

The Civil Rights Anthems

Music was a big part of the Civil Rights movement. Many leaders and participants found inspiration and comfort in songs that reflected their struggles or made statements that were similar to their beliefs.

Find recordings of the songs below and answer the questions. These songs have been recorded many different times by many different artists. See how the song changes with each recording!

“We Shall Overcome”: “We Shall Overcome” started as a spiritual, sung in churches to show perseverance in the face of hardship. Many people involved in the Civil Rights movement got their ideas and inspiration about nonviolence from their local churches and the teachings of the Bible. When the movement ramped up, people sang this song to show their determination.

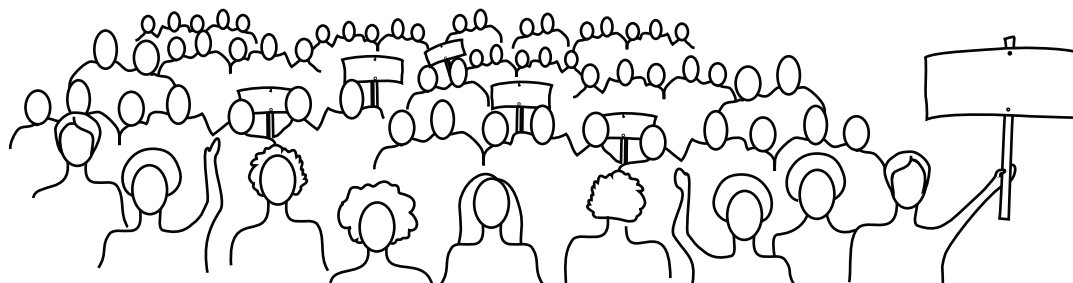
Who is the artist? _____

What year was it recorded? _____

How does it make you feel? _____

How does it get a message of peace across? _____

How does it inspire? _____



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“To Be Young, Gifted and Black”: This song was written by jazz singer Nina Simone in honor of her friend Lorraine Hansberry, a playwright who wrote plays about the African-American struggle. People fighting for Civil Rights took the song’s positive message and used it to highlight the talents of African-Americans.

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“A Change is Gonna Come”: This song was written by R&B legend Sam Cooke in the early 1960s. When he heard Bob Dylan’s protest song, “Blowin’ in the Wind,” he was surprised to hear such a powerful song about Civil Rights written by someone who wasn’t black. He then wrote his own song about the struggle for equality, “A Change is Gonna Come.” The song regained popularity during president Barack Obama’s first election to show how he represented how far American society had come since Civil Rights.

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