Conceptual Sketch for Looking at the Emergence of Protest Songs

Social Context
(Major Historical Events; Dominant Culture; Distribution of Resources)

Social Movements ↔ Biography (Life experiences)

Protest Songs
SOME INTERESTING READING AND VIEWING

Reading:


Northrup, Solomon, *Twelve Years a Slave*. Auburn N.Y., Derby and Miller, 1855.


**Viewing:**

* Joan Baez biopic “How Sweet the Sound” (2009)

* Bob Dylan biopic “No Direction Home” (2005)

Woody Guthrie biopic “Bound for Glory” (1976)

Stephen Richer YouTube lecture “If I Had a Hammer: The Life and Times of Pete Seeger” (2017)

Pete Seeger biopic “The Power of Song” (2007)


Sounds like a Revolution (2010)

Soundtrack for a Revolution (2009)
The Cutty Wren

Oh where are you going said Milder to Moulder
Oh we may not tell you said Festel to Fose
We're off to the woods said John the Red Nose
We're off to the woods said John the Red Nose.

And what will you do there said Milder to Moulder
We'll shoot the Cutty wren said John the Red Nose.
And how will you shoot her said Milder to Moulder
With bows and with arrows said John the Red Nose.

Oh that will not do said Milder to Moulder
Oh what will you do then said Festel to Fose
Great guns and great cannon said John the Red Nose.
Great guns and great cannon said John the Red Nose.

And how will you fetch her said Milder to Moulder
Oh we may not tell you said Festel to Fose
On four strong men's shoulders said John the Red Nose.
On four strong men's shoulders said John the Red Nose.

Ah that will not do said Milder to Moulder
Oh what will do then said Festel to Fose
Great carts and great wagons said John the Red Nose.
Great carts and great wagons said John the Red Nose.

Oh how will you cut her up said Milder to Moulder
With knives and with forks said John the Red Nose.
Oh how will you cut her up said Milder to Moulder
Great hatchets and cleavers said John the Red Nose.

Oh how will you boil her said Milder to Moulder
In pots and in kettles said John the Red Nose
Oh that will not do said Milder to Moulder
Great pans and large cauldrons said John the Red Nose.

Oh who'll get the spare ribs said Milder to Moulder
We'll give 'em all to the poor said John the Red Nose.
Types of Protest Songs

Magnetic versus Rhetorical songs. The first type aimed at recruitment, the second at expressing an explicit political message. (Developed by Denisoff from a “functionalist” perspective in the late sixties, and one of the few attempts to develop a taxonomy of protest songs.)

Explicit versus Coded songs. Relates to the extent to which the song's meaning is clearly evident, or concealed in encrypted language.

Grounded versus Utopian songs. The former describe a contemporary injustice and/or an immediate solution, the latter a future, often fanciful paradise.

Generic versus Specific songs. The former are songs which, because of the way they are written, can easily be used for a multitude of social issues. The latter are limited to protesting a single social issue.

Copyrighted versus Non-Copyrighted songs. Some songs are legally recognized as belonging to a particular individual or individuals, others are not.

Extraneous Factors: How the songs are presented.

Concert versus In Situ songs. The former take place in arena venues, on records, TV and radio. The latter are mounted in natural venues, such as rallies, picket lines, and marches.

Performance versus Collective songs. The former involve groups or individuals performing before an audience. The latter engage all those present in the process of singing.

Utopian, Generic, Collective (Anthems)          Grounded, Specific, Performance (Topical Songs)

(e.g. We Shall Overcome; Eyes On the Prize)     (e.g. The Death of Emmett Till; Mississippi Goddam)
Slavery/Abolition Timeline

1581 Slaves in Florida.
1619 Slaves in Virginia.
1628 The first recorded slave in Canada. (C)
1662 Hereditary Slavery passed in Virginia.
1688 Slavery legalized in New France. (C)
1705 Slaves defined as Property in Virginia.
1712 Slave revolt in New York City.
1734 Marie-Joseph Angelique's personal revolt. (C)
1739 Slave revolt in South Carolina 1.
1760 British take control in Canada. (C)
1775 American Revolution begins.
1775 Abolitionist Society founded.
1776 Declaration of Independence.
1781 The Mason-Dixon Line established.
1783 American Revolution ends.
1784 Abolition fails.
1790 First United States census.
1790 United Empire Loyalists bring their slaves with them to Canada after the American Revolution. (C)
1793 The Slave Act legislated in Upper Canada. (C)
1793 Fugitive Slave Act.
1794 Cotton gin patented.
1797 Courts begin to rule in favour of slaves who complain of poor treatment from their owners. (C)
1808 United States bans slave trade.
1820 Missouri Compromise.
1822 Slave revolt in South Carolina 2.
1831 Virginia Slave revolt.
1834 Slavery Abolition Act. (C)
1831-34 “Follow the Drinking Gourd”
1835 Censorship of anti-slavery propaganda.
1840's and 50's Role of the Hutchinson Family Singers e.g. The Slave's Appeal.
1847 Frederick Douglas publishes The North Star Newspaper.
1849 Harriet Tubman escapes after fleeing slavery.
♫1800's? “Wade in the Water”
1850 Compromise of 1850.
1850 The Elgin Settlement is incorporated. (C)
1852 Uncle Tom's Cabin published.
♫185? "Go Down Moses"
1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act.
1855 Twelve Years a Slave published
1857 Dred Scott Decision.
1860 Abraham Lincoln elected.
1860 Southern secession -South Carolina, followed by Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas.
♫186? "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot"
1861-65 United States Civil War.
♫186? "Michael, Row the Boat Ashore"
♫“I'm on my way to Canaan's Land”
1863 Emancipation Proclamation.
1865 Lincoln assassinated.
1865 Slavery abolished.
♫(Post 1865) “Oh Freedom”
Michael Row The Boat Ashore  
(Traditional - first published in Slave Songs of the United States, Allen, Ware and Garrison, 1867)

Michael row de boat ashore, Hallelujah!  
Michael boat a gospel boat, Hallelujah!  
I wonder where my mudder deh (there).  
See my mudder on de rock gwine home.  
On de rock gwine home in Jesus' name.  
   Michael boat a music boat.  
Gabriel blow de trumpet horn.  
O you mind your boastin' talk.  
Boastin' talk will sink your soul.  
Brudder, lend a helpin' hand.  
Sister, help for trim dat boat.  
Jordan stream is wide and deep.  
Jesus stand on t' oder side.  
I wonder if my maussa deh.  
My fader gone to unknown land.  
O de Lord he plant his garden deh.  
He raise de fruit for you to eat.  
He dat eat shall neber die.  
When de riber overflow.  
O poor sinner, how you land?  
Riber run and darkness comin'.  
Sinner row to save your soul.

Follow the Drinking Gourd  
(Traditional)

When the sun comes back,  
and the first Quail calls,  
Follow the drinking gourd,  
For the old man is waiting  
for to carry you to freedom  
If you follow the drinking gourd.

Chorus:  
Follow the drinking gourd,  
Follow the drinking gourd,  
For the old man is waiting  
for to carry you to freedom  
If you follow the drinking gourd.
The riverbank will make a very good road,
    The dead trees show you the way.
    Left foot, peg foot traveling on,
    Following the drinking gourd.

    The river ends between two hills,
    Follow the drinking gourd,
    There’s another river on the other side,
    Follow the drinking gourd.

When the great big river meets the little river,
    Follow the drinking gourd.
    For the old man is waiting
    for to carry you to freedom
    If you follow the drinking gourd.

**Wade In The Water**
(Traditional)

_Chorus:_

*Wade in the water,*
*Wade in the water children.*
*Wade in the water*
*God’s gonna trouble the water*

Who’s all those children all dressed in Red?
    God’s gonna trouble the water.
    Must be the ones that Moses led.
    God’s gonna trouble the water.

What are those children all dressed in White?
    God’s gonna trouble the water.
    Must be the ones of the Israelites.
    God’s gonna trouble the water.

Who are these children all dressed in Blue?
    God’s gonna trouble the water.
    Must be the ones that made it through.
    God’s gonna trouble the water.
Go Down Moses
(Traditional)

When Israel was in Egypt's land: Let my people go,
Oppress'd so hard they could not stand, Let my People go.
Go down, Moses,
Way down in Egypt land,
Tell old Pharaoh,
Let my people go.

Lord, by Moses, to Pharaoh said: Oh! let my people go.
If not, I'll smite your first-born dead—Oh! let my people go.
Oh! go down, Moses,
Away down to Egypt's land,
And tell King Pharaoh
To let my people go.

Swing Low Sweet Chariot
(Wallis Willis – 186?)

Chorus:

Swing low, sweet chariot
Coming for to carry me home,
Swing low, sweet chariot,
Coming for to carry me home.

I looked over Jordan, and what did I see
Coming for to carry me home?
A band of angels coming after me,
Coming for to carry me home.

Sometimes I'm up, and sometimes I'm down,
(Coming for to carry me home)
But still my soul feels heavenly bound.
(Coming for to carry me home)
The brightest day that I can say,
(Coming for to carry me home)
When Jesus washed my sins away.
(Coming for to carry me home)
If I get there before you do,
(Coming for to carry me home)
I'll cut a hole and pull you through.
(Coming for to carry me home)
If you get there before I do,
(Coming for to carry me home)
Tell all my friends I'm coming too.
(Coming for to carry me home)

The Slave's Appeal
(Jesse Hutchinson – 1843)

Over the mountain, and over the moor,
Comes the sad wailing of many a poor slave;
The father, the mother, and children are poor,
And they grieve for the day their freedom to have.

Chorus:
Pity, kind gentlemen, friends of humanity,
Cold is the world to the cries of God's poor,
Give us our freedom, ye friends of equality,
Give us our rights, for we ask nothing more.

Call us not indolent, vile and degraded,
White men have robbed us of all we hold dear;
Parents and children, the young and the aged,
Are scourged by the lash of the rough overseer.

Chorus:
And God in his mercy shall crown your endeavors,
The glory of heaven shall be your reward;
The promise of Jesus to you shall be given,
"Enter, ye faithful, the joy of the Lord."

Chorus:
African American Civil Rights Movement Timeline

1863-1877

- Reconstruction

1865

- Thirteenth Amendment abolishes slavery

1866

- Ku Klux Klan is formed in Pulaski, Tennessee.
- September 21 – U.S. Army regiment of Buffalo Soldiers (African Americans) formed.

1867

- March 2 - Howard University founded in Washington, D.C.

1868

- July 9 – The Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution's Section 1 requires due process and equal protection.

1870

- February 3 – The Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees the right of male citizens of the U.S. to vote regardless of race, colour or previous condition of servitude.
- February 25 – Hiram Rhodes Revels becomes the first black member of the Senate.

1872

- December 11 – P.B.S. Pinchback is sworn in as the first black member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

1875

- The Civil Rights Act of 1875 signed by President Grant. It is declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1883. Many of the provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1875 are passed into law in the 1960s with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Fair Housing Act using the federal power to regulate interstate commerce.
- The Mississippi Plan is initiated to intimidate blacks and suppress black voter registration and voting.

1876

- White Democrats regain power in many southern state legislatures and pass the first Jim Crow laws.

1877

- With the Compromise of 1877, Republican Rutherford B. Hayes withdraws federal troops from the South in exchange for being elected President of the United States, causing the collapse of the last three remaining Republican state governments. The compromise formally ends the Reconstruction era of the U.S.
1879
- Spring - Thousands of African Americans refuse to live under segregation in the South and migrate to Kansas. They become known as Exodusters.

1880
- During the 1880s, African Americans in the South peak in numbers being elected and holding local offices, even while white Democrats are working to assert control at state level.

1881
- July 4 - Booker T. Washington opens the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute (HBCU) in Tuskegee, Alabama.

1883
- In Civil Rights Cases, the U.S. Supreme Court strikes down the Civil Rights Act of 1875 as unconstitutional.

1884
- Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is published, featuring the admirable African American character Jim.
- Judy W. Reed, of Washington, D.C., and Sarah E. Goode, of Chicago, are the first African American women inventors to receive patents.
- Ida B. Wells sues the Chesapeake, Ohio & South Western Railroad Company for its use of segregated "Jim Crow" cars.

1886
- Norris Wright Cuney becomes the chairman of the Texas Republican Party, the most powerful role held by any African American in the South during the 19th century.

1890
- Mississippi, with a white Democrat-dominated legislature, passes a new constitution that effectively disfranchises most blacks through voter registration and electoral requirements, e.g., poll taxes, residency and literacy tests. This shuts them out of the political process, including service on juries and in local offices.

1895
- E.B. Du Bois is the first African American to be awarded a Ph.D by Harvard University.

1896
- May 18 - In Plessy v. Ferguson, the Supreme Court upholds de jure racial segregation of "separate but equal" facilities.
- The National Association of Colored Women is formed by the merger of smaller groups.

1901
- Booker T. Washington's autobiography Up From Slavery is published.
- Benjamin Tillman, Senator of South Carolina, comments on Theodore Roosevelt's dining with Booker T. Washington: “The action of President Roosevelt in entertaining
that nigger will necessitate our killing a thousand niggers in the South before they learn their place again.”

1904

- May 15 - Sigma Pi Phi, the first African American Greek-letter organization, is founded by African American men as a professional organization, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Orlando, Florida hires its first black postman.

1905

- July 11 - First meeting of the Niagara Movement, an interracial group to work for civil rights.

1906

- December 4 - Alpha Phi Alpha is founded at Cornell University, the first intercollegiate fraternity for African American men.

1908

- December 26 - Jack Johnson wins the World Heavyweight Title.
- Alpha Kappa Alpha is founded at Howard University, the first college sorority for African American women.

1909

- February 12 - Planned first meeting of group which would become the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an interracial group devoted to civil rights.
- The National Negro Committee meets and is formed; it will be the precursor to the NAACP.

1910

- May 30 - The National Negro Committee chooses "National Association for the Advancement of Colored People" as its organization name.
- September 29 - Committee on Urban Conditions Among Negroes formed; the next year it will merge with other groups to form the National Urban League.

1914

- Newly elected president Woodrow Wilson orders physical re-segregation of Federal workplaces and employment after nearly 50 years of integrated facilities.

1915

- Second incarnation of Klan founded
- February 8 - The Birth of a Nation is released to movie theaters.
- June 21 - In Guinn v. United States, the Supreme Court rules against grandfather clauses used to deny blacks the vote.

1916

- January - Professor Carter Woodson and The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History begins publishing the Journal of Negro History, the first academic journal devoted to the study of African American history.
- Los Angeles, California hires country’s first black female police officer.
• Great Migration begins and lasts until 1940. Approximately one and a half million African Americans move from the Southern U.S. to the North and Midwest. More than five million migrate in the Second Great Migration from 1940–1970, which includes more destinations in California and the West.

1918
• Orlando's first black doctor opens practice

1920
• February 13 - Negro National League (1920-1931) established.
• Fritz Pollard and Bobby Marshall are the first two African American players in the National Football League (NFL). Pollard goes on to become the first African American coach in the NFL.

1921
• May 23 - *Shuffle Along* is the first major African American hit musical on Broadway.
• Bessie Coleman becomes the first African American to earn a pilot's license.

1923
• January 1 – 7 Rosewood massacre: Six African Americans and two whites die in a week of violence when a white woman in Rosewood, Florida claims she is beaten and raped by a black man.

1925
• Spring - American Negro Labor Congress founded.
• August 8 - 35,000 KKK members march in Washington, D.C.
• Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters organized.

1926
• The Harlem Globetrotters founded.
• Historian Carter G. Woodson proposes Negro History Week.

1928
• Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* wins the Harmon Gold Award for Literature.

1930
• The League of Struggle for Negro Rights founded in New York City.
• Jessie Daniel Ames forms the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. She gets 40,000 white women to sign a pledge against lynching and for change in the South.

1932
• Highlander Folk School established in Grundy County, Tennessee.

1934
• Wallace D. Fard, leader of the Nation of Islam, mysteriously disappears. He is succeeded by Elijah Muhammad.
1935

- June 18 - In *Murray v. Pearson*, Thurgood Marshall and Charles Hamilton Houston of the NAACP successfully argue the landmark case in Maryland to open admissions to the University of Maryland School of Law on the basis of equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment.

1936

- August - Sprinter Jesse Owens wins four gold medals at the Summer Olympics in Berlin.

1938

- ♫ Paul Robeson changes lyrics to *Old Man River*

1939

- Easter Sunday - Marian Anderson performs on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. at the instigation of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt after the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) refuse permission for Anderson to sing to an integrated audience in Constitution Hall and the District of Columbia Board of Education decline a request to use the auditorium of a white public high school.
- ♫ Billie Holiday first performs the anti-lynching protest song *Strange Fruit* in New York City. The song, a protest against lynching written by Abel Meeropol under the pen name Lewis Allan, becomes a signature song for Holiday.
- The Little League is formed, becoming the nation's first non-segregated youth sport.

1940s to 1970

- Second Great Migration - In multiple acts of resistance, more than 5 million African Americans leave the violence and segregation of the South for jobs, education, and the chance to vote in northern, midwestern and California cities.

1941

- early 1941 - U.S. Army forms African American air combat units, the Tuskegee Airmen.
- June 25 - FDR issues Executive Order 8802, the "Fair Employment Act", requiring equal treatment and training of all employees by defense contractors.

1942

- Six non-violence activists in the Fellowship of Reconciliation (Bernice Fisher, James Russell Robinson, George Houser, James Farmer, Jr., Joe Guinn and Homer Jack) found the Committee on Racial Equality, which becomes Congress of Racial Equality.

1943

- Doctor Charles R. Drew's achievements are recognized when he becomes the first African American surgeon to serve as an examiner on the American Board of Surgery.
- Lena Horne stars in the all African American film *Stormy Weather*. 
1944
- April 25 - United Negro College Fund is incorporated.
- November 7 - Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. is elected to U.S. House of Representatives from Harlem, NY.
- Miami, Florida hires its first black police officers.

1945
- August - *Ebony*’s first issue.
- Freeman Field Mutiny: black officers attempt to desegregate an all-white officers club.

1946
- June 3 - In *Morgan v. Virginia*, the U.S. Supreme Court invalidates provisions of the Virginia Code which require the separation of white and African American passengers where applied to interstate bus transport.
- In Florida, Daytona Beach, DeLand, Sanford, Fort Myers, Tampa, and Gainesville all have black police officers, as do Little Rock, Arkansas; Louisville, Kentucky; Charlotte, North Carolina; Austin, Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, Texas; Richmond, Virginia; Chattanooga and Knoxville, Tennessee.
- Renowned actor/singer Paul Robeson founds the American Crusade Against Lynching.

1947
- April 15 - Jackie Robinson plays his first game for the Brooklyn Dodgers, becoming the first black baseball player in professional baseball in 60 years.
- January 12 - In *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of Univ. of Oklahoma*, the Supreme Court rules that the State of Oklahoma and the University of Oklahoma Law School cannot deny admission based on race.
- July 12 - Hubert Humphrey makes a controversial speech in favour of American civil rights at the Democratic National Convention.
- July 26 - President Harry S. Truman issues Executive Order 9981 ordering the end of segregation in the Armed Forces.
- Atlanta hires its first black police officers.

1950
- Third incarnation of the Klan founded
- June 5 - In *Mclaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents* the U.S. Supreme Court rules that a public institution of higher learning cannot provide different treatment to a student solely because of his race.
- June 5 - In *Sweatt v. Painter* the Supreme Court rules that a separate-but-equal Texas law school is actually unequal, partly in that it deprives black students from the collegiality of future white lawyers.
- June 5 - In *Henderson v. United States* the Supreme Court abolishes segregation in railroad dining cars.
- The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights is created in Washington, DC to promote the enactment and enforcement of effective civil rights legislation and policy.
- Orlando, Florida hires its first black police officers.
- Dr. Ralph Bunche wins the 1950 Nobel Peace Prize.
• Chuck Cooper, Nathaniel Clifton and Earl Lloyd become first black players in the NBA.

1951

• April 23 - High school students in Farmville, Virginia go on strike: the case Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County is heard by the Supreme Court in 1954 as part of Brown v. Board of Education.
• July 26 - The U.S. Army high command announces it will desegregate the Army.
• December 24 - Home of NAACP activists Harry and Harriette Moore in Mims, Florida is bombed by KKK group; both die of injuries.
• "David Arkin writes The Klan"

1952

• January 28 - Briggs v. Elliott: after a District Court orders separate but equal school facilities in South Carolina, the Supreme Court agrees to hear the case as part of Brown v. Board of Education.
• September 4 - Eleven black students attend the first day of school at Claymont High School, Delaware, becoming the first black students in the 17 segregated states to integrate a white public school. The day occurs without incident or notice by the community.

1953

• August 13 - Executive Order 10479 signed by President Eisenhower establishes the anti-discrimination Committee on Government Contracts.
• September 1 - In the landmark case Sarah Keys v. Carolina Coach Company, WAC Sarah Keys, represented by civil rights lawyer Dovey Roundtree, becomes the first black to challenge "separate but equal" in bus segregation before the Interstate Commerce Commission.
• James Baldwin's semi-autobiographical novel Go Tell It on the Mountain published.

1954

• May 3 - In Hernandez v. Texas, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that Mexican Americans and all other racial groups in the U.S. are entitled to equal protection under the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
• May 17 - The Supreme Court rules against the "separate but equal" doctrine in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kans. and in Bolling v. Sharpe, thus overturning Plessy v. Ferguson.
• July 11 - The first White Citizens' Council meeting takes place, in Mississippi.

1955

• January 7 - Marian Anderson becomes the first African American to perform with the New York Metropolitan Opera.
• January 15 - President Eisenhower signs Executive Order 10590, establishing the President's Committee on Government Policy to enforce a non-discrimination policy in Federal employment.
• May 31 - The Supreme Court rules in "Brown II" that desegregation must occur with "all deliberate speed".
• June 29 - The NAACP wins a Supreme Court decision, ordering the University of
Alabama to admit Autherine Lucy.

- August 28 - Teenager Emmett Till is killed in Money, Mississippi.
- December 1 - Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on a bus, initiating the Montgomery Bus Boycott. This occurs nine months after 15 year old high school student Claudette Colvin became the first to refuse to give up her seat. Colvin's was the legal case which eventually ended the practice in Montgomery.

1956

- February 3 - Autherine Lucy is admitted to the University of Alabama. Whites riot, and she is suspended. Later, she is expelled for her part in further legal action against the university.
- February/March - The Southern Manifesto opposing integration of schools is created and signed by members of the Congressional delegations of Southern states, including 19 Senators and 81 members of the House of Representatives, notably the entire delegations of the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Virginia.
- April 10 - singer Nat King Cole is assaulted during a segregated performance at Municipal Auditorium in Birmingham, Alabama.
- November 5 - Nat King Cole hosts the first episode of "The Nat King Cole Show." The show goes off the air after 13 months as no national sponsor can be found.
- November 13 - In "Browder v. Gayle," the Supreme Court strikes down Alabama laws requiring segregation of buses. This ruling, together with the ICC's 1955 ruling in "Sarah Keys v. Carolina Coach" banning Jim Crow in bus travel among the states, is a landmark in outlawing Jim Crow in bus travel.

1957

- January - Southern Christian Leadership Conference formed. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) is named chairman of the organization.
- May 17 - The Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom in Washington, DC is to date the largest non-violent demonstration for civil rights.
- September 4 - Orville Faubus, governor of Arkansas, calls out the National Guard to block integration of Little Rock Central High School.
- September - President Eisenhower federalizes National Guard and orders U.S. Army troops to ensure Little Rock Central School is integrated. Federal and National Guard troops escort the Little Rock Nine.
- September 27 - Civil Rights Act of 1957 signed by President Eisenhower.

1958

- June 29 - Bethel Baptist Church (Birmingham, Alabama) bombed by KKK members.
- August - Clara Luper and the NAACP Youth Council conduct the largest successful sit-in to date, on drug store lunch-counters in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. This starts a successful six-year campaign by Luper and the Council to desegregate businesses and related institutions in Oklahoma City.
- Publication of "Here I Stand," Paul Robeson's manifesto-autobiography.
1959

- January 12 - Motown Records is founded by Berry Gordy.
- *A Raisin in the Sun*, a play by Lorraine Hansberry, debuts on Broadway. The 1961 film of it will star Sidney Poitier.

1960

- *Oh Freedom, We Shall Not be Moved, We Shall Overcome* and *Keep your Eyes on the Prize* become major civil rights songs of the sixties.
  - February 1 - Four black students sit at the Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, sparking six months of the Greensboro Sit-Ins.
  - February 17 - Alabama grand jury indicts MLK for tax evasion.
  - February 20 - Virginia Union University students stage sit-in at Woolworth's lunch counter in Richmond.
  - March 7 - Felton Turner of Houston beaten and hanged upside-down in a tree, initials KKK carved on his chest.
  - March 19 - San Antonio, Texas becomes first city to integrate lunch counters.
  - March 20 - Florida Governor Leroy Collins calls lunch counter segregation "unfair and morally wrong."
  - May 6 - Civil Rights Act of 1960 signed by President Eisenhower
  - May 28 - All-white Alabama jury acquits MLK.
  - June 24 - MLK meets Senator John F. Kennedy (JFK).
  - July 11 - *To Kill a Mockingbird* published.
  - July 31 - Elijah Muhammad calls for an all-black state. Membership in Nation of Islam estimated at 100,000.
  - October 19 - MLK and fifty others arrested at sit-in at Atlanta's Rich's Department Store.
  - October 26 - MLK's earlier probation revoked; he is transferred to Reidsville State Prison.
  - October 28 - After intervention from Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy (RFK), MLK is free on bond.
  - December 5 - In *Boynton v. Virginia*, the U.S. Supreme Court holds that racial segregation in bus terminals is illegal.

1961

- March 6 - JFK issues Executive Order 10925, establishing a Presidential committee, later to become the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.
- May 4 - The first group of Freedom Riders, with the intent of integrating interstate buses, leaves Washington, D.C. by Greyhound bus. The group, organized by the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), leaves shortly after the U.S. Supreme Court has outlawed segregation in interstate transportation terminals.
- May 14 - The Freedom Riders' bus is attacked and burned outside of Anniston, Alabama. A mob beats the Freedom Riders upon their arrival in Birmingham, Alabama. The Freedom Riders are arrested in Jackson, Mississippi, and spend forty to sixty days in Parchman Penitentiary.
- May 17 - Nashville students, coordinated by Diane Nash and James Bevel, take up the
Freedom Ride, signaling the increased involvement of SNCC.

- May 20 - Freedom Riders are assaulted in Montgomery, Alabama, at the Greyhound Bus Station.
- May 21 - MLK, the Freedom Riders, and congregation of 1,500 at Rev. Ralph Abernathy’s First Baptist Church in Montgomery are besieged by mob of segregationists; RFK sends federal marshals to protect them.
- June-August - U.S. Dept. of Justice initiates talks with civil rights groups and establishes foundations to begin Voter Education Project.
- September 23 - Interstate Commerce Commission at RFK’s insistence, issues new rules ending discrimination in interstate travel, effective November 1, 1961, six years after the ICC’s own ruling in *Sarah Keys v. Carolina Coach Company*.
- November 1 - All interstate buses required to display a certificate that reads: “Seating aboard this vehicle is without regard to race, color, creed, or national origin, by order of the Interstate Commerce Commission.”
- November 22 - Albany State College students Bertha Gober and Blanton Hall arrested after entering the white waiting room of the Albany Trailways station.
- December 10 - Freedom Riders from Atlanta, SNCC leader Charles Jones, and Albany State student Bertha Gober are arrested at Albany Union Railway Terminal, sparking mass demonstrations, with hundreds of protesters arrested over the next five days.
- December 11-15 - Five hundred protesters arrested in Albany, Georgia.
- December 15 - MLK arrives in Albany, Georgia in response to a call from Dr. W. G. Anderson, the leader of the Albany Movement to desegregate public facilities.
- December 16 - MLK is arrested at an Albany, Georgia demonstration. He is charged with obstructing the sidewalk and parading without a permit.
- December 18 - Albany truce, including a 60-day postponement of MLK’s trial; MLK leaves town.
- “Black Like Me” written by John Howard Griffin, a white southerner who deliberately tanned and dyed his skin to allow him to directly experience the life of the Negro in the Deep South, is published, displaying the brutality of Jim Crow segregation to a national audience.

1962

- February 26 - Segregated transportation facilities, both interstate and intrastate, ruled unconstitutional by U.S. Supreme Court.
- April 3 - Defense Department orders full racial integration of military reserve units, except the National Guard.
- September 9 - Two black churches used by SNCC for voter registration meetings are burned in Sasser, Georgia.
- September 20 - James Meredith is barred from becoming the first black student to enroll at the University of Mississippi.
- September 30-October 1 - U.S. Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black orders James Meredith admitted to Ole Miss. Meredith enrolls; riot ensues. French photographer Paul Guihard and Oxford resident Ray Gunter are killed.
- November 20 - JFK upholds 1960 campaign promise to eliminate housing segregation
by signing Executive Order 11063 banning segregation in Federally funded housing.

- **Dylan writes The Death of Emmett Till**

1963

- January 18 – Incoming Alabama governor George Wallace calls for "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever" in his inaugural address.
- April 12 - MLK is arrested in Birmingham for "parading without a permit".
- April 16 - MLK's Letter from Birmingham Jail is completed.
- April 23 - CORE activist William L. Moore is killed in Gadsden, Alabama.
- May 9-10 - After images of fire hoses and police dogs turned on protesters are shown on television, the Children's Crusade lays the groundwork for the terms of a negotiated truce on Thursday, May 9, supporting an end to mass demonstrations in return for rolling back oppressive segregation laws and practices.
- May 13 - In United States of America and Interstate Commerce Commission v. the City of Jackson, Mississippi et al., the U.S. Court of Appeals Fifth Circuit rules the city's attempt to circumvent laws desegregating interstate transportation facilities by posting sidewalk signs outside Greyhound, Trailways and Illinois Central terminals reading "Waiting Room for White Only - By Order Police Department", and "Waiting Room for Colored Only - By Order Police Department" to be unlawful.
- June 11 - “The Stand In The Schoolhouse Door”: Alabama Governor George Wallace stands in front of a schoolhouse door at the University of Alabama in an attempt to stop desegregation by the enrollment of two black students, Vivian Malone and James Hood. Wallace only stands aside after being confronted by federal marshals, Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach, and the Alabama National Guard. Later in life he apologizes for his opposition to racial integration.
- June 11 - JFK makes his historic civil rights speech, promising a bill to Congress the next week. About civil rights for "Negroes", in his speech he asks for "the kind of equality of treatment which we would want for ourselves."
- June 12 - NAACP worker Medgar Evers is murdered in Jackson, Mississippi. (His killer is convicted in 1994.)
- Summer - 80,000 blacks quickly register to vote in Mississippi by a test project to show their desire to participate
- June 19 - JFK sends Congress his proposed Civil Rights Act.
- August 28 - March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom is held. MLK gives “I have a dream” speech.
- Joan Baez leads 300,000 people in We Shall Overcome at the Lincoln Memorial.
- September 10 - Birmingham, Alabama City Schools integrated by National Guardsmen under orders from JFK.
- September 15 - 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama kills four young girls. That same day, in response to the killings, James Bevel and Diane Nash begin the Alabama Project, which will later grow into the Selma Voting Rights Movement.
- **Nina Simone writes Mississippi Goddam**
- November 22 - JFK is assassinated. The new President, Lyndon Johnson, decides that pursuing JFK's legislative agenda is his best strategy.
- Sidney Poitier wins the Academy Award for Best Actor.
1964

- June 21 - Mississippi Civil Rights Workers murders.
- June 28 - Organization of Afro-American Unity founded by Malcolm X, lasts until his death.
- July 2 - Civil Rights Act of 1964 signed.
- August - Congress passes the Economic Opportunity Act which provides federal funds for legal representation of Native Americans in both civil and criminal suits. This allows the ACLU and the American Bar Association to represent Native Americans in cases that later win them additional civil rights.
- August - Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegates challenge the seating of all-white Mississippi representatives at the Democratic national convention.
- December 10 - MLK is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the youngest person so honoured.
- December 14 - In Heart of Atlanta Motel v. United States, the U.S. Supreme Court upholds the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

1965

- February 18 - A peaceful protest march in Selma leads to Jimmie Lee Jackson being shot to death by Alabama state trooper James Bonard Fowler, who in 2007 is indicted for his murder.
- February 21 - Malcolm X is shot to death in Manhattan, NY, allegedly by three members of the Nation of Islam.
- March 7 - Bloody Sunday: Civil rights workers in Selma, Alabama begin a march to Montgomery but are stopped by a massive police blockade as they cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Many marchers are severely injured and one killed. This action, initiated and organized by James Bevel, becomes the visual symbol of the Selma Voting Rights Movement.
- Events inspire song Marching 'Round Selma
- March 15 - President Lyndon Johnson uses the phrase "We shall overcome" in a speech before Congress on the voting rights bill.
- August 6 - Voting Rights Act of 1965 signed by President Johnson.
- August 11 - Watts riots erupt in south Los Angeles.
- September - Raylawni Young Branch and Gwendolyn Elaine Armstrong become the first African-American students to attend the University of Southern Mississippi.
- September 15 - Bill Cosby co-stars in I Spy, a first for a black person on American television.
- September 24 - President Johnson signs Executive Order 11246 requiring Equal Employment Opportunity by federal contractors.

1966

- June 5 - James Meredith begins a solitary March Against Fear from Memphis, Tennessee to Jackson, Mississippi. Shortly after starting, he is shot with birdshot and injured. Civil rights leaders and organizations rally and continue the march leading to, on June 16, Stokely Carmichael first using the slogan Black power in a speech.
- October - Black Panthers founded by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale in Oakland, California.
- November - Edward Brooke is elected to the U.S. Senate from Massachusetts. He is the first Black senator since 1881.

1967
- June 12 – In *Loving v. Virginia*, the Supreme Court rules that prohibiting inter-racial marriage is unconstitutional.
- June 13 - Thurgood Marshall is the first African American appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court.
- August 2 - *In the Heat of the Night* is released, starring Sidney Poitier.
- December 11 - *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* is released, also starring Sidney Poitier.
- In the trial of accused killers in the Mississippi civil rights worker murders, the jury convicts 7 of 18 accused men. Conspirator Edgar Ray Killen is later convicted in 2005.
- *The Great White Hope*, based on the experience of heavyweight Jack Johnson, and starring James Earl Jones, is released.
- The book *Death at an Early Age: The Destruction of the Hearts and Minds of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools* is published.

1968
- March - While filming a prime time television special, Petula Clark touches Harry Belafonte's arm during a duet. Chrysler Corporation, the show's sponsor, insists the moment be deleted, but Clark stands firm, destroying all other takes of the song, and delivering the completed program to NBC with the touch intact. The show is broadcast on April 8, 1968.
- April 4 - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is shot and killed in Memphis, Tennessee by James Earl Ray.
- April 11 - Civil Rights Act of 1968 is signed. The Fair Housing Act is Title VIII of this Civil Rights Act - it bans discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing, and completes the 1966 Chicago Open Housing Movement.
- May 12- Poor People's Campaign marches on Washington, DC.
- June 6 - Robert F. Kennedy, a Civil Rights advocate, is assassinated after winning the California presidential primary. His appeal to minorities helped him secure the victory.
- September 17 - Diahann Carroll stars in *Julia*, the first African American actress to star in her own television series where she does not play a domestic worker.
- October - Tommie Smith and John Carlos raise their fists to symbolize black power and unity after winning the gold and bronze medals, respectively, at the 1968 Summer Olympic Games.
- November 22 - First interracial kiss on American television, between Nichelle Nichols and William Shatner on *Star Trek*.
- In *Powe v. Miles*, a federal court holds that the portions of private colleges that are funded by public money are subject to the Civil Rights Act.
- Shirley Chisholm becomes the first African American woman elected to Congress.

1971
- June - Control of segregationist TV station WLBT given to a bi-racial foundation.
1972

- January 25 - Shirley Chisholm becomes the first major-party African American candidate for President of the United States and the first woman to run for the Democratic presidential nomination.
- November 16 - In Baton Rouge, two Southern University students are killed by white Sheriff deputies during a school protest over lack of funding from the state. Today, the university's Smith-Brown Memorial Union is named in their honour.

1973

- February 27 - Start of 71-day standoff at Wounded Knee between federal authorities and members of the American Indian Movement.
- Combahee River Collective, a black feminist group, is established in Boston, out of New York's National Black Feminist Organization.

1974

- Salsa Soul Sisters, Third World Wimmin Inc Collective, the first "out" organization for "lesbians, womanists and women of colour" formed in New York City.

1975

- April 30 - In the pilot episode of Starsky and Hutch, Richard Ward plays an African American boss of white Americans for the first time on TV.

1976

- February - Black History Month is founded by Professor Carter Woodson's Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History.
- The novel *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* by Alex Haley is published.

1977

- President Jimmy Carter appoints Andrew Young to serve as Ambassador to the UN, the first African American to serve in the position.

1978

- June 28 - *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* bars racial quota systems in college admissions but affirms the constitutionality of affirmative action programs giving equal access to minorities.

1979

- Assata Shakur escapes from prison.

1982

- November 30 - Michael Jackson releases *Thriller*, the best-selling album of all time.

1983

- May 24 - The U.S. Supreme Court rules that Bob Jones University does not qualify as either a tax-exempt or a charitable organization due to its racially discriminatory practices.
- August 30 - Guion Bluford becomes the first African American to go into space.
- November 2 - President Ronald Reagan signs a bill creating a federal holiday to honour
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

- Alice Walker receives the Pulitzer Prize for her novel *The Color Purple*.

1984

- September 13 - The film *A Soldier’s Story* is released, dealing with racism in the U.S. military.
- *The Cosby Show* debuts, and becomes regarded as one of the defining television shows of the decade.

1986

- January 20 - Established by legislation in 1983, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is first celebrated as a national holiday.

1988

- December 9 - *Mississippi Burning* is released, in which the 1964 murders of Mississippi civil rights workers is depicted.

1989

- February 10 - Ron Brown is elected chairman of the Democratic National Committee, becoming the first African American to lead a major U.S. political party.
- October 1 - Colin Powell becomes Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.
- December 15 - The film *Glory* is released: it features African American Civil War soldiers.

1990

- January 13 - Douglas Wilder becomes the first elected African American governor as he takes office in Richmond, Virginia.

1991

- March 3 - In Los Angeles, four white police officers are videotaped beating African American Rodney King.
- October 15 - Senate confirms the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court.

1992

- April 29 - Los Angeles riots erupt after officers accused of beating Rodney King are acquitted.
- September 12 - Mae Carol Jemison becomes the first African American woman to travel in space when she goes into orbit aboard the Space Shuttle *Endeavour*.
- November 3 - Carol Moseley Braun becomes the first African American woman to be elected to the United States Senate.
- November 18 - Director Spike Lee’s film *X* on Malcolm X is released.
1995

- June 30 – In *Miller v. Johnson* the U.S. Supreme Court rules that gerrymandering based on race is unconstitutional.
- October 16 - Million Man March in Washington, D.C., co-initiated by Louis Farrakhan and James Bevel.

1997

- July 9 - Director Spike Lee releases his documentary *4 Little Girls* about the 1963 16th Street Baptist Church bombing.

2000

- May 3 - The Bob Jones University, a fundamentalist South Carolina private institution, ends its ban on interracial dating.
- ❧ Common writes “A Song For Assata”.

2001

- January 20 - Colin Powell becomes Secretary of State.

2005

- June 21 - Edgar Ray Killen is convicted of participating in the Mississippi civil rights worker murders.
- October 15 - the Millions More Movement holds a march in Washington D.C.
- October 25 - Rosa Parks dies at the age of 92. Her body lies in state in the Capitol Rotunda in Washington D.C. before her funeral.

2007

- May 10 - Alabama state trooper James Bonard Fowler indicted for the 1965 murder of Jimmie Lee Jackson.
- June 28 - *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* along with *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education* prohibits assigning students to public schools solely for the purpose of achieving racial integration and declines to recognize racial balancing as a compelling state interest.

2008

- June 3 - Barack Obama receives enough delegates by the end of state primaries to be the presumptive Democratic Party of the United States presidential nominee.
- August 28 - At the Democratic National Convention, in a stadium filled with supporters, Barack Obama accepts the Democratic nomination for President of the United States.
- November 4 - Barack Obama elected 44th President of the United States of America, opening his victory speech with, "If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer."
2009

- January 20 - Barack Obama sworn in as the 44th President of the United States, the first African American ever to hold that office.
- January 30 - Former Maryland Lt. Governor Michael S. Steele becomes Chairman of the Republican National Committee.
- The U.S. Postal Service issues a commemorative six-stamp set portraying twelve civil rights pioneers.

2012

- February 26 - Shooting of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida.

2013

- January 20 - Barack Obama is sworn in for his second term as president.
- May 2 - FBI promotes Assata Shakur to list of "most wanted terrorists".
- July 13 - George Zimmermann acquitted in shooting of Trayvon Martin, provoking nationwide protests.

2014

- August 9 – shooting of Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager in Ferguson, MO, sparking widespread protests.

2016

- US mint announces that in 2020 Harriet Tubman will replace Andrew Jackson on $20 bill. Other civil rights leaders to appear on $5 and $10 bills.

2017

- April – US mint releases a gold coin depicting Lady Liberty as a black woman.
Old Man River
(Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II - 1927)

Ol' man river,
Dat ol' man river
He mus'know sumpin'
But don't say nuthin',
He jes'keeps rollin'
He keeps on rollin' along.

He don' plant taters/tators,
He don't plant cotton,
An' dem dat plants'em
is soon forgotten,
But ol'man river,
He jes keeps rollin'along.

You an'me, we sweat an' strain,
Body all achin' an' racket wid pain,
Tote dat barge!
Lif' dat bale!
Git a little drunk
An' you land in jail.

Ah gits weary
An' sick of tryin'
Ah'm tired of livin'
An' skeered of dyin',
But ol' man river,
He jes'keeps rolling' along.

He jes' keeps rollin'
He keeps on rollin' along.

Alternate Lyrics (Paul Robeson)

Old man river, that old man river
He must know sumpin', but don't say nothin'
He just keeps rollin'
He keeps on rollin' along.

He don't plant taters, he don't plant cotton
Them that plants 'em is soon forgotten
But ol' man river, he just keeps rollin' along

You and me, we sweat and strain
Body all achin' and racked with pain.
    “Tote that barge! Lift that bale!”
You show a little grit and you lands in jail.

But I keeps laughin' instead of crying.
I must keep fightin' until I'm dyin'
    But ol' man river,
    He'll just keep rollin' along.

Strange Fruit (Abel Meeropol - 1936)

Southern trees bear strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze,
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

Pastoral scene of the gallant south,
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth,
Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh,
Then the sudden smell of burning flesh.

Here is fruit for the crows to pluck,
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck,
For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop,
Here is a strange and bitter crop.

The Klan (David Arkin – 1951)

The countryside was cold and still
There was a cross upon the hill
And this cold cross wore a burning hood
To hide its rotten core of wood
    Father, I hear an iron sound
    Hoof beats on the frozen ground

Down from the hill the riders came
    Jesus it was a crying shame
To see the blood upon their whips
And hear the snarling of their lips
Mother, I feel a stabbing pain
Blood runs down like a summer rain

Now each one wore a mask of white
To hide his cruel face from sight
And each one sucked a little breath
Out of the empty lungs of death
   Sister, lift my bloody head
   It's so lonesome to be dead

He who travels with the Klan
He is a monster not a man
For underneath his white disguise
   I have looked into his eyes
Brother, will you stand with me
   It's not easy to be free

The Death of Emmett Till (Bob Dylan - 1962)

"Twas down in Mississippi not so long ago,
When a young boy from Chicago town stepped through a Southern door.
   This boy's dreadful tragedy I can still remember well,
   The color of his skin was black and his name was Emmett Till.
Some men they dragged him to a barn and there they beat him up.
   They said they had a reason, but I can't remember what.
They tortured him and did some evil things too evil to repeat.
There was screaming sounds inside the barn, there was laughing sounds out on the street.
   Then they rolled his body down a gulf amidst a bloody red rain
And they threw him in the waters wide to cease his screaming pain.
   The reason that they killed him there, and I'm sure it ain't no lie,
   Was just for the fun of killin' him and to watch him slowly die.
And then to stop the United States of yelling for a trial,
Two brothers they confessed that they had killed poor Emmett Till.
But on the jury there were men who helped the brothers commit this awful crime,
   And so this trial was a mockery, but nobody seemed to mind.
I saw the morning papers but I could not bear to see
   The smiling brothers walkin' down the courthouse stairs.
For the jury found them innocent and the brothers they went free,
While Emmett's body floats the foam of a Jim Crow southern sea.
If you can't speak out against this kind of thing, a crime that's so unjust,
   Your eyes are filled with dead men's dirt, your mind is filled with dust.
Your arms and legs they must be in shackles and chains, and your blood it must refuse to flow,
   For you let this human race fall down so God-awful low!
This song is just a reminder to remind your fellow man
That this kind of thing still lives today in that ghost-robed Ku Klux Klan.
But if all of us folks that thinks alike, if we gave all we could give,
We could make this great land of ours a greater place to live

**Mississippi Goddam** (Nina Simone - 1963)

The name of this tune is Mississippi Goddam
And I mean every word of it

Alabama's gotten me so upset
Tennessee made me lose my rest
And everybody knows about Mississippi Goddam

Alabama's gotten me so upset
Tennessee made me lose my rest
And everybody knows about Mississippi Goddam

Can't you see it
Can't you feel it
It's all in the air
I can't stand the pressure much longer
Somebody say a prayer

Alabama's gotten me so upset
Tennessee made me lose my rest
And everybody knows about Mississippi Goddam

This is a show tune
But the show hasn't been written for it, yet

Hound dogs on my trail
School children sitting in jail
Black cat cross my path
I think every day's gonna be my last

Lord have mercy on this land of mine
We all gonna get it in due time
I don't belong here
I don't belong there
I've even stopped believing in prayer

Don't tell me
I tell you
Me and my people just about due
I've been there so I know
They keep on saying "Go slow!"

But that's just the trouble
"do it slow"
Washing the windows
"do it slow"
Picking the cotton
"do it slow"
You're just plain rotten
"do it slow"
You're too damn lazy
"do it slow"
The thinking's crazy
"do it slow"
Where am I going
What am I doing
I don't know
I don't know

Just try to do your very best
Stand up be counted with all the rest
For everybody knows about Mississippi Goddam

I made you thought I was kiddin' didn't we

Picket lines
School boycotts
They try to say it's a communist plot
All I want is equality
for my sister my brother my people and me

Yes you lied to me all these years
You told me to wash and clean my ears
And talk real fine just like a lady
And you'd stop calling me Sister Sadie

Oh but this whole country is full of lies
You're all gonna die and die like flies
I don't trust you any more
You keep on saying "Go slow!"
"Go slow!"

But that's just the trouble
“do it slow”
Desegregation
“do it slow”
Mass participation
“do it slow”
Reunification
“do it slow”
Do things gradually
“do it slow”
But bring more tragedy
“do it slow”
Why don't you see it
Why don't you feel it
I don't know
I don't know

You don't have to live next to me
Just give me my equality
Everybody knows about Mississippi
Everybody knows about Alabama
Everybody knows about Mississippi Goddam

That's it for now! see ya' later
My Country 'Tis Of Thy People You're Dying
(Buffy Sainte-Marie - 1966)

Now that your big eyes have finally opened,
Now that you're wondering how must they feel,
Meaning them that you've chased across America's movie screens.
Now that you're wondering how can it be real
That the ones you've called colorful, noble and proud
In your school propaganda
They starve in their splendor?
You've asked for my comment I simply will render:

My country 'tis of thy people you're dying.

Now that the longhouses breed superstition
You force us to send our toddlers away
To your schools where they're taught to despise their traditions.
You forbid them their languages, then further say
That American history really began
When Columbus set sail out of Europe, then stress
That the nation of leeches that conquered this land
Are the biggest and bravest and boldest and best.
And yet where in your history books is the tale
Of the genocide basic to this country's birth,
Of the preachers who lied, how the Bill of Rights failed,
How a nation of patriots returned to their earth?
And where will it tell of the Liberty Bell
As it rang with a thud
O'er Kinzua mud,
And of brave Uncle Sam in Alaska this year?

My country 'tis of thy people you're dying.

Hear how the bargain was made for the West:
With her shivering children in zero degrees,
Blankets for your land, so the treaties attest,
Oh well, blankets for land is a bargain indeed,
And the blankets were those Uncle Sam had collected
From smallpox-diseased dying soldiers that day.
And the tribes were wiped out and the history books censored,
A hundred years of your statesmen have felt it's better this way.
And yet a few of the conquered have somehow survived,
Their blood runs the redder though genes have paled.
From the Gran Canyon's caverns to craven sad hills
The wounded, the losers, the robbed sing their tale.
From Los Angeles County to upstate New York
The white nation fattens while others grow lean;
Oh the tricked and evicted they know what I mean.

My country 'tis of thy people you're dying.

The past it just crumbled, the future just threatens;
Our life blood shut up in your chemical tanks.
And now here you come, bill of sale in your hands
And surprise in your eyes that we're lacking in thanks
For the blessings of civilization you've brought us,
The lessons you've taught us, the ruin you've wrought us --
Oh see what our trust in America's brought us.

My country 'tis of thy people you're dying.

Now that the pride of the sires receives charity,
Now that we're harmless and safe behind laws,
Now that my life's to be known as your "heritage,"
Now that even the graves have been robbed,
Now that our own chosen way is a novelty --
Hands on our hearts we salute you your victory,
Choke on your blue white and scarlet hypocrisy
Pitying the blindness that you've never seen
That the eagles of war whose wings lent you glory
They were never no more than carrion crows,
Pushed the wrens from their nest, stole their eggs, changed their story;
The mockingbird sings it, it's all that he knows.
"Ah what can I do?" say a powerless few
With a lump in your throat and a tear in your eye --
Can't you see that their poverty's profiting you.

My country 'tis of thy people you're dying.

**A Song for Assata** (Common - 2000) - selected verses

In the Spirit of God.
In the Spirit of the Ancestors.
In the
Spirit of the Black Panthers.
In the Spirit of Assata Shakur.
We make this movement
towards freedom
for all those who have been oppressed, and all those in the struggle. Yeah. yo, check it-

There were lights and sirens, gunshots firin
Cover
your eyes as I describe a scene so violent
Seemed like a bad dream, she laid in a blood
puddle
Blood bubbled in her chest, cold air brushed against open flesh
No room to
rest, pain consumed each breath
Shot twice wit her hands up
Police questioned but shot
before she answered
One Panther lost his life, the other ran for his
Scandalous the
police were as they kicked and beat her
Comprehension she was beyond, tryna hold on
to
life. She thought she'd live with no arm
that's what it felt like, got to the hospital, eyes
held tight
They moved her room to room-she could tell by the light
Handcuffed tight to
the bed, through her skin it bit
Put guns to her head, every word she got hit
"Who
shot the trooper?" they asked her
Put mace in her eyes, threatened to blast her
Her
mind raced till things got still
Opened her eyes, realized she's next to her best friend who
got killed
She got chills, they told her: that's where she would be next
Hurt mixed
wit anger-survival was a reflex
They lied and denied visits from her lawyer
But she
was buildin as they tried to destroy her
If it wasn't for this german nurse they woulda
served her worse
I read this sister's story, knew that it deserved a verse
I wonder
what would happen if that woulda been me?
All this shit so we could be free, so dig it, y'all.

Yo
Assata had been convicted of a murder she couldn't done
Medical evidence shown she couldn't shot the gun
It's time for her to see
the sun from the other side
Time for her daughter to be by her mother's side
Time for
this Beautiful Woman to become soft again
Time for her to breathe, and not be told how or when
She untangled the chains and escaped the pain
How she broke out of prison I could never explain
And even to this day they try to get to her
but she's free with
political asylum in Cuba.
I'm thinkin' of Assata, yeah. Listen to my Love, Assata, yeah.
We're molded from the same mud, Assata.
We share
the same Blood, Assata, yeah.
Your Power and Pride, so Beautiful...
May God bless your Soul.
Your Power and Pride, so Beautiful...
May God bless your Soul.
Oooh.
(Assata)
Freedom! You askin me about freedom. Askin me about freedom? I'll be honest with you. I know a whole more about what freedom isn't than about what it is, cause I've never been free.
I can only share my vision with you of the future, about what freedom is.
Uhh, the way I see it, freedom is-- is the right to grow, is the right to blossom.
Freedom is -is the right to be yourself, to be who you are, to be who you wanna be, to do what you wanna do. (fade out)