Series (1962-1967) illustrates the condition of black and white America and the contradictions of integration that were being felt by many African Americans. In Cocktail Party a crowd of white faces presses together in conversation while a lone black face is squeezed into a corner looking wordless. The inspiration for the Black Light Series (1967-1969) was to express the symbolic meaning of the color black and to extol the new Black is Beautiful movement by painting black without using a white pigment. In Flag for the Moon: Die Nigger (1969), Ringgold uses the image of the American Flag as a symbol of America’s historical mistreatment of African Americans. The museum curators remind us that during a period of civil rights, Vietnam, and the first wave of the Women’s Movement, the art of the period was defined by the “sterile movements” of pop art and minimalism. They claim that these movements generally failed to connect with social and political events of the time while Ringgold’s work offered clear insight into a critical movement in America and what it really meant to be an African American woman artist during this time.

Faith Ringgold was an important artist in the Black Arts Movement who depicted the black experience from a visual perspective and provided an authentic examination of the disparity between black and white people from a woman’s point of view. Influenced by the writings of James Baldwin and LeRoi Jones, she became dissatisfied with her traditional European art training and redefined her identity by studying African art. Cubism and African art were incorporated into her work as she “peacefully” protested and illustrated her criticism of America in the 1960s. Unfortunately, many of Ms. Ringgold’s once influential paintings have disappeared from public view, and the art curators explain that seldom are her political posters included in art history discourse. If the minimalists avoided symbolic and metaphorical associations and the pop artists associated more with American prosperity and affluence, could it be that Faith Ringgold’s expression of life through her art, which was true to her character before and after the arts movement, was an authentic and transformative voice that confronted the issues at the forefront of the 1960s racial, political and gender conflicts in America?
The teacher could use artwork from this exhibit in an interdisciplinary lesson to have the student interpret how Ringgold expressed social, political, racial and gender statements through her art and then analyze the impact of the art in the 1960s and 1970s. This is an excellent opportunity to teach content related to standard themes to students who prefer visual learning and might be more actively engaged by diverse forms of visual art such as posters, paintings, murals, photographs or other mediums. (Rose Mary Brown)


This PBS Interview with Angela Davis in 1998 is an informative piece that provides answers to questions about African Americans from the era of the Black Power Movement and Civil Rights Movement until 1998. Davis responds to vital issues concerning the state of black people in this county in the past and today. She elaborates on issues surrounding African American economics, unity, and responsibility. Davis shares insights on cultural politics, black liberation, and police violence within the culture. Her opinions are strong about the creation of a larger black middle class (the bourgeoisie) as a result of African Americans’ struggle for equality. Davis goes on to make suggestions and predictions about the future of the African American culture. Black unity is a crucial part of the future of black people, creating partnership strategies that look beyond color and race will bring black communities back together.

From the artistic view, I think looking at the impact of social, economic, and political events during the Black Power Movement can provide a window for change in the future. Interviews and discussions with people from past movements can provide a comparison with current concerns about African Americans. We can use the events of the past to assure that improvements are made within the black community and that there is no repeated destruction and inequality. Davis suggests that a larger black middle class has created a globalization of capital. When blacks became liberated, there was a growth in the black middle class, yet there is an absence of connection between the black bourgeoisie and black poor. Discussion about the black middle class or black bourgeoisie shows their contribution to changes in black music. The black middle class played an essential role in jazz music as its authentic form. Jazz was transformed to appeal to a more intellectual group of people. Berry Gordy, who was a part of the black middle class in the 1960s, marketed Motown music to a wider audience. Because of this Motown music became unauthentic since the audience of listeners included whites.

Interviews and discussions like this one can be used in the classroom as a tool to teach students how to compare and contrast historical facts. It is important that students are able to use texts such as this to develop higher order thinking and to build background knowledge about African American history. (Sharee Seal)

**The Black Collegian Online Archives: Historical Background of the Black Arts Movement (BAM).**


In an excerpt from his upcoming book,* The Magic of Juju: An Appreciation of the Black Arts Movement*, Kalamu ya Salaam details and outlines the historical background and development of the Black Arts Movement. Salaam’s narrative would serve as a reference tool for someone conducting in-depth research or seeking background on the Black Arts Movement. Salaam says that the Black Arts Movement (BAM) is usually portrayed as a “sixties” movement that was catalyzed into action in 1965 by the Assassination of Malcolm X. He defines the symbolic birth of the movement when Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka) moved “uptown to Harlem” and joined with other black artists/activists to form the Black Arts
Repertory Theatre/School (BARTS). Salaam sees a strong connection between BAM and the Black Power movement and states that both were given impetus by the passage of the 1965 Civil Rights Bill and the subsequent decline in the Civil Rights Movement.

Larry Neal, a writer and key ideological figure in the movement, proclaimed that the “Black Arts were the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept.” Salaam points out that BAM, therefore, cannot be understood apart from its beginning in the Black Power Movement. He provides a summary of the Black Power Movement’s history and discusses the importance of the black aesthetic in the context of the movement. An important point made by Salaam is that BAM was the “first American literary movement with a national reach to advance social engagement.” It is important to note that the Black Arts Movement was not isolated to one part of America but had individual and group participation nationwide. This is revealed as Salaam discusses the importance of Baraka, Neal, Ron (Maulana) Karenga, and other organizers and theorists in relation to the development and sustenance of the Black Arts Movement.

The Black Arts Movement is often referred to as the New Renaissance. As the fervor of the Black Arts Movement spread throughout America during the 1960s, Black Arts theatres and cultural centers often became active in grass roots community issues. Another hallmark of the movement was the growth of black poetry (spoken word) performance, literary journals, magazines and anthologies. Robert Chrisman, one of the founders of the Black Scholar: Journal of Black Studies and Research summarized the relevance of the times when he stated, “If we had not had a Black Arts Movement in the late sixties, we certainly wouldn’t have had national Black literary figures like Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Alice Walker, or Toni Morrison…because the Black Arts Movement did it for itself.” There were also a number of artists and musicians who expressed their social and political views through their work. The growth in black pride and Black Nationalism, which the artists individually and collectively expressed through their aesthetics, became a lasting legacy of the short-lived Black Arts Movement of the sixties and early seventies.

The teacher could have the student compare and contrast the Harlem Renaissance with the Black Arts Movement to analyze the social and political effects on American culture. A student could also research the various artists and identify the way their political and social views were being expressed. (Rose Mary Brown)

Independent Lens: A Film Festival in Your Living Room: Strange Fruit: Protest Music. PBS.  

This Web site from the Public Broadcasting Service is aimed at a general audience, and the purpose of this portion of the site is to further educate interested parties regarding the history of protest music from as early as 1776, when slavery was commonplace in the United States, all the way up through the anti-establishment era of the 1980s and 1990s, to what some define as “message music” beginning in 2000. The introduction to this section provides a wonderful explanation of its goal: “This overview highlights some American songs and songwriters whose words and music served as catalysts for thought, action and even social change.”  

Appropriately named for Billie Holiday’s mournful song about African American men hanging from the trees after being lynched, the site Strange Fruit allows one to tab through the various sections and get a succinct and informative introduction, including sound bites, to influential American musical movements. Under the tab labeled “Slavery 1776-1830,” there are specific examples and lyrics from slave songs and an explanation of how they fit into religious traditions and how these songs were instrumental in the organization and execution of the operation of the Underground Railroad. The “Abolitionist and Women’s Rights 1830s-1900s” tab on the Web site provides a quick overview of the Hutchinson Family, Julia Ward Howe and the common practice of writing new lyrics for widely known or common tunes, similar to the way Ray Charles rewrote lyrics to Gospel songs and fueled the success of his career. The “War, Labor and Race 1940s-1950s” portion is extremely sparse, with the majority of the information focusing on Woody Guthrie and folk legend, largely ignoring the issues of race and the widespread segregation of music at this time. The “Civil Rights and Vietnam 1960-1970s” tab is much more
informative, providing a springboard of information that can be further investigated. For example, lists of numerous songs written in response to the Vietnam War as well as protest songs such as Bob Dylan’s “A Pawn in Their Game,” written about the murder of the civil rights worker Medgar Evers, can be found here.

The information on this Web site can be used to further facilitate discussions on the entire spectrum of American music from its colonial roots to modern music and the social impact it has had and how that impact is illustrated in the way the music and the lyrics themselves have changed.

Audio clips are available for listening. (Andronike Giannopoulos)


-------. NPR Music: "Marvin Gaye Archive.”


This Web site, intended for the general educated public and written at a level that is accessible for individuals with minimally some high school education, is a digital version of an art exhibit originally held in the McGregor Room, Alderman Library at the University of Virginia from September 28, 2001, to February 11, 2002. The exhibit is dedicated to detailing the history of American music. It begins with a short overview of the exhibit, detailing where the exhibition’s name, “Lift Every Voice,” originates, namely a song written in the days of the Jim Crow South fully titled “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” aimed at giving African Americans hope for a better future. Walt Whitman’s “Leaves of Grass,” “I Hear America Singing,” and “America Sings” are also pictured, indicating that the interest in America’s musical roots has a wide and varied background and can be drawn from a variety of sources.

On the left side of the Web site is also a menu where one can click on and further investigate the history of a variety of different American musical styles and genres: Ballads, Hymns and Spirituals, Patriotic Odes, Minstrels and Musicals, Protest Songs and Virginiana.

The “Protest Songs” tab provides a brief introduction to the origins and needs of protest songs and states that “every period of social upheaval gives birth to songs of discontent.” Furthermore, it continues to detail the connections between the African American Spiritual and the Civil Rights Movement that some say began in 1954, noting that through the power of the Spiritual, the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum. Briefly, the transition from non-violent protest songs to songs of “Black Power” addresses pieces such as Nina Simone's "Young, Gifted and Black" and James Brown's "Say It Loud—I’m Black and I'm Proud.” (Andronike Giannopoulos)