Civil Rights Songs: A Chronological Listing

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This Civil Rights Song List is not a comprehensive catalogue. This list is merely the culmination of a set of lists that I will continue to augment on my own as more songs are created or discovered and added. The data presented here were amassed as a special project during the COVID-19 pandemic and as part of my duties as reference librarian at Oyster Bay-East Norwich Public Library in Oyster Bay, NY. Any opinions expressed in this article are my own and do not represent those of the library, its staff, or the Board of Trustees.

My own interest in civil rights, and in the power of music, dates back to the early 1960s, when my mother took me to a “Ban the Bomb” demonstration at the United Nations, and my father took me to the August 28, 1963, March on Washington. Their examples and these events would inspire a life of activism expressed through music, including my first musical on atomic testing and imperialism. I also formed the Metropolitan Philharmonic Chorus in 1988 to perform works no other chorus would or could do, including the cantata *I Have A Dream* written by my teacher and mentor Elie Siegmeister and performed in its Manhattan premiere with William Warfield on January 15, 1989, at the Harlem School of the Arts. The attendance of Pete Seeger at that performance prompted him to approach me, leading to wonderful collaborative opportunities in workshops, performances, arrangements, and compositions.

This project is intended as a starting point for others to build on. The list appended to this article is merely a snapshot in time of both a work in progress and, so to speak, a work about progress—social progress. Viewed chronologically, these songs have much to tell about the history of our country—and a few others, as well. Strictly speaking, the list is not exactly chronological: precise months and dates are not taken into account; only years, with titles alphabetized within each year. They begin half a millennium ago, and include every year since 1930 (except 1944, 1950, 1952, 1955, 1961, 1986–7, 1995, and 1997).

The names most frequently recurring here are: Bob Dylan (9); Pete Seeger and Bob Marley (8); Si Kahn and Langston Hughes (7); Elie Siegmeister and Phil Ochs (6); Bernice Johnson Reagon, Marvin Gaye, Tom Paxton, Peace Poets, Public Enemy, Tupac Shakur, and Nina Simone (5); Charon Hribar, Kendrick Lamar, Curtis Mayfield, Earl Robinson, and Staple Singers (4); Yara Allen, Marc Blitzstein, Oscar Brown, Jr., Mos Def, Anne Feeney, Rhiannon Giddens, Bertha Gober, Woody Guthrie, Jay-Z, Lead Belly, Tom Lehrer, Gil Scott-Heron, Barrett Strong, Kanye West, and Norman J. Whitfield (3).¹

Many songs are associated more with their performers than with the writers and composers who created them, the best example being “Strange Fruit,” which is often (mis)attributed to Billie Holiday, though it was written by Abel Meeropol under the pen-name Lewis Allan. Likewise, Lesley Gore is most closely associated with “You Don’t Own Me,” though it was written by John Madara and David White. Many of the songs Elvis Presley sang were also co-copyrighted by him, though he wrote none of them, and he is therefore not listed here. And, of course, “cover” artists like Joan Baez, Judy Collins, and Mara Levine

¹ My own name appears quite a few times as well since, as a composer, I know my own works catalog more thoroughly than anyone else’s.

often sing songs by writers like Phil Ochs, Bob Dylan, and Malvina Reynolds, sometimes bringing out the lyricism of the melodies even more than their creators did.

In defining “song” for this list, I included conventional settings of music for voice(s) with or without accompaniment, chants, talking blues, rap, hip-hop, and some hymns. Purely instrumental pieces, even with political titles, and even if called “songs without words,” are not found here.

Then there is the question of the meaning of “civil rights.” A dictionary definition includes the rights “to political and social freedom and equality.” In general parlance, the term also denotes struggling against racism, prejudice and bigotry. But no matter how political, or relevant, or powerful, or good, not every song of struggle, labor, prison, protest, peace, or even identity—racial or otherwise—is necessarily a civil rights song. Most of the great Spanish Civil War songs are not conventionally considered civil rights songs (even if many have been called “Songs for Democracy”), but I did include Tom Lehrer’s lampoon of them, because of his message, even though satirical, on “the fight against poverty, war and ‘injustice.’” Likewise, I included songs about freedom, slavery, abolition, and the Underground Railroad. Spirituals and religious songs are also on this list if they have been adapted for use in the struggle for civil rights.

The list contains a number of songs that have been repurposed and refocused by adaptation and parody. Many of our nation’s most important songs are indeed parodies or contain satire as a kind of critique, including “America” (“God Save the King”), “Battle Hymn of the Republic” (“John Brown’s Body,” and earlier than that, probably some revival hymns), and “This Land Is Your Land” (a Carter Family tune). Two songs of earlier generations, “Michael, Row the Boat Ashore” and “We’re Marching to Pretoria,” became adapted as civil rights songs in the 1950s, promoted especially by the Weavers. The first was discovered by Tony Saletan in the Boston Public Library, with roots in the Underground Railroad. The second was actually a British Army song from the Boer War, whose repurposing may be viewed retrospectively as somewhat humorous but effective nonetheless.

Quite a few Broadway shows and songs have dealt with civil rights, at least obliquely, such as *Finian’s Rainbow* in 1947; “Carefully Taught” in Rodgers and Hammerstein’s 1949 *South Pacific*; “Simple,” which refers to the NAACP, in *Anyone Can Whistle* by Stephen Sondheim; and as an important theme in *Hair*, *Ragtime*, and *Raisin*—Judd Woldin’s musicalization of Lorraine Hansberry’s classic play *A Raisin in the Sun*. The earliest Broadway civil rights song, though, did not begin as one. Paul Robeson transformed “Ol’ Man River” in Jerome Kern’s and Oscar Hammerstein’s *Showboat* of 1927 from a plaint of resignation into a fighting anthem during the Spanish Civil War, ten years later. Robeson also championed John LaTouche’s and Earl Robinson’s 1939 “Ballad for Americans” and Marc Blitzstein’s 1941 song “[Purest Kind of a Guy](#),” and was particularly fond of its line “black or white or tan . . .” (as attested to by Blitzstein’s sister, Josephine Davis, in interviews with me and Blitzstein biographer Eric Gordon).

Other songs mention civil rights specifically, like Tom Paxton’s “[Daily News](#)” or Joel Mandelbaum’s and Leah Fichandler’s “[The Causes Are Waiting for You](#).” Many recent songs have tended toward street chants—for instance, those at Black Lives Matter marches.² But I have also tried to include songs from operas and oratorios, such as those about Dr. King, the Freedom Riders, Emmett Till, Medgar Evers, the three civil rights workers killed in Mississippi in 1964, and many more about recent victims like George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Michael Brown.

During the 2020 pandemic, the York Theatre sponsored a seven-round contest for songwriters on a

² On June 19, 2020, I joined and spoke at one such march, recalling words I had heard Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., say in Washington and in Great Neck.

different theme every two weeks. In Week 4, in response to Black Lives Matter, the theme was “What Matters to You.” A few interesting civil rights songs resulted from that assignment. I composed seven songs for the first six rounds, perhaps the most memorable being a collaboration with Suffolk County’s first poet laureate, George Wallace (not to be confused with the late governor of Alabama, about whom there have also been quite a few civil rights songs written). An excerpt from George’s text reads:

*we can all fit within
we can all do without
but don't push outsiders in
by tossing insiders out
fight for your rights as a minority
but don't dis your allies in the majority*

In eschewing capital letters, George admitted to having been influenced by E. E. Cummings, and one of Cummings’s poems also made it into this list—a 1926 anti-war send-up of political hypocrisy, in a couple of settings (mine of 1982; Declan McKenna’s of 2016). The most frequently occurring of any of the writers is Langston Hughes. Hughes’s poems have also been a source of inspiration for quite a few composers, most notably Elie Siegmeister, who set more of his poetry than anyone else. The Hughes poem that seems to have been set by more composers than any other in my lists (eight in total) is “Dreams,” which arguably inspired Dr. King, about whom more civil rights songs seem to have been written than anyone else.

Civil rights songs are constantly being written and could be added to similar lists of your own making. At the time of this writing, I think this is the largest list of its kind (522 items) and so a significant foundation for researchers and others. I encourage anyone who wants to take up the mantle to continue the work.

Chronological List of Civil Rights Song Titles and Creators

(with thanks to Zalmen Mlotek, NYTF; Bennet Zurofsky, Philip Aaberg, and Si Kahn)

1500s	<i>De Colores</i>	Spanish folk; adapted by Cursillos in Majorca, 1944
1700s	(There's a) Better Day A-Coming	Folk; adapted by Michel LaRue, 1960
1779 (published as a hymn)	Amazing Grace	words: John Newton, 1772; tune: "New Britain"
1800s	<i>Mir viln frayhayt</i> [We Want Freedom]	Anonymous; tune: " <i>Sholom Aleichem</i> "
1824	Ode to Joy	words: from the poem <i>An die Freude</i> by Friedrich Schiller, 1785; music: Ludwig van Beethoven for his Ninth Symphony, 1824; sung by Paul Robeson for Welsh miners, 1957; sung by Chilean protesters and as Anthem of Europe, 1972; performed as <i>An die Freiheit</i> ("Ode to Freedom") under Leonard Bernstein at the fall of the Berlin Wall, 1989; adapted by the Deadly Snakes, 2003
1825	We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder	Spiritual
1842	The Abolitionist Hymn [a.k.a. Prayer of the Abolitionist]	John Pierpont (tune: "Old Hundredth")
1841–3	I Am an Abolitionist	William Lloyd Garrison (tune: " <i>Auld Lang Syne</i> ")
1842	<i>Die Gedanken sind frei</i>	Hoffmann von Fallersleben
1844	Get Off the Track!	Jesse Hutchinson, Jr. (tune: "Old Dan Tucker")
1844	Oh Freedom!	Slave song; adapted by John Handcox, 1935; marching song of Atlanta race riots, 1906; sung and then recorded by Odetta, 1944, 1956
1847	O Holy Night	words: Placide Cappeau; music: Adolphe Adam (English translation: John Sullivan Dwight, 1855)
1850s (exact date unknown)	No Irish Need Apply	Anonymous
1855 (published)	Slavery Is a Hard Foe to Battle	words: Judson Hutchison; tune: "Jordan Is a Hard Road to Travel" by Dan Emmett, 1853
1866–92 (exact date unknown)	<i>In Ale Gasn—Hey, Hey, Daloy Politzey</i> [Everywhere You Look—Down with the Police!]	David Edelstadt (tune includes quote from Russian folk song parodied as " <i>Tsar Nikolai izdal manifest: Myortvym svoboda, zhivikh pod arrest!</i> " ["Tsar Nicholas issued a manifesto: Freedom for the dead; the living under arrest!"] quoted in Leonard Lehrman's opera <i>Sima</i> , 1976
1899–1966 (exact date unknown)	<i>Maknes Geyen</i> [Masses Marching]	Mikhl Gelbart
1860s	No More Auction Block (for Me) [a.k.a. Many Thousand Gone]	Civil War song
1860	Song of the Free	Underground Railroad Song (tune: "Oh! Susanna")

1861	John Brown's Body [a.k.a. The John Brown Song]	Anonymous (tune: "Say, Brothers Will You Meet Us?")
pre-1862	Steal Away	Spiritual
1862	The Battle Cry of Freedom [a.k.a. Rally 'Round the Flag]	George Frederick Root
1862	Battle Hymn of the Republic [a.k.a. Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory]	Julia Ward Howe (tune: "John Brown's Body")
1862 (published)	Go Down, Moses	Spiritual (arrangements: Henry Burleigh, Florence Price)
1863	Get on Board [a.k.a. Get on Board, Little Children; a.k.a. The Gospel Train]	sometimes credited to John Chamberlain
1864	Wake Nicodemus	Henry Clay Work
1865	Slavery Chain Done Broke at Last	Spiritual (tune: "Joshua Fit de Battle of Jericho")
1867 (published)	Michael, Row the Boat Ashore	Spiritual (published in <i>Slave Songs of the United States</i>)
1880	We Are Soldiers in the Army	Anonymous
1856–1932 (exact date unknown)	Ale Brider [a.k.a. <i>Un mir zaynen ale brider</i> (And We Are All Brothers)]	Morris Winchevsky
1856–1932 (exact date unknown)	<i>O di velt vet vern yinger</i> [a.k.a. <i>Di Zukunft</i> (The Future)]	Morris Winchevsky
1900	Lift Every Voice and Sing	James Weldon Johnson
1907	Will the Circle Be Unbroken?	words: Ada R. Habershon; music: Charles H. Gabriel
1915	Solidarity Forever	Ralph Chaplin (tune: "John Brown's Body")
1917	Bread and Roses	words: James Oppenheim, 1911; music: Caroline Kohlsaat, 1917
1917	I Don't Feel No-Ways Tired	Spiritual (arrangement: Harry Thacker Burleigh)
1917	Walk Together, Children	Spiritual (arrangement: J. Rosamond Johnson)
1918 (published)	Down by the Riverside	Spiritual
1920s	This Little Light of Mine	adapted by Harry Dixon Loes
1922	This Train (Is Bound for Glory)	Gospel
1924	The Prisoner's Song (If I Had the Wings of an Angel)	Robert and Guy Massey; copyrighted by Vernon Dalhart
1927	Georgia Stockade Blues	Sara Martin
1927 (published)	He's Got the Whole World in His Hands	Spiritual
1928 (published)	Follow the Drinkin' Gourd	Spiritual (Underground Railroad song)
1930 (composed)	How Can You Keep on Movin' (Unless You Migrate Too)	Agnes "Sis" Cunningham (published in 1959)
1931	I'll Be Glad When You're Dead (You Rascal You)	Sam Theard; adapted by Louis Armstrong
1931	I'll Fly Away	Albert Edward Brumley, influenced by "The Prisoner's Song"
1932	Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?	from <i>Americana</i> ; words: E.Y. "Yip" Harburg; music: Jay Gorney
1932	Which Side Are You On?	Florence Reece; later adapted by Ani DiFranco, et al

1933	Supper Time	Irving Berlin (written for Ethel Waters)
1934	Park Bench	words: Langston Hughes; music: Elie Siegmeister
1934	The Scottsboro Boys Shall Not Die	words: Charles Abron; music: Elie Siegmeister (a.k.a. L. E. Swift)
1935	We Shall Not Be Moved	Textile Workers; many adaptations, thru present
1936	Joe Worker	from <i>The Cradle Will Rock</i> ; Marc Blitzstein
1937	The Bourgeois Blues	Huddie Ledbetter (a.k.a. Lead Belly)
1937	Ol' Man River	from <i>Show Boat</i> , 1927; words: Oscar Hammerstein; music: Jerome Kern; version adapted & sung by Paul Robeson, 1937
1937	Strange Fruit	Abel Meeropol (a.k.a. Lewis Allan)
1938	Certainly Lord	Spiritual (used in <i>Regina</i> by Marc Blitzstein, 1949)
1938	Joe Hill	words: Alfred Hayes; music: Earl Robinson
1938	Precious Lord, Take My Hand [a.k.a. Take My Hand, Precious Lord]	Thomas A. Dorsey; Dr. King's favorite hymn
1939	Ballad for Americans [a.k.a. The Ballad for Uncle Sam]	from <i>Sing for Your Supper</i> ; words: John LaTouche; music: Earl Robinson
1939	Free at Last	Spiritual (recorded by the Blind Boys of Alabama, 1939); quoted in "I Have a Dream" speech by M. L. King, Jr.; quoted in <i>I Have A Dream</i> Cantata by Elie Siegmeister, 1966–7; quoted in <i>I Have a Dream</i> Oratorio by James Furman, 1970–1
1939–47 (several versions)	There's a Man Goin' Round Takin' Names	Huddie Ledbetter (a.k.a. Lead Belly)
1940	Another Man Done Gone	(collected by John and Alan Lomax)
1940	Jim Crow (Lincoln Set the Negro Free; Why Is He Still in Slavery?)	The Almanac Singers (Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Millard Lampell)
1940 (published)	Soon I Will Be Done (Gonna Turn the World Around)	Spiritual (adapted 2001)
1940	This Land Is Your Land	Woody Guthrie (tune: "When the World's on Fire" by the Carter Family)
1941	The Purest Kind of a Guy	from <i>No for an Answer</i> ; Marc Blitzstein
1941	Uncle Sam Says	Josh White
1942	All You Fascists Bound to Lose	Woody Guthrie
1942	I'm On My Way (to [the] Freedom Land)	Mamie Brown and Carlton Reece (arrangement: Arthur Stern)
1943	The House I Live In	words: Abel Meeropol (a.k.a. Lewis Allan); music: Earl Robinson
1945	Hold Fast to Dreams	words: Langston Hughes, 1922; music: Florence Price
1946	Hallelujah, I'm A-Travelin'	Anonymous (tune: "Hallelujah, I'm a Bum")
1947	Duncan and Brady	Huddie Ledbetter (a.k.a. Lead Belly)
1947	The Freedom Train	Irving Berlin
1947	(I Will) Move on Up a Little Higher	W. Herbert Brewster
1947	Talking Union	Millard Lampell, Lee Hays, and Pete Seeger
1947	When the Idle Poor Become the Idle Rich	from <i>Finian's Rainbow</i> ; words: E. Y. "Yip" Harburg; music: Burton Lane

1948	Black, Brown and White [Blues]	William “Big Bill” Broonzy
1948	Brown-Skinned Cow	Hy Zaret and Lou Singer
1948	Passing Through	Dick Blakeslee
1949	If I Had a Hammer [a.k.a. The Hammer Song]	Lee Hays and Pete Seeger
1949	You’ve Got to Be Carefully Taught	from <i>South Pacific</i> ; words: Oscar Hammerstein; music: Richard Rodgers
1951	Chalk Marks on the Sidewalk	words: Langston Hughes; music: Elie Siegmeister
1951	How I Got Over	Clara Ward
1953	I Wanna Go Back to Dixie	Tom Lehrer
1953	We Are Marching to Pretoria	Boer War Song, 1900; adapted by The Weavers, 1953
1954	Michael, Row the Boat Ashore	Slave song (first published in 1867); adapted by Tony Saletan with harmony and some lyrics changes
1956	Black and White	Earl Robinson
1956	Brown Eyed Handsome Man	Chuck Berry
1956	Union Maid	Woody Guthrie (tune: “Red Wing”)
1957	Wasn’t That a Time?	Lee Hays
1958	Turn, Turn, Turn	Pete Seeger (words from Ecclesiastes 3:1–8)
1959	Fables of Faubus	Charles Mingus
1959	No Crime, No Law	Lord Commander
1960s (exact date unknown)	Calypso Freedom [a.k.a. Freedom’s Coming and It Won’t Be Long]	Willie Peacock (tune: “Banana Boat Song [a.k.a. Day-O]”)
1960s (exact date unknown)	Everybody Says [Wants] Freedom	Spiritual (recorded on <i>Freedom Songs: Selma Alabama</i> , 1965, Smithsonian Folkways)
1960s (exact date unknown)	Going Down to Mississippi	Phil Ochs
1960s (exact date unknown)	Governor Wallace	Freedom Singers
1960s (exact date unknown)	Guide My Feet (While I Run This Race)	Spiritual (tune: “Do Lord Remember Me,” attributed to Julia Ward Howe, 1860s)
1960s (exact date unknown)	Lord, Hold My Hand While I Run This Race	Spiritual
1960s (exact date unknown)	Oh Pritchett, Oh Kelly	Bertha Gober, Rutha Harris, Charles Sherrod, and Jamie Culbreath (tune: “Rockin’ Jerusalem”)
1960s (exact date unknown)	Over My Head I See Freedom in the Air	Bernice Johnson Reagon
1960s (exact date unknown)	Walk with Me, Lord	Spiritual; adapted by Fannie Lou Hamer
1960	(There’s a) Better Day A-Coming	adapted by Michel LaRue from a 1700s tune
1960	Brown Baby	Oscar Brown, Jr.
1960	Dog, Dog [a.k.a. Dogs; a.k.a. Your Dog Loves My Dog]	Freedom Singers
1960	Freedom Day	words: Oscar Brown; music: Max Roach
1960	Greensboro [a.k.a. Ballad of the Student Sit-Ins]	Guy Caravan, Eve Merriam, and Norma Curtis
1960	Chain Gang	Sam Cooke

1960	We Are Moving On to Vict'ry	Pete Seeger
1946–60 (several versions)	We Shall Overcome	Zilphia Horton, Frank Hamilton, Guy Caravan, and Pete Seeger (original hymn: "I'll Overcome Some Day" by Charles Albert Tindley, published 1901; published as "We Will Overcome" in <i>People's Song Bulletin</i> , 1945)
1962	Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round [a.k.a. Don't Let Nobody Turn You Around]	Spiritual
1962	Blowin' in the Wind	Bob Dylan
1962	The Death [a.k.a. Ballad] of Emmett Till	Bob Dylan
1962	Freedom in the Air	Bernice Johnson Reagon
1962	Hymn to Freedom	Oscar Peterson
1962	Ride On Red, Ride On	Louisiana Red
1963	Ain't A-Scared of Your Jail	Lester Cobb (tune: "Old Grey Mare")
1963	Been Down into the South	Bob Zellner
1963	If You Miss Me at the Back of the Bus	Charles Neblett (tune: "O Mary, Don't You Weep")
1963	Get Your Rights, Jack	CORE Freedom Singers
1963	Go Tell It on the Mountain (to Let My People Go!)	Spiritual (published 1909); adapted Fannie Lou Hamer
1963	I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free	Billy Taylor and Dick Dallas
1963	In the Upper Room	L. E. Campbell
1963	Oginga Odinga	Matthew Jones
1963	Only a Pawn in Their Game	Bob Dylan
1963	Power and the Glory	Phil Ochs
1963	Stone Walls and Steel Bars	Ray Pennington and Roy Marcum
1963	There but for Fortune	Phil Ochs
1963	Uncle Tom's Prayer	Matthew Jones
1963	We'll Never Turn Back	Bertha Gober
1963	Woke Up This Mornin' (with My Mind Stayed on Freedom)	Robert Wesby
1963	You Don't Own Me	John Madara and David White
1964	Birmingham Sunday	Richard Fariña
1964	Carry It On	Gil Turner and Marion Wade
1964	A Change Is Gonna Come	Sam Cooke
1964	Chimes of Freedom	Bob Dylan
1964	Daily News	Tom Paxton
1964	Dancin' in the Street(s)	Marvin Gaye, William "Mickey" Stevenson, and Ivy Jo Hunter
1964	He Was My Brother	Paul Simon
1964	I'm Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table	Gospel hymn, adapted by McComb, MS, Freedom School Students
1964	In The Mississippi River	Marshall Jones
1964	It Isn't Nice	Malvina Reynolds
1964	Keep On Pushing	The Impressions
1964	The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll	Bob Dylan

1964	Mississippi Goddam	Nina Simone
1964	Promised Land	Chuck Berry (tune: “Wabash Cannonball”)
1964	Simple	from <i>Anyone Can Whistle</i> ; Stephen Sondheim
1964	The Times They Are A-Changin’	Bob Dylan
1964	Too Many Martyrs [a.k.a. The Ballad of Medgar Evers]	Phil Ochs
1964	What Did You Learn in School Today?	Tom Paxton
1964	When the Ship Comes In	Bob Dylan
1965	Ain’t That News?	Tom Paxton
1965	Alabama Blues	J. B. Lenoir
1965	Ballad of a Thin Man	Bob Dylan
1965	Been in the Storm [So Long]	Folk
1965	Days of Decision	Phil Ochs
1965	The Folk Song Army	Tom Lehrer
1965	Forty Acres and a Mule	Oscar Brown, Jr.
1965	Four Women	Nina Simone
1965	Freedom Is a Constant Struggle	Roberta Slavitt
1965	Freedom Now Chant	(recorded on <i>Freedom Songs: Selma, Alabama</i> , 1965, Folkways Records)
1965	Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney	Tom Paxton
1965	Here’s to the State of Mississippi	Phil Ochs
1965	Keep Your Eyes on the Prize [a.k.a. Hold On]	Alice Wine (tune: “Keep Your Hand on the Plow”)
1965	Maggie’s Farm	Bob Dylan
1965	Michael, Andrew and James	Richard Fariña
1965	National Brotherhood Week	Tom Lehrer
1965–8 (several versions)	Oh Wallace	James Orange
1965	People Get Ready	Curtis Mayfield
1965	Respect	Otis Redding
1965	Society’s Child [a.k.a. Baby, I’ve Been Thinking]	Janis Ian
1965	Tell It On and On	Edith Segal (on Goodman, Schwerner and Chaney)
1965 (recorded)	Wade in the Water	Spiritual (first published by Frederick J. Work and John Wesley Work II in <i>New Jubilee Songs as Sung by the Fisk Jubilee Singers</i> ; recorded as a civil rights song by the Staple Singers on the album <i>Freedom Highway</i>)
1965	We Didn’t Know	Tom Paxton; adapted by Leonard Lehrman, 2006, 2019
1965	Why (Am I Treated So Bad)?	Staples Singers
1966	Ain’t No Mountain High Enough	Nickolas Ashford and Valerie Simpson
1966	Burn, Baby, Burn	Jimmy Collier and Frederick Douglass Kirkpatrick
1966	For What It’s Worth	Stephen Stills

1966	Those Three Are On My Mind	Pete Seeger and Frances Taylor
1966	Compared to What?	Gene McDaniels
1967	Black Boys—White Boys	from <i>Hair</i> ; words: Gerome Ragni and James Rado; music: Galt MacDermot
1967	Exile; I Have a Dream; The Sound of Freedom	excerpts from Cantata, <i>I Have a Dream</i> ; words by Edward Mabley after speech by M.L. King; music by Elie Siegmeister
1967	The Motor City Is Burning	John Lee Hooker
1967	Police on My Back	The Equals
1967	Sittin' On the Dock of the Bay	Otis Redding
1967	We're a Winner	Curtis Mayfield
1967	What's Goin' On Down There?	Malvina Reynolds
1968	Abraham, Martin and John	Dick Holler
1968	Ballad of Martin Luther King	Mike Millius
1968	Blackbird	John Lennon and Paul McCartney
1968	Blues for Martin Luther King	Otis Spann
1968	Everybody's Got a Right to Live	Frederick D. Kirkpatrick
1968	Everyday People	Sly Stone
1968	The Face of War	title song in cycle of 5; words: Langston Hughes, 1967; music: Elie Siegmeister, 1968
1968	I['ve] Been 'Buked and I['ve] Been Scorned [We'll Never Turn Back]	adapted by Bertha Gober
1968	Piggies	George Harrison
1968	Say It Loud I'm Black and I'm Proud	James Brown
1968	Volunteered Slavery	Roland Kirk
1968	Why? (The King of Love Is Dead)	Nina Simone
1969	Freedom's Comin'	Charity
1969	In the Ghetto	Mac Davis
1969	Have You Been to Jail for Justice?	Anne Feeney
1969	Is It Because I'm Black?	Syl Johnson
1969	Message from a Black Man	Barrett Strong and Norman J. Whitfield
1969	Rebuild America/Keep Hope Alive	Anne Feeney
1969	Stand!	Sly Stone
1969	To Be Young, Gifted and Black	words: Weldon Irvine; music: Nina Simone
1969	When Will We Be Paid? [for the Work We've Done]	Staple Singers
1970	Ball of Confusion (That's What the World Is Today)	Norman Whitfield and Barrett Strong
1970	(Don't Worry) If There's A Hell Below We're All Going to Go	Curtis Mayfield
1970	Down in Mississippi	J.B. Lenoir
1970	(For God's Sake) Give More Power to the People	Eugene Record
1970	Freedom Rider	Traffic
1970	I Don't Want Nobody to Give Me Nothing (Open Up the Door, I'll Get It Myself)	James Brown

1970	No More	The Lumpen
1970	Ohio	Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young
1970	Southern Man	Neil Young
1970	We Are the People [Who Are] Darker Than Blue	Curtis Mayfield
1970	When the Revolution Comes	The Last Poets
1970	Yes, We Can	Lee Dorsey and Allen Toussaint (adapted as “Yes, We Can Can” by Allen Toussaint, 1973)
1970–1	Liberation/Poem	Sonia Sanchez
1971	Freedom Song	Roberta Flack
1971	Harlem River Drive	words: Calvin Clash; music: Eddie Palmieri
1971	Law and Order	from <i>Inner City</i> ; words: Eve Merriam; music: Helen Miller
1971	Respect Yourself	The Staple Singers
1971	The Revolution Will Not Be Televised	Gil Scott-Heron
1971	Save the Children	Al Cleveland, Renaldo Benson, and Marvin Gaye
1971	Smiling Faces Sometimes	Norman Whitfield and Barrett Strong
1971	What’s Going On?	Marvin Gaye
1971	Wholy Holy	Al Cleveland, Renaldo Benson and Marvin Gaye
1972	The Harder They Come	Jimmy Cliff
1972	I’ll Take You There	The Staple Singers
1972	Inner City Blues	Marvin Gaye
1972	No Knock	Gil Scott-Heron
1973	Get Up, Stand Up	Bob Marley
1973	Living for the City	Stevie Wonder
1973	Me and Baby Brother	War
1973	Measure the Valleys	from <i>Raisin</i> ; words: Robert Brittan (after Lorraine Hansberry); music: Judd Woldin
1973	Someday We’ll All Be Free	Donny Hathaway
1974	Bread and Roses	words: James Oppenheim, 1911; music: Mimi Fariña, 1974
1974	Burn, Baby, Burn	Hudson Ford
1974	Hercules	Aaron Neville
1974	Revolution	Bob Marley
1974	Sweet Home Alabama	Lynyrd Skynyrd
1974	Them Belly Full (But We Hungry)	Bob Marley
1975	Burnin’ and Lootin’	Bob Marley
1975	Chocolate City	Parliament
1975	Give the People What They Want	The O’Jays
1975	The People United Will Never Be Defeated! (<i>El pueblo unido jamás será vencido</i>)	variations by Frederic Rzewski of 1973 song by Sergio Ortega and Quilapayún
1975	Politicians in My Eyes	Bobby, David, and Dannis Hackney (a.k.a. “Death”)
1976	Joan [Joanne] Little	Bernice Johnson Reagon
1977	Baltimore	Randy Newman
1977	Equal Rights	Peter Tosh

1977	Harriet Tubman	Walter Robinson
1977	95 South, All the Places We've Been	Gil Scott-Heron and Brian Jackson
1977	Sorrow, Tears and Blood	Fela Kuti
1978	<i>Brot und Rosen</i> [Bread and Roses]	words: James Oppenheim, 1911; translated into German by Peter Maiwald; music: Renate Fresow
1978	The Devil Went Down to Georgia	Charlie Daniels
1979	Zimbabwe	Bob Marley
1980s (exact date unknown)	Courage [My Friend]	South African Anti-Apartheid song
1980s (exact date unknown)	Walking Down the Road	Si Kahn (written about South Africa)
1980	Real Situation	Bob Marley
1980	Redemption Song	Bob Marley
1980	Yes, We Want Our Freedom	Cleo Kennedy and Carlton Reese
1981	Ella's Song—We Who Believe in Freedom Cannot Rest Until It Comes	from the film <i>Fundji</i> ; Bernice Johnson Reagon (about Ella Baker)
1981	Mr. Policeman	Rick James
1981	Nazi Punks Fuck Off	Dead Kennedys
1981	Rise Above	Black Flag
1982	I Was Just a Stupid Dog to Them	Nina Simone
1982	Know Your Rights	The Clash
1982	"next to of course god"	words: E. E. Cummings, 1926; music: Leonard Lehrman
1983	Batterram	Toddy Tee
1983	The Causes Are Waiting for You	words: Leah Fichandler; music; Joel Mandelbaum; adapted by Leonard Lehrman, 2007
1983	Chant Down Babylon	Bob Marley
1983	I Am What I Am	from <i>La Cage aux Folles</i> by Jerry Herman
1983	Sunday Bloody Sunday	U2
1983	Wade the Water to My Knees	adaptation of "Wade in the Water" by McIntosh County Shouters
1984	Come the Revolution	from <i>E.G.: A Musical Portrait of Emma Goldman</i> ; words: Karen Ruoff Kramer; words and music: Leonard Lehrman
1984 (published)	Freedom Is Coming	collected by Anders Nyberg in <i>South African Freedom Songs</i>
1984	MLK	U2
1984	Pride (In the Name of Love)	U2
1985	They Killed Him	Kris Kristofferson
1985	Your Daughters and Your Sons	Tommy Sands
1988	Across the Lines	Tracy Chapman
1988	Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos	Public Enemy
1988	Bread and Roses	words: James Oppenheim, 1911; music: John Denver, 1988
1988	Daybreak in Alabama	words: Langston Hughes, 1940; music: Elie Siegmeister
1988	Fight the Power	Public Enemy
1988	Fuck tha Police	N.W.A.

1988	I'm Gon' Stand	Sweet Honey in the Rock
1988	Talkin' 'bout a Revolution	Tracy Chapman
1988–9	Nothin' [Nothing] New	Gloria Estefan
1989	Sister Rosa	The Neville Brothers
1989	They All Sang "Bread and Roses"	Si Kahn
1989	We Didn't Start the Fire	Billy Joel
1990	Anti-Nigger Machine	Public Enemy
1990	Black and Proud	Tragedy Khadafi
1990	Burn Baby Burn	2 Black 2 Strong
1990 (recorded)	Ninety-Nine and a Half Won't Do	Carlton Reese (<i>Sing For Freedom: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement Through Its Songs</i> , Smithsonian Folkways)
1991	By the Time I Get to Arizona	Public Enemy
1991	I Have Seen Freedom	Si Kahn
1991	Just a Friendly Game of Baseball	Main Source
1991	No Nose Job	Digital Underground
1991	Old Jack Davey	Si Kahn
1991	Optimistic	Sounds of Blackness
1992	Cop Killer	Body Count
1992	Wake Up	Rage Against the Machine
1992	Who Got the Camera	Ice Cube
1992	Killing in the Name	Rage Against the Machine
1993	Just Another Day...	Queen Latifah
1993	None of Us Are Free	Barry Mann, Cynthia Weil, and Brenda Russell
1993	Putting Up Resistance	Beres Hammond
1993	Sound of da Police	KRS-One
1993	U.N.I.T.Y.	Queen Latifah
1994	I Love Everybody	Lyle Lovett
1994	Like a King	Ben Harper
1996	Bulls on Parade	Rage Against the Machine
1996	Make Them Hear You	from <i>Ragtime</i> ; Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens
1996	The Pride	Chuck D
1996	They Don't Care About Us	Michael Jackson
1996	To Live and Die in L.A.	Makaveli [Tupac Shakur]
1996	White Man's World	Makaveli [Tupac Shakur]
1998	Changes	Tupac Shakur
1998	Daybreak in Alabama	words: Langston Hughes, 1940; music: Ricky Ian Gordon
1998	Forgive Them Father	Lauryn Hill
1998	Lincoln's Army	The Irish Rovers
1999	Colorgate	Julie Gibbons Kinscheck
1999	Freedom Song	CosmoPop
1999	Mathematics	Mos Def
1999	Umi Says	Mos Def
2000	Can U C the Pride in the Panther?	Mos Def (based on poetry by Tupac Shakur)
2000	A Tree Never Grown	Mos Def and Talib Kweli
2000	Welcome to S.N.C.C.	James Horner
pre-2001 (exact date unknown)	We Shall Not Give Up the Fight	Anti-apartheid song

2001	American Skin (41 Shots)	Bruce Springsteen
2001	Burn Baby Burn	Ash
2002	A Dream Deferred [a.k.a. Harlem]	words: Langston Hughes, 1951; music: Leonard Lehrman
2002	My Block	Scarface
2003	Everyone's a Little Bit Racist	from <i>Avenue Q</i> by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marks
2003	Song of Freedom	Marty Sampson
2004	Ghetto Gospel	Tupac Shakur (posthumous release of 1992 recording)
2004	Hold Fast to Dreams	words: Langston Hughes, 1922; music: Dave Brubeck
2004	I Just Wanna Live	Good Charlotte
2004	'Merican	The Descendents
2004	Rise Above It	Afro Celt Sound System
2005	Freedom Song	Luc and the Lovingtons
2005	Hold Fast to Dreams	words: Langston Hughes, 1922; music: Leonard Lehrman
2005	Up to the Mountain	Patty Griffin
2006	Ballad of Martin Luther King	Michael Borkson
2006	A Dream	Common
2007	Be the Change	Arlon Bennett
2007	Black Boys	Bashy
2007	Freedom Ain't Free	Brother Ali
2007	From the Plantation to the Penitentiary	Wynton Marsalis
2007	Harder Than You Think	Public Enemy
2007	Same Thing	Flobots
2008	By My Silence	Ellen Bukstel and Nick Annis
2008	Hold Fast to Dreams	words: Langston Hughes, 1922; music: André J. Thomas
2008	If You're Out There	John Legend
2008	Sharing a Gibson with Martin Luther King, Jr.	Kurt Wagner
2008	Take It from Dr. King	Pete Seeger
2008	We Are the Ones	will.i.am
2008	Yes We Can	words: "Barack Obama concession speech at New Hampshire primary"; music: will.i.am
2009	John Brown	David Rovics
2010	Long Island Is Just Not Long Enough	words: Marcia McNair, 2009; music: Leonard Lehrman
2010	1960 What?	Gregory Porter
2010	Not Afraid	Eminem
2010	Power	Kanye West
2011 (exact date unknown)	About Face	Maggie Martin
2011	For Gene Debs	Anne Feeney
2011	Let America Be America Again	words: Langston Hughes, 1935; music: Leonard Lehrman
2011	My Name Is Emmett Till	Emmylou Harris
2011	No Church in the Wind	Jay-Z and Kanye West

2011	Nothin' New	Ab-Soul
2011	The People Will Rise	Nelini Stamp
2011	So Beautiful or So What	Paul Simon
2011	We Are the Ones (We've Been Waiting For)	Melissa Etheridge
2005–12 (exact date unknown)	Spirit Found Us	words: David Schiffman, 2005; music: Lisa G. Littlebird
2012	Around My Way (Freedom Ain't Free)	Lupe Fiasco
2012	Black Rage	Lauryn Hill (tune: "My Favorite Things" from <i>The Sound of Music</i> , 1960; music: Richard Rodgers)
2012	Blood from Stones	Si Kahn
2012	Break the Chain	Tena Clark and Tim Heintz
2012	Land of the Free	Esperanza Spalding
2012	Vann Plantation	Si Kahn
2012	We Are Alive	Bruce Springsteen
2013	Freedom Song (They'll Never Take Us Down)	Neil Diamond
2013	Hell You Talmhout	Janelle Monáe
2013	Hold Fast to Dreams	words: Langston Hughes, 1922; music: Susan LaBarr
2013	New Slaves	Kanye West
2013	One	India.Arie
2014	Be Free	J. Cole (about Michael Brown)
2014	The Charade	D'Angelo
2014	Don't Shoot	The Game
2014	Everybody Ought To Know What Freedom Is	Ysaye Barnwell (adapted from hymn by Harry Dixon Loes, 1940)
2014	Glory	from <i>Selma</i> ; Common and John Legend
2014	Hands Up	Vince Staples
2014	Marching on Ferguson	Tom Morello
2014	One Love	Elle Varner
2014	Rollcall for Those Absent	Ambrose Akinmusire
2014	Unity	TheFatRat (Christian Büttner)
2014	We Are Strong	Lil Bibby
2014	We Gotta Pray	Alicia Keys
2014	White Privilege	Macklemore and Ryan Lewis
2015	All Black	Raftaar
2015	Alright	Kendrick Lamar
2015	Baltimore	Prince
2015	The Blacker the Berry	Kendrick Lamar
2015	Chains	Usher
2015	Cry No More	Rhiannon Giddens
2015	Freedom Is a Funny Thing	Malik & The O.G's
2015	Freedom Side—Which Side Are You On?	Movement for Black Lives (adaptor unknown) (tune: Which Side Are You On?)
2015	Hand in Hand	Jayanthi Kyle and Wes Burdine
2015	I Am Not Afraid	Peace Poets

2015	It's Not So Very Far from the Mississippi Clay	Greg Artzner and Terry Leonino
2015	King Kunta	Kendrick Lamar
2015	We Will Remember: Song for Michael Brown	Raging Grannies, Vicki Ryder, NJ Solidarity Singers, Roseanne DePasquale (tune: "The Water Is Wide")
2015	Wesley's Theory	Kendrick Lamar
2016	Better Days	Victoria Monét and Ariana Grande
2016	Black America Again	Common
2016	F.U.B.U.	Solange
2016	Formation	Beyoncé
2016	Freedom	Beyoncé
2016	Freedom Freestyle	Joe Budden
2016	Hands Up	Daye Jack and Killer Mike
2016	Here in My Hands	Amy Wadge
2016	How Many	Miguel
2016	I'm Gonna Lift My Sister/Brother Up	Faya Rose Toure
2016	I'm Gonna Walk It With You	Brian Claflin and Ellie Grace
2016	Isombard	words: "next to of course god america i" by E. E. Cummings, 1926; music: Declan McKenna
2016	Last Ones	Amaal Nuux
2016	Lead with Love	Melanie DeMore
2016	A Lot of Love	Chris Brown
2016	<i>Mi Unica</i> (No human being will ever be illegal)	Peace Poets
2016	No Justice No Peace	Z-ro
2016	Nobody Speak	DJ Shadow
2016	Sad News	Swizz Beatz
2016	(Same Old) Rich Man's Strategy	Peace Poets
2016	Sandra's Smile	Blood Orange
2016	16 Shots	Stefflon Don
2016	Spiritual	Jay Z
2016	Thieves! Screamed the Ghost	Run The Jewels
2017	Bleed the Same	Mandisa
2017	Freedom Highway	Rhiannon Giddens
2017	Harriet—The Conductor	Lak
2017	i can't breathe	Bea Miller
2017	*Insert Here*	VANT
2017	Land of the Free	Joey Bada\$\$
2017	Nothin' New	21 Savage
2017	People Gonna Rise Like the Water	Peace Poets
2017	Praying with Our Feet	Rabbi Joe Black and Steven Brodsky
2017	Room for the Refugee	Tom Bias
2017	Sing Out/March On	Joshuah Campbell
2017	The Story of O.J.	Jay-Z
2017	Tear Down That Wall	Bright Light Social Hour
2017	Ten Thousand Bridges	Greg Artzner and Terry Leonino

2017	(There Are) More Waters Rising	Saro Lynch Thomason
2017	We Will Rise Together	Hali Hammer
2018	Blam	Georgia Anne Muldrow
2018	Blue Lights	Jorja Smith
2018	Calling All [the] Warriors	Dina Erie
2018	Cops Shot the Kid	Nas
2018	Don't Don't Do It!	Jay Rock
2018	A Dream Deferred [a.k.a. Harlem]	words: Langston Hughes, 1951; music: Ricky Ian Gordon
2018	Freedom Ain't Free	Anika Whitfield
2018	Hold Fast to Dreams	words: Langston Hughes, 1922; music: Joel Thompson
2018	I Have Seen Freedom Being Born	Joe Jencks
2018	I Wanna Be Ready for Change to Come	Charon Hribar (tune: "I Wanna Die Easy")
2018	Kaepernick Effect	JAG
2018	King's Dead	Jay Rock
2018	Love It If We Made It	The 1975
2018	Rise Up	Charon Hribar and Jose Vasquez
2018	Shake Injustice Off	Yara Allen (tune: "Shake the Devil Off")
2018	6 Summers	Anderson .Paak
2018	Somebody's Hurting My Brother [My Sister] [Our People]	Yara Allen
2018	The Stone Throwers (Gone in a Blink)	Shad
2018	There's a Moral Revolution Going On	Ruth MacKenzie
2018	This Is America	Childish Gambino [Donald Glover]
2018	<i>Un Zol vi Veyt (Dos Naye Lid [The New Song])</i>	words: Avrom Reisen; music: Louis Schwartz
2018	Unsettling Force	Luke Nephew
2018	We are the Protectors	Peace Poets
2018 (exact date unknown)	We Have Come	Luke Neighbor
2018	Why Are the Guns Still Firing?	Joe Jencks
2019	Be a Pain	Alastair Moock
2019	Bells (Ring Loudly)	Terri Lyne Carrington
2019	Don't You Wanna Vote	Yara Allen (tune: "Don't You Wanna Go")
2019	In My Heart (I Want to Fight for...)	Composer unknown
2019	Land of the Free	The Killers
2019	Mamma's Cryin' Long	Rhiannon Giddens
2019	Nina	Rapsody
2019	Organize, Organize, Organize	Composer unknown (adapted by Charon Hribar)
2019	Our Hands	Lu Aya and Charon Hribar
2019	Revealing the Truth	Lu Aya
2019	Strange Things	Composer unknown (adapted by Karen Porter and VT Solidarity Singers)

2019	There's a New World Coming Over	Bernice Johnson Reagon
2020	All That Matters	Dana Vance
2020	The Bigger Picture	Lil Baby
2020	Black Like Me	Mickey Guyton
2020	body cast	Dua Saleh
2020	Bread, Roses and RBG's Last Wish	words: Leonard Lehrman (on Ruth Bader Ginsburg) (music: "Bread and Roses" by Mimi Fariña, 1974)
2020	BREATHE	Adrienne Danrich and Drew Hemenger
2020	Cops with Guns are the Worst!!!	Snotty Nose Rez Kids
2020	Days of Decision	(adapted for John Lewis by Roseanne DePasquale) (based on "Days of Decision," Phil Ochs, 1965)
2020	Freedom Is A Constant Song	Si Kahn
2020	Frightened	Dave Williams
2020	Hallelujah; I'm On My Journey; Ride the Chariot	excerpts from opera <i>Freedom Ride</i> by Dan Shore
2020	I Can't Breathe	H.E.R.
2020	Imaginary Graduation Speech	Leonard Lehrman
2020	JU\$T	Run The Jewels, Zack De La Rocha, and Pharrell Williams
2020	Our Turn Now	Len Seligman (on John Lewis)
2020	Pig Feet	Terrace Martin
2020	Pity the Nation	words: Lawrence Ferlinghetti, 2007; music: Leonard Lehrman
2020	Say Can You See	Scott Cook
2020	Scottie Beam	Freddie Gibbs and The Alchemist
2020	<i>Sin Aire</i> [Without Air]	Rafa Pabón
2020	Stay in Place, Stay Alive, Organize	Natalie Robinson and Jessica Petersen (tune: "Organize, Organize, Organize")
2020	Sweeter	Leon Bridges
2020	Thinking Outside the Box	George Wallace and Leonard Lehrman
2020	Underdog	Alicia Keys, Johnny McDaid, Ed Sheeran, Amy Wadge, Jonny Coffey, and Foy Vance
2020	Walking in the Snow	Run The Jewels
2020	What Matters	Leonard Lehrman

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