
Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2004-2019

2012

The Legacy Of Civil Rights Protest Music: Sweet Honey In The Rock's "the Ballad Of Harry T. Moore"

Thomas Hyder
University of Central Florida



Part of the [Music Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Masters Thesis (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2004-2019 by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.

STARS Citation

Hyder, Thomas, "The Legacy Of Civil Rights Protest Music: Sweet Honey In The Rock's "the Ballad Of Harry T. Moore"" (2012). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2004-2019*. 2331.

<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd/2331>

THE LEGACY OF CIVIL RIGHTS PROTEST MUSIC: SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK'S
"THE BALLAD OF HARRY T. MOORE"

by

THOMAS MATTHEW HYDER
B.M.E. University of Central Florida, 2008

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Music
in the College of Arts and Humanities
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term
2012

Major Professor: Scott Warfield

© 2012 Thomas Matthew Hyder

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role music played in the Civil Rights Movement as a form of political protest. The first part of the studies analyzed how political protest music was used in the early part of the twentieth-century leading up to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. An analysis of the role of music in African-American culture also provides a historical background to the music-making of the Civil Rights Movement. Specific musical forms such as topical ballads, freedom songs, and spirituals are examined. In addition, musical influences of African culture as well as religious influences on music-making during the Civil Rights Movement are also examined.

The second section of the paper investigates the life and murder of NAACP organizer Harry T. Moore of Mims, Florida. Moore's life and death became the subject of a topical ballad, "The Ballad of Harry T. Moore", composed in 2001 by musical group Sweet Honey In The Rock. An analysis of the song's, literary, political, and musical connections to the ideology and music of the Civil Rights Movement, as well as subject matter, gives evidence that places the song within the tradition of the musical protest activities of the Civil Rights Movement.

For my grandfathers with love.

Thomas A. Hyder – “Pop”

&

A.J. Nolen – “Doo-Dah”

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The journey that is the writing of a thesis is an interesting one. At times, it is simultaneously the most difficult and most frustrating event going on in one's own life. Other times, the research, discovery, and synthesis of the entire process gives you a sense of utter accomplishment and wonder in regards to the story you are endeavoring to tell. Several people have guided, supported, proofed and re-proofed, and mentored me through this process, all of which deserve acknowledgement and gratitude. The first is my thesis chair Dr. Scott Warfield. Through the hours of discussion, technical help, concept guidance, and overall mental support, he endeavored to assist me in not only discovering the voice of this document, but fashioning it in such a way that I left a bit of my own voice in the final product. Thanks are due to my committee members Drs. Keith Koons and Jeremy Hunt for being a part of this project. The support of the Music Department of the University of Central Florida and to Jeff Moore, the chair, for providing me the opportunity to return to a school I loved, to work, to learn, and to teach at, has been integral to the success of this project. Thanks are due to Mary and Wayne Johnson for playing the "Ballad of Harry T. Moore" and handing me a CD recording of Sweet Honey in the Rock one evening over dinner. Neither they nor I could have know how serendipitous that would be. Many thanks go to my fraternity brothers Bryan Pittard, Patrick Williams and Dave Schreier for countless hours of listening to me vent when I was stuck and for constantly reminding me that it would be finished when it was finished. Kate Kostopoulos for constantly proofing and re-proofing for hours on end with me at the University Writing Center and at home when I just had to have that second or third read-through. Special

thanks are due to my parents, Craig and Eleanor Hyder, and my brothers, Nicholas and Brian, who gave me the needed support when words seemed to fail me and the blank pages on the computer screen appeared to be winning. Finally, I would like to thank my grandfathers, to whom this work is dedicated. A man of my generation is counted lucky to have positive male role models. In addition to my father, I knew two incredible men, who with their support, love, guidance, and wisdom made me who I am today. You are loved and you are missed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS.....	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: ANTECEDENTS OF MUSICAL PROTEST: “WOBBLIES,” WOODY GUTHRIE, PETE SEEGER, AND PEOPLE’S SONGS.....	4
Musical Forerunners: The Composer’s Collective And The IWW	4
Woody Guthrie.....	8
Pete Seeger And People’s Songs	12
CHAPTER TWO: MUSICAL PROTEST AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT	17
Historical Background: The American Civil Rights Movement	17
The Movement’s Predecessors: Roosevelt, The New Deal, WWII And Truman	18
The Music Of The Civil Rights Movement.....	21
Musical And Oral Tradition Roots: Africa And Slavery.....	21
The Freedom Song	26
Topical Songs.....	27
CHAPTER THREE: SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK	31

The First Voice: Bernice Johnson Reagon And The Beginning Of Sweet Honey In The Rock.	33
Feminist Perspective	36
Musical Style	38
Church Music Influences	39
African And Western Vernacular Musical Influences	41
CHAPTER FOUR: HARRY T. MOORE	44
The Man Harry T. Moore	45
“The Ballad of Harry T. Moore”: A Modern Day Civil Rights Protest Song	47
The Words.....	48
The Music	49
APPENDIX A: SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY	54
APPENDIX B: SELECTED LIST OF CIVIL RIGHTS PROTEST SONGS	58
LIST OF REFERENCES	61

LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

IWW	INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD
NAACP	NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
SHIR	SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK
WWII	WORLD WAR II

INTRODUCTION

Musical protest is not a new phenomenon. For generations individuals and groups have been utilizing music as a medium for transmitting their grievances with social, political, economic, labor, and cultural policies and predicaments. The music of these protest movements ranges from simple a cappella solo song to a high-budget modern rock show complete with pyrotechnics and a full array of musical timbres and experiences. In a sense, musical protest can run the gamut from “backwoods” to “Hard Rock”, from folk to jazz. Even within a genre, such as folk music, the range includes everything from small gatherings of amateur musicians and non-musicians to professional folk artists such as Pete Seeger and Beck. Despite the obvious differences in budgets and venues and the inherent argument of commercialization versus authenticity, the singular important feature in each of these musical productions is the use of music as the vehicle of protest. Music has many purposes within the context of protest, including a source of cathartic release, a source of unification, a vehicle for the dissemination of information, and a weapon in the movement’s or individual’s quest for change.

Within the United States, the musical protest vehicle of choice has usually been folk music. While contemporary popular music has become a part of the musical protest genre, rap for instance, the heart of protest music is folk song. The use of folk music for protest in a larger social setting had its beginnings in the nineteenth century and continued well into the twentieth century with perhaps its most fertile era occurring during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. The journey from early protest music of the nineteenth century to the Civil Rights era was an evolutionary process. The very nature of protest music is tailored to the events and causes of

the movement. However, each subsequent movement or cause draws from the experience and traditions of the previous, adding new musical experiences to a rich heritage in order to fight its battles more effectively and successfully.

The musical ventures of the Civil Rights Movement encompassed several sub-genres of song types. Many of these drew regularly from the African-American spiritual traditions that relied upon storytelling, call and response, unaccompanied solo singing, and most importantly, freedom songs. Storytelling was an important facet of the protest music of the Civil Rights Movement. Stories of inequality, racism, and injustice were used as examples of the struggle that all African-Americans faced during this time.

Key figures such as Harry T. Moore were immortalized within songs as examples for members of the movement to unify around. Additionally, these figures were used to educate the larger general populace about the key issues with which the movement was concerned. These topical songs became rallying cries and flashpoints for the movement and its members. The song “The Ballad of Harry T. Moore” provides an interesting case study in regards to Civil Rights protest music. A seminal figure within earlier civil rights efforts in the 1930s and 1940s, Moore’s murder in 1951 became a flashpoint for the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Harry T. Moore is considered one of the first civil rights martyrs. However, it was not until several decades after the Civil Rights Movement, that a documentary about Moore’s life was produced in 2001. “The Ballad of Harry T. Moore” was composed by the all-female, all-African-American vocal ensemble Sweet Honey in the Rock for that documentary.

“The Ballad of Harry T. Moore” by Sweet Honey in the Rock demonstrates that the musical traditions of the Civil Rights movement perpetuates well into the twentieth-century. Additionally, despite the significant gap in time between the music of the Civil Rights Movement and its actual composition date, “The Ballad of Harry T. Moore” functions both as a synthesis of freedom and topical song genres prevalent during the Civil Rights Movement as well as a continuation of the genre’s musical heritage.

It is my intention to explore the function music played within the social protest music of the Civil Rights movement, its major sources of material, antecedents, key musical figures and events that sparked this cultural and musical revolution within the United States. A brief history of Sweet Honey in the Rock and the vocal ensemble’s relationship to Civil Rights protest music, and protest music in general, will provide context for the study of “The Ballad of Harry T. Moore” and its place within the genre of Civil Rights protest music.

CHAPTER ONE: ANTECEDENTS OF MUSICAL PROTEST: “WOBLIES,” WOODY GUTHRIE, PETE SEEGER, AND PEOPLE’S SONGS

Musical Forerunners: The Composer’s Collective And The IWW

In 1934, the Composers Collective, an offshoot of the Pierre Degeyter Club of New York and affiliate of the communist-led Workers’ Music League, published the first *Workers Songbook*. In its forward, the *Songbook* stated:

Music Penetrates Everywhere
It Carries Worlds With It
It Fixes Them In The Mind
It Graves Them In the Heart
Music is a Weapon in the Class Struggle.¹

With this statement, the Composers Collective stated unequivocally that music could and would initiate and effect major change in current American socio-political trends. This sentiment, later echoed in the words of the great folk protest singer Woody Guthrie, would serve as the banner for the protest movement of the 1930s and 40s. This pioneer, together with other like-minded musicians such as Pete Seeger, would appropriate American folk music for fighting what they perceived as a class war in the United States. Music would become the vehicle of their change, and they became masters at utilizing it effectively.

With the publication of the *Worker’s Songbook*, the Collective’s intent to both compose and perform revolutionary music supporting the burgeoning American Communist movement in

¹ Robbie Lieberman “My Song Is My Weapon:” *People’s Songs, American Communism, And The Politics of Culture 1930-1950*.(Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press. 1989), 28

the United States at the time began to gain attention and attract new members. The Collective's membership consisted of the most prominent classical musicians of the day, Charles Seeger, Aaron Copland, Marc Blitzstein, and Earl Robinson.² These men would serve as the forerunners of the political-musical tradition later inherited by folk artists such as Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, and Josh White. It was from these early musicians, not all of them communists, that the folk protest movement would receive its early education, both politically and musically. The concept of utilizing folk music to promote socio-political change, however, would only develop after the "rediscovery" of American folk music in the middle part of the twentieth century. Folk music by contrast, received only a "passing glance" in the early part of the 1920s and 30s.

The major focus of groups such as the Composers Collective was the revolutionary chorus. These pieces, based on European models, were usually in a foreign language and technically difficult to sing for amateur musicians without extensive rehearsal. The native folk music of the United States received little if any attention at all. American folk music was not considered musically or politically progressive enough for the Collective's membership.³ Because of this, the initial *Worker's Songbook* contained no folk music while the second edition contained only two folk songs. It was not until the strikes of the 1920s that the Collective realized that their mass songs were not connecting with their audiences. Much of the Collective's music, while full of the political fervor they desired, was incredibly difficult to sing at rallies and protests unless a piano could be brought to the march.⁴ The Composer's Collective failed in its

² Lieberman, 28

³ Lieberman, 30

⁴ David King Dunaway and Molly Beer. *Singing Out: An Oral History of America's Folk Music Revivals*. (New York, New York: Oxford University Press. 2010), 32

musical mission due to the type of music they utilized. However, the folk idiom that they had ignored, and largely stigmatized, would take the lessons learned from the Collective and transform it into a true weapon of the masses. During the strikes of the 1920s and early 30s, protest singers produced songs such as “The Soup Song” and “We Shall Overcome” set to popular vernacular folk tunes and spirituals.⁵ The path for folk music’s ascendancy into the socio-political struggle of American Communism was open.

The concept of “singing out” against inequality was certainly not new by the time the Composers Collective published their first *Workers’ Songbook*. Another radical left-leaning group had also published a songbook. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), or “Wobblies,” had been “singing out” just as the Collective had. The difference between the two groups lay in their choice of song genre. The “Wobblies” relied on vernacular forms of musical protest, folk and pop. The IWW rewrote the well-known tunes of the day were rewritten for political use, specifically, union and labor causes. These songs such as Joe Hill’s “The Preacher and the Slave,” sung to the tune of spiritual “In the Sweet Bye and Bye,” utilized religious overtones to convey the class struggle of the labor unions:

Long-haired preachers come out every night
Try to tell you what’s wrong and what’s right
But when asked how ‘bout something to eat
They will answer with voices so sweet:
You will eat by and by
In that glorious land above the sky;
Work and pray, live on hay,
You’ll get pie in the sky when you die.⁶

⁵ Lieberman, 31

⁶ Dunaway, 37-38

Hill, born Joel Hägglund 7 October 1879 in Sweden, was the “Wobblies” premier song composer and protest singer. Having emigrated to the United States in the early 1900s, Hill lived as a hobo, moving from city-to-city, working odd jobs in both agrarian and industrial sectors. He was fascinated with the idea of organizing all the various tradesmen unions into one large union.⁷ His music’s biting satire aimed to convince or shame workers to the IWW’s point of view. His view was that the music, since it was the only effective way of reaching the common man, needed to inform the worker who was not incredibly intelligent or bright. Hill was determined to incite the downtrodden workers to battle the capitalist bosses by creating easy to remember, repetitive songs based on popular tunes.⁸ This militant unionism came to a halt however with the advent of World War I. Hill was arrested for murder in 1914 and executed by firing squad on 19 November 1915.⁹ Additionally, the IWW's protest against WWI resulted in the group being discredited. Political protest music withdrew into the background of American thought with the financial boom of the 1920s. The myth of Joe Hill was not forgotten however. He had created a model that the protest singers, who came to maturity during the Great Depression of the 1930s, would build on.¹⁰ The communists and the “common man” of the labor movement would soon find a new “Joe Hill,” champion of worker solidarity, in Woody Guthrie.

⁷ Lawrence J. Epstein. *Political Folk Music in America from Its Origins to Bob Dylan*. (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc. 2010), 22

⁸ Epstein, 25

⁹ Epstein, 29

¹⁰ Jerome Rodnitzky. “Popular Music as Politics and Protest” in *America’s Musical Pulse: Popular Music in Twentieth-Century Society*, ed. by Kenneth J. Bindas. (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers 1992), 4

Woody Guthrie

Woody Guthrie's early life was anything but idyllic. Born in Okema, Oklahoma in 1912, he was witness to the poverty and despair of the Dustbowl first hand. By the age of fourteen, he had watched as his family was torn apart. His mother was institutionalized; his sister Clara had died in a mysterious fire, his father had become crippled and was destitute. Left to fend for himself, Guthrie took to the open road in search of a better life. This would mark the first of many such wanderings, which in turn served as much of Guthrie's inspiration for his music.¹¹ Wandering along with other Dustbowl refugees, Guthrie found his way into California. He, like Joe Hill, worked odd jobs in the fields and frequented migrant hobo camps. It was during this time that he became part of a hillbilly act on a local progressive radio station. "The Woody and Lefty Lou Show" was popular with other refugees homesick for the songs and culture back home. It was here that his easygoing manner and distinctive humor was born. It was also during his stint with KFVD that Guthrie became introduced to the left wing political scene of California.

The Communist Party in America had resurfaced in the wake of the Great Depression to expound upon the wonders of Marxist principles and how their application could solve the poverty and social woes of the country's downtrodden.¹² Putting aside factional disagreements in the wake of the New Deal era, communists and socialists began a new wave of massive union organization. Guthrie, like many displaced Okies, was inherently drawn to this ideal of equality for all. Guthrie, while working with KFVD, began a friendship with *People's World*

¹¹ Wayne Hampton. *Guerrilla Minstrels: John Lennon, Joe Hill, Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan*. (Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press. 1986), 100

¹² Hampton, 102-3

correspondent Ed Robbin.¹³ Robbin introduced Guthrie to left wing circles and political rallies, acting as his informal agent. This early period is marked more by political songs expounding on Communist ideals of freedom from oppression with songs like “Mr. Tom Mooney Is Free” and “More War News.” The latter describes Russia’s 1939 invasion of Poland as “liberation:”

Stalin stepped in, took a big strip of Poland
and give the farm lands back to the farmers.¹⁴

This defense of the communist war machine did not endear Guthrie to his boss and earned him his walking papers at KFVD. Once again, Guthrie took to the open road.

New York was the ultimate destination. Staying with friends and in shabby hotel rooms, Guthrie was eventually booked, through the help of friend Will Greer, in the “Grapes of Wrath” show to benefit migrant farm workers. Several important things mark this performance. As far as the developing folk-protest movement was concerned, the show was a star-studded event. It featured ballad singer Aunt Molly Jackson and Huddie “Leadbelly” Ledbetter, a blues singer. In the audience was a young Pete Seeger. Backstage was Alan Lomax, the curator for the folklore archives of the Library of Congress. Lomax recorded Guthrie in March of 1940, as well as helping the singer get bookings on various radio programs. Through Lomax, Victor Records produced Guthrie’s music. *Dust Bowl Ballads*, while not a large commercial success, nevertheless is considered one the most influential recordings of the social protest movement. It was during the production of a second album, *Hard-Hitting Songs for Hard-Hit People* that Guthrie worked with young protest singer Pete Seeger. Traveling together to Oklahoma, Guthrie and Seeger stayed with the local Communist Party, sang songs and pushed the agenda of unions.

¹³ Hampton, 103

¹⁴ Hampton, 106

It was on this particular trip that “Union Maid” was composed.¹⁵ Expounding upon the virtues of “solidarity” it was the quintessential union song propagated by the Communist Party at the time:

Oh, you can't scare me, I'm sticking to the union,
I'm sticking to the union, I'm sticking to the union.
Oh, you can't scare me, I'm sticking to the union,
I'm sticking to the union 'til the day I die.¹⁶

Seeger left to roam on his own and would later find his way back to New York. It was in New York that he, along with several other young folk musicians, founded the Almanac Singers, a group devoted to the folk protest music movement. The group immediately found themselves brought to the attention of the Communist Party who saw them as the perfect vehicle for change. Their socio-political rhetoric, especially the album *Songs for John Doe*, brought negative attention from the government. FDR is anecdotally said to have remarked about the Almanac Singers: “This [group] is the most dangerous voice in America”¹⁷ Guthrie joined the Almanac Singers in the spring of 1941 and toured with them. They gave concerts at local union halls, and gave afternoon concerts in the basement of the Greenwich Village commune, Almanac House. These “hootenannies” became weekly Sunday events for local communists and unionists.¹⁸ The Almanac Singers, as their name implies, wanted to serve as a guideline and commentary of the left wing political movement. In their own words, they defined themselves: “Well if you want to know what the weather is going to be, you have to look in your Almanac. . . .and if you want to know what’s good for the itch, or unemployment, or fascism, you have to look in your

¹⁵ Epstein, 81

¹⁶ “Union Maid” Woody Guthrie, Accessed March 1, 2012 http://www.woodyguthrie.org/lyrics/Union_Maid.htm

¹⁷ Richard A Reuss and JoAnne C. Reuss. *American Folk Music and Left-Wing Politics, 1927-1957*. American Folk Music and Musicians Series, No. 4. (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press 2000), 152

¹⁸ Hampton, 114

Almanac.....”¹⁹ The tragedy of Pearl Harbor and the United States entrance into World War II, however, stalled the Almanac Singers’ career. The anti-government rhetoric of the protest movement was once again seen as unpatriotic. The Almanacs tried to compensate by composing anti-fascism songs such as “Deliver the Goods:”

Its gonna take everybody to win this war,
The butcher, the baker, and the clerk in the store,
The men who sail the ships and the men who run the trains,
And the farmer raising wheat on the Kansas plains.²⁰

However, the shift to a political ideology that was not very believable as well as ideological and compositional disputes amongst the group’s members led to its eventual decline. The scathing *Songs for John Doe* had produced equally scathing attacks from the anti-communist right as well.²¹ The war ended the Almanac Singers, but their lasting legacy on the folk music movement was huge. The Almanac Singers became the template from which folk protest groups such as the Weavers and Peter, Paul, and Mary drew inspiration. Through their experiences with the Almanac singers, Guthrie and Seeger had also created and defined the role of the professional protest folk singer.²² The role of the professional folk protest singer was concern for society as well as for the song. Originally, folk singers were mostly anonymous and sang for family, while professional singers sang not of societal issues but personal ones. Guthrie and Seeger fused the two together. After the Almanac Singers, Seeger and Guthrie would create another group in the spirit of the Almanac Singers, People’s Songs Inc.

¹⁹ Reuss, 150

²⁰ Reuss, 163

²¹ Epstein, 92

²² Epstein, 93

Pete Seeger And People's Songs

People's Songs was envisioned as an organization bent on "to create, promote distribute songs of labor and the American people."²³ Pete Seeger envisioned it as a singing labor movement. Its intent was clearly a focus on the American folk song tradition. Alan Lomax wrote a letter to sponsors describing the group:

We have based our program largely in the rich and democratic traditions of American folk music. We feel that the whole American folk tradition is a progressive people's tradition. For that reason our comments, our new songs, our activities, are in great measure, rooted in the fertile soil of American folk music.²⁴

The group consisted of many non-folk music related musicians. Everyone from jazz and other pop music performers joined People's Songs. In its first year, it touted nearly 1,506 members in its organization. The organization's main drive was political action, primarily communist in nature, driven and backed by the folk music tradition. Their political action was as much in their monthly *Bulletin* and publications as was in their songs and songbooks.²⁵ They advocated music as the weapon of the masses. A description from "Organize a People's Song Branch" read:

- a Teach everyone some grand new songs
- b Get memberships to singing
- c Get kids singing
- d Songs as a political weapon, an organizing weapon
- e Get new songs made up
- f Throughout emphasize the value of music for brotherhood and peace.²⁶

²³ Reuss, 186

²⁴ Reuss, 187

²⁵ Reuss, 188

²⁶ Lieberman, 70-71

People's Songs embraced these tenets wholeheartedly. Songs such as "Passing Through," utilized mountain tunes but with very different social protest orientated words.

I was at Franklin Roosevelt's side
Just a while before he died
He said "One world must come out of World War II.
Yankee, Russian, white or tan,
Lord a man is just a man,
We're all brothers and we're only passing through"²⁷

However, the modern communist movement in America during the Cold War era was no longer connecting effectively with the unions and labor movement. It became more evident after World War II that the United States and the USSR were experiencing political difficulties. The social-political view of the Communist Party in the United States suffered because of this larger political shift. Unions were now leaning away from the leftist politics of the past, at least the extreme communist ones. The FBI identified People's Songs as a communist front in 1947, and proceeded to investigate the group in order to bring about its end.²⁸ Interestingly enough, People's Songs *Bulletin*, and much of their other publication did not contain the strict "communist" rhetoric that Hoover and the FBI were seeking. What People's Songs did promote was the bringing of communist views through patriotic song. This was done the way most musical protest groups had done; through folk idiom found in the heritage of American history. Songs such as "Abe Lincoln" and "Jefferson and Liberty" were performed alongside patriotic songs such as "The Star Spangled Banner." People's Songs saw Communism as a natural outgrowth of Americanism. The communists saw a shared vision of unity in the songs presented by People's Songs. However, the People's Songs just could not reach the mass "proletariat" they

²⁷ Lieberman, 91

²⁸ Epstein, 102

sought to organize. In 1949, after clear opposition from the government, the HUAC Hollywood hearings, and a failed presidential run backed by People's Songs, People's Songs ceased to exist as an entity.²⁹

The folk music movement, driven by communist ideals, did not go away completely. Pete Seeger continued to lead the charge with another group the People's Artists founded in 1949. However, Guthrie was becoming less and less involved. His body was racked with Huntington's disease, and his increasingly odd behavior was alienating him from his friends, his family, and his audiences. He took once again to the road after his second marriage ended. He married one last time; this one also ending in divorce. He entered the Brooklyn State Hospital in 1956 and died there in 1967.³⁰ After his death, the legacy of the folk protest movement was passed to Woody Guthrie's partner and successor, Pete Seeger, who has carried it into the current decade. Guthrie's philosophy of singing out as a community against injustice formed the backbone of the folk protest movement. He championed the ideal of "Solidarity Forever;" that together the masses could affect substantial, positive, and lasting change.³¹ Most of his songs take the shape of "documentary songs." These songs are vivid descriptions of social problems Guthrie personally encountered or saw in his various wanderings. His best known song, "This Land Is Your Land," belongs to this group of ballads. Recorded in April of 1944, it originally contained a verse in regards to private property, a concept anathema to communist ideals.

As I went walking I saw a sign there
And on the sign it said "No Trespassing."

²⁹ Epstein, 105-107

³⁰ Hampton, 116

³¹ Hampton, 120

But on the other side it didn't say nothing,
That side was made for you and me.³²

This verse however was taken out eventually, and the popular ballad is learned by schoolchildren of all ages across the United States. Other “documentary songs” are “The Great Dust Storm” describing a devastating dust storm in 1935, or “I Ain’t Got No Home in This World Any More:”

My brothers and my sisters are stranded on this road,
Its’ a hot and dusty road that a million feet have trod
Rich man took my home and drove me from my door
And I ain’t got no home in this world anymore.³³

The other songs fit into the labor or “union songs” category. These songs deal specifically with labor issues: strikes, fair wages, unionization, organization and solidarity.³⁴ Songs such as “You Gotta Go Down and Join the Union,” “Union Maid,” and “Good Old Union Feeling” were composed with the intent to propagate the concept of a working class struggle in the hearts and minds of his audience. Guthrie was about recognizing inequality, and his song was the weapon against it.

While the folk protest movement went dormant during the Cold War era, the 1950s and 60s would bring about a musical protest movement unlike the previous movements seen before. Utilizing the legacy of protest singing traditions in conjunction with their own cultural traditions, African-American men and women in conjunction with singers and activists of the previous era, like Seeger, picked up where the protesters of the labor movement had left off and began a new era of musical protest. These men and women found a home for their musical activism within the

³² “This Land is Your Land” Woody Guthrie, Accessed on March 1, 2012
http://www.woodyguthrie.org/Lyrics/This_Land.htm

³³ “I Ain’t Got No Home” Woody Guthrie, Accessed on March 1, 2012
http://www.woodyguthrie.org/Lyrics/I_Aint_Got_No_Home.htm

³⁴ Hampton, 120

large national Civil Rights Movement. Re-appropriating the sounds and songs of their culture, the spiritual and freedom songs of the slavery era, the Civil Rights protester would fashion their own musical weapons for a new kind of fight.

CHAPTER TWO: MUSICAL PROTEST AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Historical Background: The American Civil Rights Movement

Tradition dictates that Thursday December 1, 1955 is the starting point of the American Civil Rights Movement. It was on that day that Rosa Parks, a black woman, refused to give her seat up for a white patron on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. At the time, it was illegal for African-American persons to sit in the “Whites Only” section of a bus. While Ms. Parks was in the so-called “neutral zone”, the row immediately behind the “white section,” the law still required her to relinquish her seat to a standing white passenger. For her crime, she was arrested and jailed. When asked why she had refused to give up her seat she replied:

I did not think I should have to stand up.
After I had paid my fare and occupied a seat,
I didn't think I should have to give it up.³⁵

This single act of protest sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycotts. Led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and including many prominent African-American local religious, union, and business leaders, the boycott became one of many protest events in the ensuing decades. The goal resonating with all those involved was simple: change. The men and women who became involved with what would later be labeled the American Civil Rights Movement wanted to affect a series of small changes in the overall pattern of Southern societal and economic norms.³⁶ These

³⁵ Lillie Patterson, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Freedom Movement. (New York: Oxford: Fact on File, 1989), 2

³⁶ Kerran L. Sanger, “The Rhetoric of Freedom Songs in the American Civil Rights Movement”. (PhD. diss, Pennsylvania State University, 1991), 36

smaller changes, mostly at the city or county level and dealing with societal norms, would in turn combine in a snowball effect that would bolster a later large-scale state or federal effort. The idea was that smaller victories could be cited as evidence to support larger state or federal changes. The bus boycott, and the year long struggle it encompassed, stands as the unofficial beginning of a series of protests, demonstrations, riots, marches, boycotts, and legal proceedings that became the American Civil Rights Movement.

The Movement's Predecessors: Roosevelt, The New Deal, WWII And Truman

While the actions of Rosa Parks and the subsequent Montgomery Bus Boycott stand as seminal events that began the Civil Rights Movement, earlier smaller incidents of activism occurred before December of 1955. Scholar Patricia Sullivan asserts that the movement, so prominent during the 1950s and 60s, “rested upon a foundation of coalition building and consciousness-raising formed the 1930s and 40s”³⁷ These two decades, marked by the New Deal of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, saw a drastic shift in the political climate of the United States. The New Deal policies ushered in new opportunities for American dispossessed by the Great Depression. Organized labor activism spread throughout the nation and called for fair and equal treatment for all workers. Those who had not prospered during the 1920s welcomed the economic change that the New Deal policies created. At the same time, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) launched a very successful political and legal

³⁷ Patricia Sullivan, “Southern Reformers, the New Deal, and the Movement’s Foundation” in *The Civil Rights Movement, Blackwell Readers in American Social and Cultural History* edited by Jack E. Davis. (Malden Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2001), 9

campaign against racial discrimination in public education. It was during this era that key persons in the Roosevelt administration and in the NAACP laid the groundwork for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s. Scholar Patricia Sullivan cites Charles Hamilton Houston, legal counsel for the NAACP during the New Deal era, as one of these key ground layers. Houston was one of few national civil rights activists who responded to New Deal ideals and politics by organizing local constituencies that focused on full and equal rights for African-Americans. A vice-dean of Howard University, Houston made the University a center of civil rights law development. In addition, as the special counsel to the NAACP Howard gathered and supported young African-American lawyers such as Thurgood Marshall to create broad legal strategies throughout the South.³⁸ New Deal policies and ideals at the federal level hit a wall in 1938, with President Roosevelt's attempt to remove powerful political opponents in Congress. However, World War II brought on a resurgence of New Deal ideology in regards to the rights of African-Americans citizens with particular emphasis on African-American voter registration. Organizations such as The Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW), an interracial coalition of southern New Deal supporters and representatives of the CIO formed in 1938, as well as the NAACP, made voter registration a top priority.³⁹ Local NAACP organizers such as Harry T. Moore, bolstered membership in new areas of the Deep South in addition increasing existing membership numbers to unprecedented levels.

In 1944, the Supreme Court's ruling in *Smith v. Allwright* was a monumental victory for the NAACP. The result of a twenty-year long battle to do away with the white primary, it was

³⁸ Sullivan, 12-13

³⁹ Sullivan, 14

comparable to the *Brown v. Board of Education Topeka* decision later on and its immediate effects saw the creation of a National Progressive Voters League, an interracial group, as well as vastly increased African-American voter registration and political activism.⁴⁰ However, any successes were met with increasing opposition from Southern whites in all aspects of American society and politics. Legal and policy problems were compounded by violence. African-Americans voting in primaries in Southern States often faced kidnapping, torture, and murder. By the late 1940s, the beginnings of the United States' Cold War mentality began to surface. President Harry S. Truman's loyalty-security program, begun in March of 1947, had far reaching implications. Establishing a national mentality of anti-communism, the program in tandem with the Smith Act of 1948 fractured the national New Deal coalition amongst organized labor and political liberals.⁴¹ By this time, the momentum felt by New Deal civil rights advocates and organizations such as the SCHW began to fade as the country slipped further into anti-communism and eventual McCarthy-ism. While the coalitions of the 1930s and 40s had become divided or altogether defunct, African-Americans had experienced a sense of empowerment that would prove not to die, but would continue to survive just under the surface. Courtroom victories would eventually culminate in the landmark *Brown v. Board* decision in 1954 and provide a burst of momentum that would propel African-Americans, and the rest of the country, into the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

⁴⁰ Davis, 17

⁴¹ Davis, 27

The Music Of The Civil Rights Movement

Musical And Oral Tradition Roots: Africa And Slavery

Throughout the Civil Rights Movement, organizers looked for varied strategies for purposes of organization, dissemination of information, protests, as well as communication with those in the veritable trenches of the movement's vanguard as well as those outside of the movement. Committed to an overarching policy of non-violence, advocated by Dr. King, the members organizing various events sought out only the forms of communication that they felt would have the most impact and power. Due to the political and social climate of the times, the various members involved with the Civil Rights movement were virtually powerless as individuals. However, through organization and unification, they perceived that it was impossible for their grievances to be ignored in any way. Further demonstrating their unification, and in order to make the most impact, the participants of the Civil Rights Movement chose very public demonstrations: sit-ins, Freedom-rides, mass demonstrations, boycotts, and other non-violent forms of civil disobedience.⁴² During all of these demonstrations, the activists chose to communicate the best way they knew how, through song. It is necessary to discuss the historical foundations that exist in regards to music in African-American culture. This will enable us to understand fully the extent in which music was woven into African-American culture during the Civil Rights Movement.

⁴² Sanger, 38

African-American culture has a rich tradition of singing stretching back to the days of slavery. Toward that end, music itself was incredibly important to the African slave culture in ways that were categorically different from their white slave owner counterparts. A significant aspect of the African music culture is that music making happens most often in social situations. The music is not created for artistic purposes, but as an expressive medium. Social music-making, as it existed for white Americans, was viewed as simply entertainment or as a form of amusement to occupy time.⁴³ Contrary to that is the belief in African cultures that music is pervasive throughout every single thought and action.⁴⁴ Music was a constant and sacred component of African daily life. Existing within a predominately oral tradition society, music, more specifically song, was a complex form of communication and was seen as a vehicle for easing tension as well as for expressing thoughts usually deemed inappropriate for plain speech. In addition, song specifically functioned as the society's living historical record. Song was prevalent in nearly every aspect of African culture: labor, religious ceremony, social gatherings and festivals, and other events in African culture. While the music was not necessarily the exclusive purpose of an event, it was understood that it contributed to the success of the event by "focusing attention, communicating information, encouraging social solidarity, and transforming consciousness."⁴⁵ Because of the way African culture regarded music, song acted as a cathartic vehicle for African culture. This aspect of African music would follow slaves brought to the

⁴³ Sacred Music being the exception to this.

⁴⁴ Lovell, 42

⁴⁵ David Locke, "Africa/Ewe, Mande, Dagbamba, Shona, Ba'Aka" in *Worlds of Music* 5th ed, (Belmont California: Schirmer Cengage Learning, 2009), 85

United States and serve as a foundation for later musical traditions for African-Americans after slavery.

During slavery, slaves were denied the more educated forms of communication: reading and writing. From the viewpoint of the white slave owner, an illiterate and ignorant slave was less capable of organization, and therefore, rebellion. A further effort to prevent organization was the separation of slaves and family groups and the prohibition of slaves meeting in large groups. However, songs, specifically the work songs of the fields, were encouraged by white slave owners. Seen as simple distractions, ones that seemed to make the slaves more productive and happier in their labors, the work songs were anything but simple. The African slaves utilized the field songs and shouts for many reasons, one of which was to create an elaborate form of communication. This communication went far beyond the simple melodies and lyrics heard by the slave overseers. Complex meaning, instructions for escape, emotions, and news hid behind circumlocution and double meanings housed within the lyrics of each work song.⁴⁶ The work songs were the predecessor of the freedom songs of the next several hundred years. They gave African-Americans a source of protest and cultural identity that was denied them by their situation. This outlet of communication gave African-American slaves a positive outlet in which to pour their aspirations.⁴⁷ The songs were transformative: “Without these songs, you know we wouldn’t be anywhere.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Sanger, 42

⁴⁷ Sanger, 43

⁴⁸ “Without these Songs” Newsweek August 31, 1964, 74

According to Thomas F. Jones, song became the African-American's outlet for "individual self-expression."⁴⁹ In his article in the *Journal of Black Sacred Music*, Jon Michael Spencer states that "Singing was not only a source of courage, it was a means of responding to events and audaciously 'talking back' to the establishment."⁵⁰ Later activists used song as survival tool in their struggle for equality. No longer used as a form of resistance or communication in the field, African-Americans began to use it in other places of oppression. Within prisons, where according to Spencer it was disallowed, singing was used as a "form of rebellious self-assertion." Songs such as "I'm gonna tell God how you treat me" and "Poor Silas Died in Jail" are among the songs used in this way by activists imprisoned at Parchman Penitentiary.⁵¹ The singing of songs enabled the activists to continue their protest despite being imprisoned. It is evident that no matter what the situation, song and singing allowed the movement to continue its mission. The songs and the ideology that they represented persisted after emancipation outlawed slavery. From these early musical beginnings various types of African-American music have developed, both sacred and secular.⁵² The music moved from the fields and into both the secular and sacred spheres of the freed African-American culture. The organizers of the Civil Rights Movement would have understood the underlying tenets of their musical heritage. Therefore, the music of the Civil Rights Movement is an extension of the oral and singing traditions of the African culture passed down through slavery. Bernice Johnson Reagon in her dissertation states that while the music of the Civil Rights movement was recorded

⁴⁹ Jones, 103

⁵⁰ Jon Michael Spencer "Freedom Songs of the Civil Rights Movement" *The Journal of Black Sacred Music* 1 no.2 (1987), 6

⁵¹ Spencer, 6

⁵² Sanger, 42

and written down, thus placing it in a literary category, it was nevertheless indicative of the oral tradition. She asserts that the value and life of the songs and music of the Civil Rights Movement are due to being a “component of an oral process.”⁵³ The songs of the Civil Rights Movement joined the larger umbrella of African and later African-American oral traditions.

The Civil Rights activists drew heavily, if not completely, upon the vast repertoire of cultural heritage songs available to them. The African-American Spiritual, anti-slavery hymnody, social gospel hymnody, and the songs developed specifically for the Civil Rights Movement, became the weapons of the movement. Like the folk protesters of the 1920s, 30s and 40s before them, the activists involved with the movement turned to music to create an incredibly powerful instrument for change. Taking into account the vast musical heritage of African-Americans, the songs of the Civil Rights Movement, for the purpose of this study are compiled into two broad categories: freedom songs and topical protest songs. A definition of each category and the songs that belong to it are necessary to place the music into an organized form that will fit with the intent of this work. Much, if not all, of the music of the Civil Rights Protesters does not fall within one single category. The multi-purpose nature of the music is such that a topical song may also have been used as a freedom song. Since much of the music of the Civil Rights Movement is tied to the African-American Christian church, many of the freedom songs fit within the sub category of spirituals.

⁵³ Bernice Johnson Reagon “Songs of the Civil Rights Movement 1955-1965: A Study in Culture History” (PhD diss., Howard University, 1975), 6

The Freedom Song

While many different musical elements of African-American culture were utilized, the freedom songs made up the bulk of the protestor's arsenal. Most of the freedom songs found their roots in the older slave spirituals and African-American religious music. The spiritual became another musical vehicle of the movement, fitting within the overall category of freedom songs. Spirituals utilized religious references, such as biblical figures, and events, or direct references to God or Jesus, as a form of musical worship. However, some of these older songs and forms were adopted and modified by civil rights activists for social protest. Figures and stories from the Christian Bible became allegorical models which African-Americans communicated their desires for freedom and equality. Using this model and initially drawing upon white Protestant hymns and songs, such as "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," activists were eventually reintroduced to the traditional African-American slave spirituals. . It was Guy Carawan, a white man and school music director, who redirected the activists back towards their traditional musical roots.⁵⁴ Utilizing these old melodies and forms, the activists began to write new words and "...made them their own."⁵⁵ Spirituals such as "Keep your hand on the plow, hold on;" "Over my head, I see Jesus in the air;" "This Little Light of Mine;" and "I Shall Not Be Moved;" were modified to become "Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on;" "Over my head I see freedom in the air;" and "We shall not be moved." Tunes such as "Old Time Religion" were completely rewritten:

⁵⁴ Sanger, 39

⁵⁵ Guy Carawan and Candie Carawan. *Sing For Freedom: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement Through Its Songs*. (Montgomery, Alabama: NewSouth Books, 2008), 5

We are moving on to victory
We are moving on to victory
We are moving on to victory
with hope and dignity
We will all stand together
We will all stand together
We will all stand together
Until we all are free.⁵⁶

These new lyrics served to evoke the feelings and determinative spirit of the activists. The freedom song became the musical tool of the Civil Rights activists to “galvanize people into political action.”⁵⁷

Topical Songs

In addition to the spiritual and freedom songs, another sub-genre utilized during the Civil Rights Movement to great effect, was the topical song. Topical songs refer to protest songs composed to address contemporary problems in a rather specific manner. In her dissertation on Civil Rights music, Bernice Johnson Reagon’s definition of topical songs are those songs that “...refer to a larger group of songs composed by professional songwriters about specific events of the [civil rights] Movement’s struggle”⁵⁸ These songs referred to specific social ills or events. Bob Dylan’s “Only A Pawn In Their Game,” a topical song discussing the assassination of civil rights leader Medgar Evers, and Phil Ochs’ “Going Down to Mississippi,” which deals with civil rights struggle in a specific southern state, serve as two examples of this type of professional

⁵⁶ Bernice Johnson Reagon “The Civil Rights Movement” in African American Music: An Introduction edited by Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby. (New York, New York: Taylor & Francis Group), 601

⁵⁷ Reagon, 599

⁵⁸ Sanger, 46

protest music. However, these songs incorporate little of the African-American musical traditions. Instead, the songs utilize more elements from the music of the earlier folk protest singers such as Woody Guthrie or Pete Seeger. The songs are strophic, with each successive verse set to the same melodic and harmonic content. In addition, the music of performers such as Ochs and Dylan are accompanied with the traditional folk instruments such as the guitar and harmonica. While the emphasis on the folk was prominent amongst white performers, elements of African-American musical culture was prominent in topical protest songs of black professional groups. The Staple Singers' "When Will We Be Paid For The Work We've Done" utilizes elements of African-American musical traditions. The song features strophic verses interrupted by a refrain describing the various, unremunerated, contributions of African-Americans since slavery to the United States. Like many African-American songs, a song leader performs the verses while the entire ensemble sings the refrain. Despite the similar elements in professional African-American protest performers, the differences between the topical songs of these professional amateur singing activists are still many. One of the largest differences between the songs of professional and amateur activists was accompaniment. Most of the amateur topical songs were sung a cappella, with a song leader singing verses and the collective body of participants all singing the refrain. The music drew upon the elements of African-American church, spiritual, and traditional African music idioms, instead of the folk protest elements utilized by white professionals such as Ochs and Dylan.

However, despite their perceived universality, these old traditional musical forms were not immediately embraced. Not everyone in the community felt that the use of these songs was appropriate. Many felt that the old genres and songs represented the past days of enslavement

and struggle of African-Americans. It was up to the activists to convince everyone involved that it was necessary to embrace the music of their past tradition – “an embracing of something which for years they have scorned or rejected.”⁵⁹ It was not just the music that came under fire as well. In addition to traditional songs being viewed as a window into a best-forgotten past, the movement’s policy of non-violence was viewed as ineffective and doomed to failure by those of a more militant slant. Spencer quotes Malcolm X, one of the more militant leaders of African-American protesters, in his speech “Black Revolution” as saying “revolutions are never waged singing, ‘We Shall Overcome.’ Revolutions are based upon bloodshed.”⁶⁰ According to Spencer, singing was a symbol of nonviolence that was “both a defensive weapon of mitigation and an offensive banner of self-assertion.”⁶¹ The more militant African-Americans saw defensiveness as weakness, and therefore the policy of nonviolence was a policy doomed to fail. As a result, singing became a vehicle of internal protest as well as external protest.

Still, despite the misgivings of the more militant members, the activists did succeed in convincing the bulk of the African-American community that songs of their past were not reminders of past humiliation, but emblems of black pride and self worth. The activists, relying on the strength that the old songs empowered them with, chose to sing only a few of the newer and more popular songs of the day. While those involved in The Civil Rights Movement did

⁵⁹ Carawan and Carawan, 8

⁶⁰ Spencer, 11

⁶¹ Spencer, 12

occasionally sing popular tunes or parodies of popular tunes, the old traditional spirituals and hymns were “deemed more universally appropriate and appealing.”⁶²

In the decades that followed the Civil Rights movement, the all-female African-American vocal ensemble, Sweet Honey in the Rock, using the musical traditions known to them, would merge the two categories of freedom and topical protest songs to memorialize an early Civil Rights activist, Harry T. Moore. This blurring of lines between genre, category, and musical content serves as the ultimate synthesis of the musical ideals of the Civil Rights Movement.

⁶² Sanger, 45

CHAPTER THREE: SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK

The Civil Rights Movement has never stopped. The constant struggle for political, social, and economic equity for African-Americans, and other ethnic minorities, continues to this day. After the 1960s, the cultural revolution continued with further momentum into the 1970s. It was in the 1970s that the all-female a cappella vocal ensemble Sweet Honey in the Rock (SHIR) would begin and find its voice. SHIR is unique in its appropriation and application of cultural music traditions in its socio-political musical output than the other all-female a cappella ensembles that have come before and after it.

SHIR, which began as a synthesis of all the musical, political, and social-equality ideals of the Civil Rights Movement experienced by Bernice Johnson Reagon, also champions social, political, and economic equality of black women. The group views its purpose as a celebration of African-American music and African-American identity, more specifically that of African-American female identity. Feminism forms such an important facet of the group's identity that the members refer to SHIR as a single female entity who possesses "her" own unique voice.⁶³ This strong leaning toward feminist ideology has given SHIR a distinctive political and social protest voice, with a great portion of their music focusing on the idea of African-American feminine equality. However, they operate within the same milieu that had been transformed by the Civil Rights Movement. Their music is drawn from the old religious and cultural forms used by the early protesters both freedom songs and topical. Many of the subjects of their topical songs are men, women, places, and events that are significant and often synonymous with the

⁶³ Arlette Miller Smith "Speaking The Song, Spreading The Word, Lifting The People: The Reimagination of Community Through Vocal Music Activism" (PhD diss., The State University of New York at Buffalo, 2005), 1

ideals of the Civil Rights Movement and the struggle for African-American equality. The members of the group bring their collective experiences and interests into each composition created.

In order to understand the importance of SHIR for this study, three key aspects of SHIR provide a better understanding of the group's role as a musical contributor to the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement. A brief background of the development of the group, with particular focus on founder Bernice Johnson Reagon and her personal ideology will give essential grounding into the "mind" of the "woman" called Sweet Honey. Reagon is the only member of SHIR to have actively participated in the Civil Rights Movement as an activist and song leader in Georgia. It was her experiences and the musical influences of the movement that inspired her to found SHIR in the early 1970s. Secondly feminism, specifically that of African-American women during the early 1970s, lies at the heart of SHIR's ideology. Eventually, SHIR would develop a broader national, as well as international, interest for a variety of social and cultural movements in addition to feminism and civil rights activism. This shift, from Reagon's initial concept of the experience of American civil rights activism through music, while important in the musical work of SHIR is not critical for its use in the scope of this study. Finally, and the most essential to this chapter, is that of SHIR's musical output within the vein of Civil Rights music. Two questions need answers in regards to SHIR's musical output for this purpose: "What is SHIR's musical style?" and "Where does its music exist within the larger tradition of Civil Rights protest music?"

Examining SHIR's musical style should reveal which aspects of the greater African-American musical traditions they chose to appropriate for its musical activism. This in turn will reveal the crucial information for the second question posed in this chapter: where exactly SHIR fits within the larger musical protest traditions of the Civil Rights Movement. This chapter's intent is to utilize all of the evidence gathered to demonstrate the importance of SHIR's musical motivations in addition to its place within the larger contexts of musical protest traditions during the Civil Rights Movement.

The First Voice: Bernice Johnson Reagon And The Beginning Of Sweet Honey In The Rock.

The group that eventually became known as Sweet Honey in the Rock traces its roots to Washington D.C. and the D.C. Black Repertory Company. Formed by actor Robert Hooks, the Repertory Company's goal was to train African-American men and women for careers in television, theatre, and film. It was at the D.C. Black Repertory Company that Bernice Johnson Reagon, in her position as vocal director, developed a series of workshops to assemble, create, and develop performance ensembles.⁶⁴ Reagon had previously been involved with the "Freedom Singers" for the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee as well as acting as a song leader in Albany, Georgia during the Civil Rights Movement.⁶⁵ Her workshops, while garnering a small group of interested performers, enjoyed only a limited success. The efforts of Reagon and few

⁶⁴ Kristina Gisele Boerger. "Whose Music is It. Anyway? Black Vocal Ensemble Traditions And The Feminist Choral Movement: Performance Practice As Politics" (DMA diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2000), 76

⁶⁵ Reagon "Songs Of The Civil Rights Movement 1955-1965: A Study In Cultural History" Preface.

dedicated performers fell short and for the most part the workshops were unsuccessful in creating a cohesive ensemble. Reagon made ready to abandon the project as a failed experiment. It seemed that the majority of individuals involved with the Repertory Company were primarily interested and dedicated to theater. However, one of the regular workshop attendees, Louise Robinson, urged Reagon to give the workshops one last attempt.⁶⁶ That last attempt would prove exceptionally fruitful. Reagon and the three other women who attended the workshop began to sing and found that as a group they blended incredibly well. The first song Reagon taught the others would ultimately become their namesake.

“Honey in the Rock” was the initial title of a refrain recorded in 1927 by singer Mamie Forehand in Memphis Tennessee. The hymn is based upon Psalm 81:6 in which the poet David advises that if the people of God would serve the Lord, they would be fed “honey out of the rock” as a reward for their faithful service. Various congregations would soon add the adjective “sweet” to the title, which stuck and remains to this day.⁶⁷ Reagon, having grown up as the child of a Baptist preacher, heard the song sung by vocalists and quartets in church and other performances. As a result, “Sweet Honey in the Rock” was a song that, throughout her life, would remain ingrained in Reagon’s consciousness. With that particular song at the forefront of her thoughts, she decided to make this the first piece taught to her group. She describes the event that led to the creation of Sweet Honey in the Rock:

After they got the chorus harmony just right, I said, “That’s the name of the group.”

Then I had to call my father, a Baptist minister, and ask him the song’s

⁶⁶ Smith 76

⁶⁷ Horace Clarence Boyer “Introduction” in *Continuum: The First Songbook of Sweet Honey in the Rock*. Choral Collection. (San Francisco, California: Contemporary A Cappella Publishing, 2000), III

meaning.

... I can still remember how comforting I felt about the idea of singing inside such an active powerful phrase.⁶⁸

Under the guidance and leadership of Bernice Johnson Reagon, Louise Robinson, Mie Fredericks, and Carol Maillard joined to form Sweet Honey in the Rock. SHIR came to embody all of the previous ideals associated with African-American music making in addition to the goals of the Civil Rights and Black Feminist Movements. SHIR endeavored to raise social consciousness utilizing an “eclectic array of expressive forms.”⁶⁹ Utilizing the traditions from African musical culture, African-American religious music traditions, as well as the spirit of the Civil Rights activists, SHIR became another voice within the larger musical protest for equality. The essence of this can be found in the lyrics of one of SHIR’s songs. “Ella’s Song”, composed by Reagon, is based around a famous declaration of civil rights activist Ella Baker. The words: “We who believe in freedom cannot rest...cannot rest until it comes.” forms the refrain of Reagon’s song. A later verse, using Baker’s words captures the civil rights notion of teaching those to continue the struggle: “Struggling myself don’t mean a whole lot, I’ve come to realize that teaching others to stand up and fight is the only way my struggle survives.”⁷⁰ In her dissertation on community and vocal music activism, Arlette Smith postulates that this single lyric summarizes SHIR’s “mission and message.”⁷¹

⁶⁸ University Musical Society “Sweet Honey in the Rock 2002/2003 Teacher Resource Guide” (UMS Youth Education. Ann Arbor, Michigan: 2003), 10

⁶⁹ Smith, 175

⁷⁰ “Ella’s Song” Bernice Johnson Reagon. Accessed March 1, 2012
<http://www.bernicejohnsonreagon.com/ella.shtml>

⁷¹ Smith, 180-181

From this initial group of individuals, with Bernice Johnson Reagon at the center as the ever-present “mountain,” Sweet Honey in the Rock coalesced into a striking vocal ensemble that would embody all of the musical activism that came before them. This celebrated and Grammy-Award winning ensemble has performed at a multitude of gatherings for a wide range of organizations. SHIR’s first album came three years after the fateful workshop gathering in 1973. SHIR is typically composed of five vocalists and a sign-language interpreter. However not all of the original members have always been a part of the group. More than twenty different women have performed as members of Sweet Honey in the Rock since its creation. The loose membership structure of the ensemble allows for individuals to pursue outside projects while still maintaining a connection to the group.⁷² Despite both the transient and interchangeable nature of its membership, SHIR became and successfully remained an incredibly flourishing and vibrant performing force.

Feminist Perspective

The Seventies, the decade in which Sweet Honey in Rock came of age, was a period in United States history marked by much political activism. The aftermath of the 1960s and the Civil Rights Movement spawned several additional socio-political movements, including radical feminism. Many of SHIR’s various members dealt exclusively with the ideals found within the feminism of the 1970s and this in turn found its way into their music and message. Several of SHIR’s songs deal with issues of social justice and equality for women. The song entitled “Joan

⁷² Boerger, 76

Little” speaks to this type of political message. On their album, “Raise Your Voice” SHIR gives background on the story and creation of the song “Joan Little”. In 1974, Joan Little was serving a sentence in a Washington, North Carolina, county jail for breaking and entering. One of the guards assigned to the jail while Little serving her sentence sexually assaulted her in her cell. Little stabbed the white jailer, Clarence Alligood, to death with an ice pick and fled the jail. She was later arrested and put on trial in July of 1975 for the murder of the guard. After months of deliberation, the jury of six whites and six African-Americans found Little not guilty. The trial had been hailed as the “Biggest Civil Rights Trial of ‘70s,” and as such, saw a diverse group of demonstrators and social justice protesters. Feminist issues such as sexual rights, body rights, and self-defense were thrust into the forefront of the nation’s socio-political conscious.⁷³ SHIR would contribute to this as well. Finding their place in the “Free Joan Little” movement, SHIR would create a polarizing song rife with social justice and feminist ideologies. The song is a poignant stance in defense of a woman turned into a fugitive for defending herself from a potential rapist. The lyrics

...Tell me what did she do to deserve this name.
Killed a man who thought she was fair game
...we live in a land that brings all pressure to bear
on the head of a woman whose position we share⁷⁴

⁷³ Genna Rae McNeil “The Body, Sexuality, and Self-Defense in State vs. Joan Little, 1974-1975” *Journal of African American History* 93 no 2. Discourses on Race, Sex, and African American Citizenship (Spring, 2008), 236

⁷⁴ Bernice Johnson Reagon. “Joan Little” *Sweet Honey In The Rock: Raise Your Voice! Earthbeat!* 2005. Liner Notes

speak to the ideas of female solidarity and the rights of bodily integrity. The struggle of Joan Little became a catalyst for the membership of SHIR that increased their sense of community and influence among the circle of women around them.⁷⁵

Musical Style

VERSE: Do you pray unto God the Father,
“What wilt Thou have me to do?”
Never fear, He will surely answer,

VERSE: Then go out thro’ the streets and hy-ways,
Preach the word to the many or few;
Say to ev’ry fallen brother.

CHORUS: There’s Honey in the Rock for you.
Oh, there’s Honey in the Rock, my brother, my brother,
There’s Honey in the Rock for you; for you;
Leave your sins for the blood to cover,
There’s Honey in the Rock for you, for you.
(Traditional Hymn)⁷⁶

The traditional hymn that is SHIR’s namesake is indicative of two things in regards to the musical style, socio-political intent, and the musical genres that make up the body of SHIR’s repertoire. Arlette Miller Smith, in her dissertation gives us two reasons as to the choice of this particular song. Its use by Reagon was either in response to the “civil unrest in the aftermath of the intense civil rights work through the NAACP and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee” that she experienced or because she was “encouraged that the social justice work of the Sixties and early Seventies finally was beginning to make a difference.”⁷⁷ SHIR, like the

⁷⁵ Smith, 199

⁷⁶ Smith, 196

⁷⁷ Smith, 196-197

musical activists of the Civil Rights Movement, utilizes its musical heritage as a weapon against the social ills and struggles that face African-American people. Drawing from this vast cultural repertoire, SHIR has composed, transcribed, arranged, and performed various songs from the African-American church, jazz, folk, African chants, rap, reggae, blues, and work song traditions. How all of those forms and genres are utilized for the unified vision of the musical activism of the Civil Rights era will be explored in this section. The best way to view any of this music in the terms of its purpose is to look directly at the music, specifically the body of songs that fit within this category. The purpose of songs, freedom and topical, of the Civil Rights Movement music was to meld words and ideas with music into transcendental and transformative vehicles. SHIR endeavored to create, with their musical style and vocal works, the same effect as their activist forbearers. SHIR's music, like the activists before, would attempt to educate and challenge, politically and socially.⁷⁸ In time SHIR found itself not just speaking to the specific ideals of the Civil Rights Movement, but to the larger ideal of freedom and what that means to everyone. SHIR, would eventually synthesize all of the various experiences each woman brought to the group and transform into a musical protest group that sought out varied projects in the spirit of civil rights ideals.

Church Music Influences

The musical traditions of the African-American church stand as the foundation of the musical style of SHIR. Traditional church music forms and styles drawn from gospel pieces like

⁷⁸ Smith, 223

“In The Upper Room with Jesus”, hymns such as “Old Ship of Zion” and “This Little Light of Mine”, and various spirituals provided musical foundations for SHIR’s original compositions such as “Movin’ On”, “Ella’s Song”, and “The Ballad of Harry T. Moore”. It is the sense of community that is achieved by the singing style of African-American church music: call-and-response, “raising up”, and unison singing; that successfully transmits, transforms, and empowers the message for which these songs were created. The song “In the Morning When I Rise”, utilizes this sense of community to convey a message of victory and vindication. Using religious allegorical images, in addition to the African-American religious musical tradition of call and response singing, the song is not just experienced, but performed by the entire community present during its performance. The lyrics of the song speak to the protest heritage indicative of SHIR’s musical output:

I’m going up to heaven to
sing and shout
There’ll be nobody there to
put me out...

Walk down by the river
And meet Harriet Tubman
Her battle done been fought
And her vic’try done won...⁷⁹

The hymn and its lyrics fosters a sense of victory over the social ills of inequality by labeling victory not as something to be wished for, but something that “will” happen. The performance of such a song is a community performance with the leader singing the first chorus and engaging the audience to finish the chorus by joining in a responsorial nature. This corporate performance practice is certainly a tradition rooted in the African-American church, and is demonstrated in

⁷⁹ Reagon. “In The Morning When I Rise” Sweet Honey In The Rock: Raise Your Voice! Earthbeat! 2005. Liner Notes

SHIR's performance on their album *Sweet Honey in the Rock: Raise Your Voice!* The song also demonstrates qualities of "raising up" a song in the performance of a bridge-like portion of the song. The song leader sings lyrics, which in turn are repeated by the rest of the audience members who sing it as a response:

LEADER: Wanna rise sanctified
AUDIENCE: Wanna rise sanctified
LEADER: Wanna rise holy
AUDIENCE: Wanna rise holy
LEADER: Wanna rise wanna rise
AUDIENCE: Wanna rise, wanna rise⁸⁰

While essentially call-and-response in nature, the audience's response is not exactly like the tempo of the leader's solo line. It would be inaccurate to label this particular performance practice lining out (in practice, true lined hymns are often slower in tempo and sung one line at a time) as the bridge-like portion of this particular song is in a faster tempo keeping the mood and tempo of the overall composition consistent.⁸¹

African And Western Vernacular Musical Influences

SHIR's musical style also includes many original arrangements and compositions that fall outside of the African-American Church tradition as well as Western Musical traditions. Songs like SHIR members Aisha Kahil's "Fulani Chant", Ysaye Maria Barnwell's "Chant", based upon a traditional Mbuti chant, and Nitanju Bolade Casel's arrangement of a traditional

⁸⁰ Reagon. "In The Morning When I Rise" *Sweet Honey In The Rock: Raise Your Voice!*

⁸¹ Lining-out, a form of call-and-response singing, involves a song leader providing each line of a hymn tune or song in a chanted form, often suggesting the tune to be sung. The line given is usually provided at a much slower tempo than what will be performed by the corporate ensemble or congregation.

Malian song “Denko” all are evidence of the importance African musical influences have upon SHIR’s musical style. Each song consists of a rich polyphonic texture that is indicative of the African musical tradition of ensemble music making. Barnwell’s “Chant”, a song from the Congo area of central Africa is in Barnwell’s own words: “...a song of community.”⁸² The two dissonant melodic ideas, both set to the same text, are performed in a round-like fashion so that the two different melodic segments create a unique wash of harmonic and melodic sounds that are at the same time primal and incredibly communal in nature. Casel’s “Denko”, is a song of blessing for the life and welfare of a woman’s unborn child. Again, indicative of African musical traditions, the song’s performance is communal. Casel learned the song during a trip to the African country of Mali. Her arrangement of the traditional Malian song is a plaintive, stark, virtuosic solo line supported by a choral response.⁸³ As the piece gains momentum, the solo line and chorus merge. The music’s texture changes from soloist supported by chorus to a full choral texture. The lyrics, a prayer to an unborn child, now become the responsibility of the entire ensemble.

Outside of both the African and African-American Church traditions, are the vernacular musical forms that have influenced and flavored the sounds and songs of SHIR. Drawing from sources such as rock, reggae, rhythm & blues, Latin, and rap among others, SHIR encapsulates their socio-political messages in more contemporary and vernacular musical forms. Casel’s “Young and Positive,” which seeks to promote “positive encouragement and affirmation to

⁸² Ysaye Maria Barnwell “Intro to Chant” Sweet Honey In The Rock: Raise your Voice! Earthbeat! 2005

⁸³ Nitanju Bolade Casel “Composer’s Notes” in Continuum: The First Song Book of Sweet Honey In The Rock. (Southwest Harbor, Maine: Contemporary A Cappella Publishing. 1999), 29.

young people,” utilizes the rap tradition.⁸⁴ Toshi Reagon’s “Ballad of the Broken Word” utilizes elements of reggae and extended rock-like guitar solo passages. All of these elements are set to a fusion of rock and rhythm & blues rhythmic and harmonic elements, that create a unique and modern sound. Reagon’s song, coupled with Nitanju Bolade Casel’s “Give The People Their Right To Vote!” takes the aforementioned elements and uses them in concert with lyrics devoted to suffrage and equal rights for all. It is the combination of all the various musical traditions that have made SHIR an incredibly dynamic, successful, and enduring musical protest-performing group. Their musical contributions to the Civil Rights Movement, Feminist Movement, and various international philanthropic causes, such as African suffrage, AIDs, and environmentalism stand as testament to the power of musical protest.

⁸⁴ Casel, 29

CHAPTER FOUR: HARRY T. MOORE

Born in 1905, Harry Tyson Moore was an important Civil Rights activist in Florida during the 1940s and the early part of the 1950s. Educated in Live Oak, Florida in the 1920s, Moore went on to become a teacher in elementary and junior high schools. His involvement with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People as the Executive Secretary of the Florida Conference of Branches placed him on the front lines of the Civil Rights movement within the state of Florida. This involvement and leadership position within the NAACP would ultimately lead to Moore's murder on 25 December 1951, when a bomb detonated at his home in Mims Florida. This tragic occurrence would bring Moore's and the NAACP's work in the Civil Rights Movement to the mainstream media attention, and the nation's collective conscious.⁸⁵ In addition to public outcry and a new national attention on the southern Civil Rights activities, Moore's death would serve as a galvanizing event for the Civil Rights Movement as a whole. Langston Hughes would memorialize Moore in a poem whose words would serve as a battle cry for the freedom fighters of the Civil Rights Movement. Hughes' words would be appropriated nearly fifty years later by Sweet Honey in the Rock to serve as the lyrics for music used in a documentary depicting Moore's life and work. "The Ballad of Harry T. Moore" is a representative example of the topical songs and ballads written about contemporary issues during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s. Despite not being "contemporary" at the time of its composition, it nevertheless would have been the type of song utilized by activists in the 1950s and 60s. Evidence of this can be seen by comparing "The Ballad of Harry T. Moore" to

⁸⁵ Glenda Elizabeth Sherouse. *Conflicting Visions: Harry T. Moore And The NAACP* (MA Thesis. University of South Carolina. Columbia, South Carolina 2008), 1

topical songs written during the 50s and 60s. Comparisons between lyrical inspiration, content, and musical settings will show that the “The Ballad of Harry T. Moore” contains all the same elements and intentions as other topical songs that were composed during the Civil Rights Movement. The ballad tradition of the Civil Rights Movement will provide solid evidence as to why this particular song can be categorized as a civil rights topical ballad, even though it was composed much later. A brief history of the subject, Harry Tyson Moore, will demonstrate why his work and his death were important enough to the Civil Rights Movement to be memorialized musically.

The Man Harry T. Moore

The early 1920s saw an optimistic beginning for the organization of Florida branch chapters of the NAACP. Within the state, chapters in Jacksonville, Key West, Tallahassee, Munson, Palatka, Pensacola, and St. Augustine boasted a collective membership of around 1,060 active participants.⁸⁶ However, this level of membership did not last and ultimately began to dwindle due to several factors. In her dissertation on the NAACP in Florida, Caroline Emmons lists factors such as fear of violence toward African-Americans due to membership in the NAACP and uncertainty that promises from the predominately northern based organization would be fulfilled, that led to the decline of Florida NAACP membership.⁸⁷ Despite this flagging in membership, the Florida-based NAACP continued to fight for equal voting rights for African-

⁸⁶ Caroline S. Emmons. *Flame Of Resistance: The NAACP In Florida 1910-1960*. (PhD. diss. The Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida 1998), 30

⁸⁷ Sherouse, 30

American Floridians. This did not come without dangers, however. Threats from local authorities as well as the Ku Klux Klan were serious, and often as not, physical violence, rather than social or political sanctions, was the retribution of choice against the most active and vocal African-American citizens and activists. The dwindling membership that continued into the early part of the 1930s would receive a dramatic boost in growth however, around the end of the decade. The president of the Brevard chapter of the NAACP, Harry T. Moore, was constantly engaged in various civil rights activities during the middle of the 1930s. It was his intent to galvanize community support for the local NAACP chapters, in an effort to battle the apathy and fear many of the African-American citizenry had towards the various inequities the NAACP sought to correct.⁸⁸ Born in Houston, Florida, in 1905, Moore received a college degree from Bethune College, and became a teacher in Mims, Florida a predominately African-American town outside of Titusville in Central Florida. His involvement with the NAACP began in 1934 and ended in November 1951, a month before his murder.⁸⁹ While working with the NAACP Moore held a variety of positions from president of the Brevard County branch to the president of the Florida State Conference of Branches, which he helped found. Under his leadership, the Florida-based NAACP grew from nine active branches to seventy-six active branches at its peak in 1948.⁹⁰ For his activism, he faced constant threats to himself, friends and family, from the white supremacist Ku Klux Klan. Due to his activities and involvement with NAACP, Moore was fired from his position as a teacher in Mims in 1946. The backlash from opponents of Moore's work finally culminated on Christmas Eve 1951, when a dynamite bomb tore through the Moore's house

⁸⁸ Emmons, 79

⁸⁹ Sherouse, 11

⁹⁰ Sherouse, 1

fatally wounding Moore and critically injuring his wife Harriette, who, due to her injuries, died nine days later.⁹¹ The aftermath of his death propelled Moore's name and his work into the spotlight of the national and international media. In anticipation of the publicity that Moore's martyrdom would engender, the NAACP's national office launched fundraising and membership drives in Moore's name.⁹²

Moore's death had achieved the opposite of his murderer's intentions. Rather than silence the activism by silencing Harry T. Moore, it galvanized African-American citizens to fight, this time more than ever, for equality. Moore's memorialization took many forms. As stated above, several fundraising and membership drives were created in Moore's name. The Harry T. Moore and Harriette V. Moore Cultural Center in Mims, Florida has established a museum commemorating the Moores as well as other Florida civil rights leaders.⁹³

"The Ballad of Harry T. Moore": A Modern Day Civil Rights Protest Song

Composed by Bernice Johnson Reagon and performed by Sweet Honey in The Rock, for a 2001 documentary on Moore's life, "The Ballad of Harry T. Moore", in a sense, is fifty years late when compared to protest music of the Civil Rights era. In the examination of "The Ballad of Harry T. Moore", three concepts are explored in an effort to prove the song's relationship to Civil Rights Protest songs: Lyrical content and the intent of its language, musical content and its

⁹¹ Ben Green. *Before His Time: The Untold Story of Harry T. Moore, America's First Civil Rights Martyr*. (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2005 [199]), 8-10

⁹² Green, 188

⁹³ "The Harry T Moore Homesite." Accessed March 31, 2012. <http://www.nbbd.com/godo/moore/>

relationship to musical style and form used by other Civil Rights songs, and finally the song's composition date in relation to the Civil Rights Movement. While the song's stylistic traits make it distinctly protest in nature, it is its date of composition that makes the song notable. However, both the lyrical and musical content play a significant role in assisting the temporal labeling of the song as "Civil Rights protest music".

The Words

The lyrical content for "The Ballad of Harry T. Moore" is derived from a Langston Hughes poem of the same title. Hughes read verses he had composed at a large NAACP rally in New York in memory of Moore.⁹⁴ The rhetoric of the poem's lines function both as a memorial and as a call for action. In the literary ballad tradition, the poem functions as a narrative telling the story of Moore's work and subsequent murder. The poem also links the religious themes of Christmas and the birth of Jesus to the intention of the men who murdered Moore and his wife:

But they must've forgotten Jesus
Down in Florida that night
Stealing through the orange groves
Bearing hate and dynamite.⁹⁵

The religious theme of equality in the eyes of God was one that was a constant theme within Civil Rights rhetoric, as well as a connection to the deep religious roots of the African-

⁹⁴ Michael Browning, "Who Was Harry T. Moore?" The Palm Beach Post, 16 August 1999 Accessed March 1, 2012 <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/454.html>

⁹⁵ Langston Hughes "The Ballad of Harry T. Moore" The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes edited by Arlond Rampersad. (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 588-590

American culture at large. The civil rights concept that equality and freedom for all men cannot be defeated is echoed in the lines that follow the previous stanza:

But around the world an echo hurled
A question: When?...When?...When?
When will men for the sake of peace
And for democracy
Learn no bombs a man can make
Keep men from being free?⁹⁶

The civil rights idea that freedom cannot be destroyed is found throughout the entire poem. Lines such as, “For Freedom never dies,” which forms the chorus of Sweet Honey in the Rock’s song, and “I will not stop! I will not stop --” function as rallying cries for listeners to continue Harry T. Moore’s legacy. The rhetoric of Hughes’ words resonated with the Civil Rights Movement activists, and so did Harry T. Moore’s story. After his death, Moore’s martyrdom served as a source of inspiration for early activists to continue the struggle for equal rights.

The Music

The many musical characteristics of “The Ballad of Harry T. Moore” mark it as a song of Civil Rights Protest. The form in which the music is composed is at the same time a hymn and a ballad. The hymn-like traits are evident in the strophic nature of the song. Each verse is sung to relatively same melodic lines with a refrain on the words:

Chorus:
No bomb can kill the dreams I hold
For freedom never dies.
Freedom never dies I say

⁹⁶ Hughes, 588-590

Freedom never dies
No bomb can kill the dreams I hold
Freedom never dies.⁹⁷

In SHIR's performance of the song, the song-leader sings the verses, which tell the story of the ballad's subject. The refrain reinforces the overarching concept of the song, which is done communally by the entire ensemble, another musical style trait of Civil Rights Music. In addition, the chorus is sung in close harmony, another important element of the African-American musical tradition "The Ballad of Harry T. Moore" is also exactly as the title proclaims, a ballad. The use of the term ballad in this instance describes the story-songs, which were strophic in nature, that were prevalent throughout the Civil Rights era. Several examples of Civil Rights era ballads can be found in Guy and Candie Carawan's collection of Civil Rights music *Sing For Freedom: The Civil Rights Movement Through Its Songs*. These ballads are similar strophic narratives, topical in nature. Songs such as "Ballad of the Student Sit-ins" chronicle large collections of events while compositions such as "The Ballad of Herbert Lee" and "The Ballad For Bill Moore" deal specifically with individual occurrences of injustice against freedom workers or simply African-Americans. Each song's form is structured the same way with the incident being memorialized, framed by verses that are interrupted by a refrain that speaks to the heart of the song's intention. The tunes used for the both the "The Ballad of Herbert Lee" and "Ballad For Bill Moore" were traditional ones adapted with new words.⁹⁸ This re-texting of pre-existing music was another characteristic of civil rights music. Hymns, spirituals, folk songs, and popular vernacular tunes were appropriated and re-texted to create an ease of accessibility for the singing activists.

⁹⁷ Bernice Johnson Reagon "The Ballad of Harry T. Moore" Sweet Honey in the Rock: Raise Your Voice Earthbeat! 2005 Liner Notes

⁹⁸ Carawan and Carawan, 96 & 104

The range of the melody of “The Ballad of Harry T. Moore” is roughly an octave in distance, from G below middle C to the G at the octave above. The song leader sings the melody line, while the rest of the ensemble performs chordal figures, in a homorhythmic fashion, that function as the harmonic support of the song. The melody’s phrases occur in regular and even units. The same occurs within the accompaniment figures that function as the harmonic structure. The melody consists of a large phrase of four units, that are subdivided into two smaller phrases of two units. The harmonic structure of the piece follows a traditional and regular hymn-like form. The verses, performed by the song leader and harmonically supported by the ensemble’s pulsing hum on “mm” follow a tonal progression of I-V for the antecedent phrase that makes up the first half of a verse. The consequent phrase that forms the last half of a verse line follows a tonal progression of I-IV-V-I. The harmonic structure of the refrain follows the exact same progression as each of the verses. The unification of the harmonic structure over each element of the song, verse and refrain, complements the theme of unification and solidarity found within the text. In addition, the regularity of harmonic structure links this song back to the hymns of the African-America church traditions which also were marked by regularity of harmonic structure. Melodically the music is similar in content throughout the entire piece. The phrase shape only deviates when dictated by longer or shorter lines of text in the lyrics. A solo song leader performs almost all of the melodic content, at least in the case of SHIR’s performance. The ensemble sings along with the song leader only in instances where the text is of sufficient importance to denote a necessary reinforcement by the entire ensemble. This occurs during each repetition of the refrain (“Freedom never dies...”), the lyrics “stand up everywhere,” and “he has no dynamite,” as well as a small extension of the final verse going into the final refrain of the

song. It is the simplicity of the song's harmonic structure and accessibility melodic elements mark the traditional nature of its origins.

While "The Ballad of Harry T. Moore" is new music, albeit in an exceptionally traditional style, and not an adapted tune, it still follows the formula of a topical ballad song created and sung in the Civil Rights movement. In addition, as evidenced from the above section that deals with the lyrical content, its intention was exactly the same – to memorialize, instruct, advocate, and unify. It is interesting to note, that one of the verses of Hughes's poem not utilized by Reagon in SHIR's "Ballad of Harry T. Moore" is the verse: "I will not stop! I will not stop!" The rhetoric of these words would seem a better fit in the overall rhetoric of the topical songs of the era. While the chosen lines "No bomb can kill the dreams I hold" is quite effective, in addition to specifically referencing the manner in which Moore died, the "I will not stop!" verses seem to carry more weight to the overall intent a topical ballad song would want to convey. Regardless, the chosen verses by Bernice Johnson Reagon, as well as the harmonic and melodic elements of her arrangement for SHIR's are nevertheless quite effective in their rhetoric as well as linking the composition back to its roots in African-American musical traditions

CONCLUSION: THE MUSICAL LEGACY OF HARRY T. MOORE.

After examining all of the information in regards to the intention, content, and musical traditions that made up the Civil Rights protest songs, it is only natural that “The Ballad of Harry T. Moore” be labeled as one such song. The intention behind the music’s lyrical content goes hand in hand with the spirit of the topical songs used during the Civil Rights Movement. Hughes’ poem intends to both memorialize and galvanize. The words, “Freedom never dies” and “No bomb can kill the dreams I hold” are testaments to the spirit of resistance ascribed to by the freedom fighters of the Civil Rights. By using the poem, written during civil rights activities and about an early civil rights activist, links the song to past, and makes it “contemporary” despite being composed fifty years after the fact. Musically “The Ballad of Harry T. Moore” is clearly linked to the topical, specifically ballad, song tradition used by civil rights activists during the Civil Rights movement. Its similar form structure and musical traits, such as a chorus section surrounded by verse material and communal performance traits connect it to the musical traits and styles of Civil Rights protest music. All of this is important because it shows that the musical traditions adopted and utilized during the Civil Rights Movement continue to be significant forms of performance. The Civil Rights Movement is not over; it has just entered a different phase of its existence. The musical legacy left by the Civil Rights Movement is still being used, as is evidenced by Sweet Honey in Rock’s “The Ballad of Harry T. Moore.” The song stands as a testament to the songs that were created and used during the struggle for African-American equality and its close ties to the musical, socio-political, and cultural ideals of civil rights music bond it completely to the protest music of that era.

**APPENDIX A: SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK SELECTED
DISCOGRAPHY**

SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK - Flying Fish, 1976

B'LIEVE I'LL RUN ON... - Redwood, 1978

GOOD NEWS – Flying Fish, 1981

WE ALL...EVERYONE OF US – Flying Fish, 1983

THE OTHER SIDE – Flying Fish, 1985

FEEL SOMETHING DRAWING ME ON – Flying Fish, 1985

BREATHS – Flying Fish, 1988

LIVE AT CARNEGIE HALL – Flying Fish, 1988

ALL FOR FREEDOM – Music For Little People, 1989

IN THIS LAND – Earthbeat!, 1992

STILL ON THE JOURNEY – Earthbeat!, 1993

I GOT SHOES – Music For Little People, 1994

SACRED GROUND – Earthbeat!, 1996

...TWENTY-FIVE... - Rykodisc, 1998

STILL THE SAME ME – Rounder Kids, 2000

FREEDOM SONG – Sony, 2000

THE WOMEN GATHER – Earthbeat!, 2003

RAISE YOUR VOICE! – Earthbeat!, 2005

EXPERIENCE...101 – Earthbeat!, 2007

GO IN GRACE – She-Rocks 5, Inc., 2008

ARE WE A NATION (single) – She-Rocks 5, Inc., 2010

APPENDIX B: SELECTED LIST OF CIVIL RIGHTS PROTEST SONGS

SELECTED LIST OF CIVIL RIGHTS PROTEST SONGS

All song titles appear in regular type. Song adaptations are listed with original song parentheses and in bold type.
Songs categorized by their alternate titles or first line appear in italics

A

A Change Is Gonna Come
Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round
And the choirs kept singing
Another Day's Journey

B

Ballad For Bill Moore
Ballad Of Birmingham
Ballad Of Harry T. Moore
Ballad Of Herbert Lee
Ballad Of The Student Sit-Ins
Battle Hymn Of The Republic
Burn, Baby Burn

C

Certainly, Lord
Change Is Gonna Come, A
Choice Of Colours
Come And Go With Me To That Land
Come By Here (**Kumbaya**)

D

Dixie
Do What The Spirit Say Do
Down By The Riverside
Down On The Freedom Line

E

Everybody Sing Freedom
Eyes On The Prize (**Hold-On**)

F

Fighting For My Rights
For God's Sake Give More Power To The People
Freedom, freedom, freedom's comin' (**Banana Boat Song**)
Freedom Is A Constant Struggle
Freedom Now
Freedom Train A' Comin'

G

Get On Board Little Children
Get Your Rights, Jack
Go Tell It On The Mountain

H

Hallelujah, I'm A-Travelin'
Hammer Song, The
Hard Travelin'
Here's To The State Of Mississippi
Hold On

I

I Aint' Scared of Your Jail
I Shall Not Be Moved
I Want My Freedom
I Will Overcome
I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free
I'm Gonna Sit At The Welcome Table
I'm On My Way To The Freedom Land
Is It Because I'm Black

J

Jacob's Ladder
Joan Little
Juba

K

Keep On Pushin
Keep Your Eyes On The Prize (**Hold On**)
Kumbaya

L

Legend Of Danville
Let's Clean Up The Ghetto
Look a here people listen to me

M

Message From A Black Man
Midnight Special
Move On Over
Moving On

N

Never To Much
Nothing But A Soldier

O

Oh Freedom
Oh Mary Don't You Weep
Oh Pritchett, Oh Kelly
On Top Of Old Smokey
Over My Head

P

People Get Ready
Pie in the Sky (**Sweet Bye and Bye**)
Prophecy Of A SNCC Field Secretary

R

Right! Right!

S

Sing Till The Power Of The Lord Comes Down
St. James Infirmary
Streets Of Laredo

Sweet Bye And Bye

T

This Little Light Of Mine

Throw Me Anywhere Lord

Travelling Shoes

The Times They Are A Changin

U

Up Over My Head

W

Wade In The Water

We Shall Not Be Moved

We Shall Overcome

We've Got A Job

Which Side Are You On?

Y

You Should Have Been There

LIST OF REFERENCES

- African American Music : An Introduction. Edited by Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maulsby. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Allison, Calhoun-Brown. "Upon This Rock: The Black Church, Nonviolence, and the Civil Rights Movement." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33, no. 2 (2000): 169-174.
- Appleby, David, Allison Graham, and Steven John Ross. "At the River I Stand" San Francisco, CA: California Newsreel, 1993.
- Awkward, Michael. *Soul Covers : Rhythm and Blues Remakes and the Struggle for Artistic Identity : (Aretha Franklin, Al Green, Phoebe Snow) Refiguring American Music*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Banfield, William. "Black Artistic Invisibility: A Black Composer Talking 'Bout Taking Care of the Souls of Black Folk While Losing Much Ground Fast." *Journal of Black Studies* 35, no. 2 (2004): 195-209.
- Barnet, Richard D., Bruce Nemerov, and Mayo R. Taylor. *The Story Behind the Song: 150 Songs That Chronicle the 20th Century*. Westport: Greenwood (CT) Westport, CT, US, 2004.
- Barnwell Ysaye Maria. "Intro to Chant" *Sweet Honey In The Rock: Raise your Voice! Earthbeat!* 2005
- Bennett, Andy. *Cultures of Popular Music / Andy Bennett Issues in Cultural and Media Studies*. Maidenhead, Berkshire, UK. ; Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2001.
- Bernstein, Jane A. "'Thanks for My Weapons in Battle—My Voice and the Desire to Use It': Women and Protest Music in the Americas." 2004.
- Boerger, Kristina Gisele. "Whose Music is It. Anyway? Black Vocal Ensemble Traditions And The Feminist Choral Movement: Performance Practice As Politics" (DMA diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2000)
- Boyd, Herb. *Autobiography of a People : Three Centuries of African American History Told by Those Who Lived It*: Doubleday, 2000.
- Boyer, Horace Clarence "Introduction" in *Continuum: The First Songbook of Sweet Honey in the Rock. Choral Collection*. San Francisco, California: Contemporary A Cappella Publishing, 2000

A Brief List of Material Relating to Freedom Songs of the Civil Rights Movement / Library of Congress, Music Division, Archive of Folk Song. Edited by Song Archive of Folk. Washington, D.C: The Archive, 1974.

Brown, Jim. "We Shall Overcome [Videorecording] / Producers, Jim Brown ... [Et Al.] ; Director, Jim Brown." edited by Joan Baez, Harry Belafonte, Jim Brown, Newsreel California, Singers Freedom, Paul Peter, Mary, Pete Seeger and Taj Mahl . San Francisco, CA: California Newsreel, 1988.

Browning Michael. "Who Was Harry T. Moore?" The Palm Beach Post, 16 August 1999
Accessed March 1, 2012 <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/454.html>

Butler, Sara A. "The Art of Negotiation: Federal Arts, Civil Rights, and the Legacy of the Marian Anderson Concert, 1939–43." *Winterthur Portfolio* 40, no. 4 (2005): 175-204.

Carawan, Guy and Candie Carawan. *Sing For Freedom: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement Through Its Songs*. Montgomery, Alabama: NewSouth Books, 2008.

Carrier, Jim. *A Traveler's Guide to the Civil Rights Movement* / Jim Carrier. 1st ed. ed. Orlando: Harcourt, 2004.

Carter, David C. *The Music Has Gone out of the Movement : Civil Rights and the Johnson Administration, 1965-1968* 1st. ed. ed. Chapel Hill, N.C: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Crosby, David. *Stand and Be Counted : Making Music, Making History : The Dramatic Story of the Artists and Causes That Changed America* / David Crosby and David Bender. 1st ed. ed., Edited by David Bender. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2000.

Davis, Ossie Dee, Ruby Dickson Sandra H., Green Ben, and Churchill Lee Roberts, "Freedom Never Dies the Legacy of Harry T. Moore", Watertown, MA : Documentary Educational Resources Accessed March 1, 2012.
<http://www.aspresolver.com/aspresolver.asp?AHIV;734211>.

Denisoff, R. S. "Protest Songs: Those on the Top Forty and Those on the Street." *American quarterly* 22, no. 4 (1970): 807.

Dunaway, David King and Molly Beer. *Singing Out. An Oral History of America's Folk Music Revivals*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Emmons, Caroline S. *Flame Of Resistance: The NAACP In Florida 1910-1960*. PhD. diss. The Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida 1998

Epstein, Lawrence J. *Political Folk Music in American from Its Origins to Bob Dylan*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc, 2010.

- Erenrich, Susan J. "Rhythms of Rebellion: Artists Creating Dangerously for Social Change." PhD. diss., Antioch University, 2010.
- Eyerman, Ron. *Music and Social Movements : Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* / Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison Cambridge Cultural Social Studies, Edited by Andrew Jamison. Cambridge, [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Field, Connie. "Freedom on My Mind [Videorecording] / Produced and Directed by Connie Field and Marilyn Mulford ; Written and Edited by Michael Chandler ; Clarity Productions, Inc." edited by Newsreel California, Michael Chandler, Connie Field, Marilyn Mulford and Rhonnie Lynn Washington. San Francisco, Calif: California Newsreel, 1994.
- Frederick II, Nathaniel "Praise God and Do Something: The Role of Black American Gospel Artists as Social Activists, 1945-1960." PhD. diss., Pennsylvania State, 2009.
- Fuller, Michael. "Endangered Species?" *The Musical Times* 142, no. 1875 (2001): 78-80.
- Green, Ben. *Before His Time : The Untold Story of Harry T. Moore, America's First Civil Rights Martyr*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2005.
- Guthrie, Woody. "Union Maid", Accessed March 1, 2012 http://www.woodyguthrie.org/lyrics/Union_Maid.htm
- Guthrie, Woody. "This Land is Your Land" Accessed on March 1, 2012 http://www.woodyguthrie.org/Lyrics/This_Land.htm
- Guthrie, Woody. "I Ain't Got No Home" Accessed on March 1, 2012 http://www.woodyguthrie.org/Lyrics/I_Aint_Got_No_Home.htm
- Hampton, Wayne. *Guerrilla Minstrels: John Lennon, Joe Hill, Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan*. Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press, 1986.
- Hsiung, David C. "Freedom Songs and the Modern Civil Rights Movement." *OAH Magazine of History* 19, no. 4 (2005): 23-26.
- Hughes Langston. "The Ballad of Harry T. Moore" *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* edited by Arlond Rampersad. New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995, 588-590
- Lewis, George. *A Power Stronger Than Itself : The Aacm and American Experimental Music* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Lieberman, Robbie. "My Song Is My Weapon" *People's Songs, American Communism, and the Politics of Culture. 1930-1950*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

- Locke, David. "Africa/Ewe, Mande, Dagbamba, Shona, Ba'aka." In *Worlds of Music*. Belmont, California: Schirmer Cengage Learning, 2009.
- Margolick, David. *Strange Fruit: Billie Holiday, Café Society, and an Early Cry for Civil Rights*. Edited by Inc NetLibrary. Philadelphia: Running Press, 2000.
- McCabe, Nicholas. "Politics and Music." *The Musical Times* 109, no. 1506 (1968): 727.
- McNeil, Genna Rae. "The Body, Sexuality, and Self-Defense in State vs. Joan Little, 1974-1975" *Journal of African American History* 93 no 2. Discourses on Race, Sex, and African American Citizenship (Spring, 2008)
- Monson, Ingrid T. *Freedom Sounds [Electronic Resource] : Civil Rights Call out to Jazz and Africa / Ingrid Monson*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Morehen, John. "Masonic Instrumental Music of the Eighteenth Century: A Survey." *Music Review* 42, no. 3/4 (1981): 215-224.
- North, Joseph. *Behind the Florida Bombings : Who Killed Naacp Leader Harry T. Moore and His Wife?* New York: New Century Publishers, 1952.
- "Off the Beaten Track: 'Freedom Is a Constant Struggle.'" 39, 126-127, 1994.
- Patterson, Lillie. *Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Freedom Movement / Lillie Patterson Moad*, Edited by Inc Facts on File. New York ; Oxford: Facts on File, 1989.
- Pfeiffer, Robert Henry. "1911-1958 (Inclusive). Papers." 6 linear ft. (24 boxes).
- Phull, Hardeep. *Story Behind the Protest Song: A Reference Guide to the 50 Songs That Changed the 20th Century*. Westport: Greenwood (CT) Westport, CT, US, 2008.
- Polletta, Francesca. "The Structural Context of Novel Rights Claims: Southern Civil Rights Organizing, 1961-1966." *Law & Society Review* 34, no. 2 (2000): 367-406.
- Poore, Caroline. "Striking the First Blow : Harry T. Moore and the Fight for Black Equality in Florida." vi, 103 leaves ; 29 cm. Dissertation: Thesis (M.A.)--Florida State University, 1992.
- Reagon, Bernice Johnson. "Ella's Song". Accessed March 1, 2012
<http://www.bernicejohnsonreagon.com/ella.shtml>
- _____. "In The Morning When I Rise" *Sweet Honey In The Rock: Raise Your Voice!* Earthbeat! 2005. Liner Notes

- _____. "The Civil Rights Movement" in *African American Music: An Introduction* edited by Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby. (New York, New York: Taylor & Francis Group), 601
- _____. "The Ballad of Harry T. Moore" *Sweet Honey in the Rock: Raise Your Voice Earthbeat! 2005 Liner Notes*
- _____. "Songs of the Civil Rights Movement 1955-1965: A Study in Culture History." Dissertation, Howard University, 1975.
- Redmond, Shana L. "Anthem: Music and Politics in Diaspora, 1920-1070s." Dissertation, Yale University, 2008.
- Reuss, Richard A. and JoAnne C. Reuss *American Folk Music and Left Wing Politics, 1927-1957. Vol. 4 American Folk Music and Musicians*. Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2000.
- Rodnitzky, Jerome. "'Popular Music as Politics and Protest'." In *America's Musical Pulse: Popular Music in Twentieth-Century Society*, edited by Kenneth J. Bindas, Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1992. 3-11.
- Sanger, Kerran L. "The Rhetoric of the Freedom Songs in the American Civil Rights Movement." PhD. diss, Pennsylvania State University, 1991.
- _____. "When the Spirit Says Sing!" : The Role of Freedom Songs in the Civil Rights Movement *Garland Studies in American Popular History and Culture*. New York: Garland, 1995.
- Saunders, Robert W. *Bridging the Gap : Continuing the Florida Naacp Legacy of Harry T. Moore, 1952-1966*. 1st ed. Tampa, Fla.: University of Tampa Press, 2000.
- Sherouse, Glenda Elizabeth. *Conflicting Visions: Harry T. Moore And The NAACP* (MA Thesis. University of South Carolina. Columbia, South Carolina 2008)
- Smith, Arlette Miller. "Speaking the Song, Spreading the Word, Lifting the People: The Reimagination of Community through Vocal Music Activism." PhD. diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 2005.
- Spencer, Jon Michael. "Freedom Songs of the Civil Rights Movement." *The journal of black sacred music* 1, no. 2 (1987): 1.
- _____. *Protest and Praise: Sacred Music of Black Religion*. Minneapolis: Fortress (MN) Minneapolis, MN, 1990.
- Stuckey, Sterling. "Going through the Storm: The Great Singing Movements of the Sixties."

Sullivan, Patricia. "Southern Reformers, the New Deal, and the Movement's Foundation" in *The Civil Rights Movement*, Blackwell Readers in American Social and Cultural History edited by Jack E. Davis. Malden Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2001

... *That They Shall Not Have Died in Vain*. New York: The Association, 1952.

Turner, Kristen Meyers. "Guy and Candie Carawan: Mediating the Music of the Civil Rights Movement." Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2011.

University Musical Society "Sweet Honey in the Rock 2002/2003 Teacher Resource Guide" UMS Youth Education. Ann Arbor, Michigan: 2003

Ward, Brian. *Just My Soul Responding : Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations* California: University of California Press, 1998.

Weissman, Dick. *Which Side Are You On? : An inside History of the Folk Music Revival in America*. New York: Continuum, 2005.

"Without these Songs" *Newsweek* August 31, 1964, 74

Who Killed the Moores? : A True Mystery Only You Can Solve. New York: The Committee, 1952.

Williams, Johnny E. "Linking Beliefs to Collective Action: Politicized Religious Beliefs and the Civil Rights Movement." *Sociological Forum* 17, no. 2 (2002): 203-222.

Zimmerman, Nadya Cecelia, Candie Carawan, and Guy Carawan. "'Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round': Music of Black Resistance in the 1960s." 15; 12, 18; 1-30, 1990.