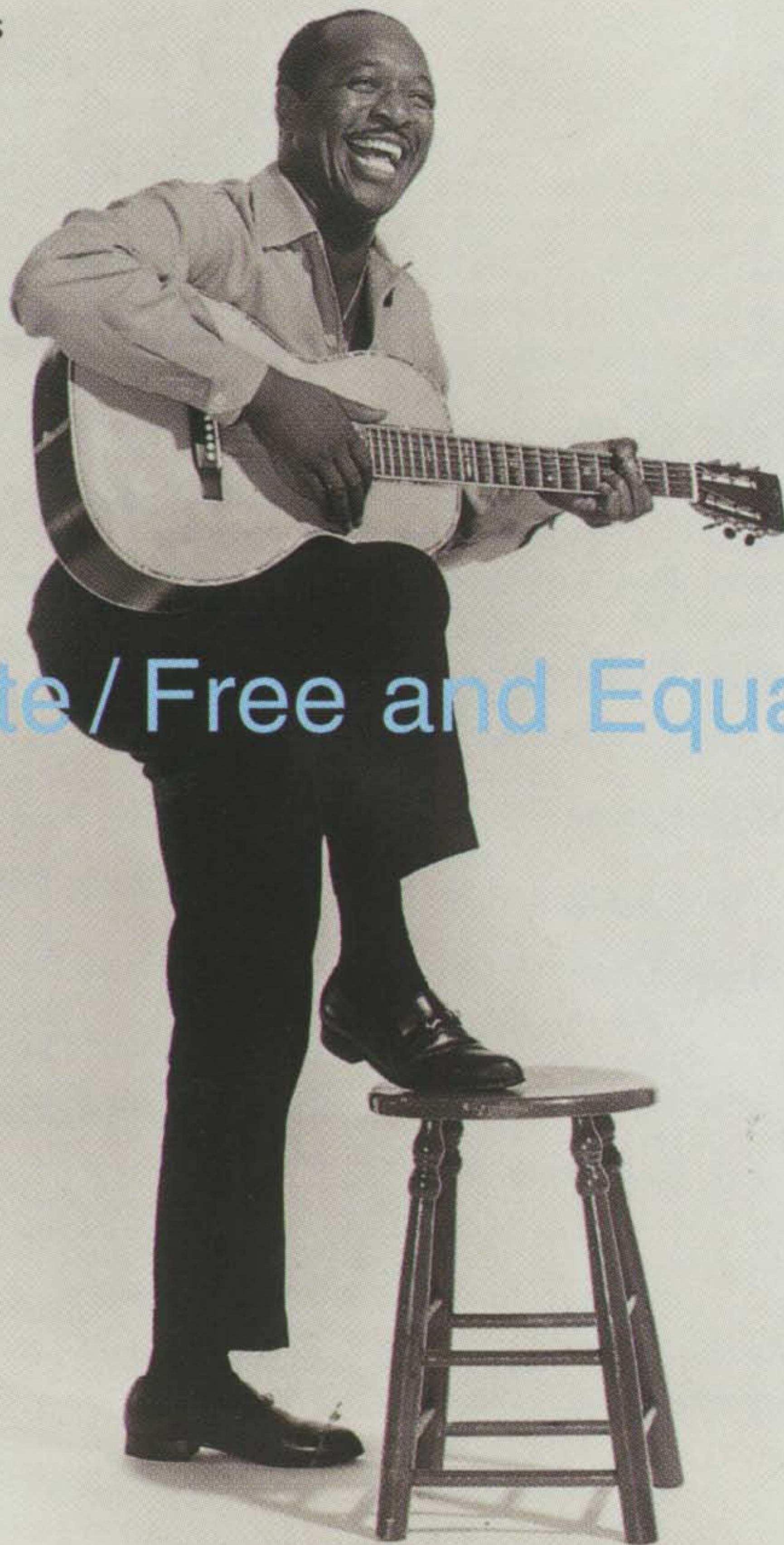
 Smithsonian Folkways



Josh White / Free and Equal Blues

Josh White
Free and Equal Blues

Josh White (1914-1969) was a brilliant musician whose vibrant guitar and rich vocals captivated audiences for decades. Recorded at the height of his career by Moses Asch in the 1940s, he performs these 26 blues, gospel, popular, and hard-hitting topical songs solo or accompanied by such contemporaries as Lead Belly, Mary Lou Williams, and the Almanac Singers. Extensive biographical notes, photographs, archivist's remarks, bibliography, and discography. 74 minutes.

1. One Meat Ball 3:09
2. In My Time of Dying 3:13
3. Free and Equal Blues 4:28
4. Number 12 Train 3:37
5. Jim Crow 2:46
6. Landlord 2:35
7. Betty and Dupree 3:44
8. Trouble 2:38
9. Beloved Comrade 2:01
10. Hold On 2:11
11. Jelly Jelly 2:29
12. When I Lay Down 2:35
13. The House I Live In 2:29
14. Fuhrer 3:09
15. Minute Man 2:04
16. Take a Gal Like You 3:08
17. Whatcha Gonna Do 1:12
18. Don't Lie Buddy 2:20
19. Motherless Children 2:28
20. No More Blues
(No More Bread Lines) 2:43
21. Mean Mistreatin' Woman 3:09
22. Freedom Road 2:18
23. Miss Otis Regrets 2:57
24. Careless Love 3:21
25. T B Blues 3:20
26. Outskirts of Town 3:03



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Josh White, Free and Equal Blues

By Elijah Wald

Considering his importance, it is surprising how little attention Josh White has received from folk and blues historians. During his heyday in the 1940s, Josh (as he preferred to be called) was second only to Burl Ives as a folk music star, and he did more than any other performer to introduce blues to an urban, white audience. He was arguably the most influential guitarist in the early folk revival; he opened up New York's jazz and pop clubs to folk performers like Ives, Richard Dyer-Bennet and Pete Seeger; and he brought American traditional music to audiences around the world. As a blues guitarist, his distinctive, ringing tone has not been matched to this day.

Josh's story is unique. Unlike his peers on the 1940s New York folk scene, he had been a commercial star, selling thousands of blues and gospel records in the early to middle 1930s. Unlike his "race records" contemporaries, however, he managed to adapt and vary his repertoire to suit the demands of the largely white, middle and upper class urban audience that appeared in the 1940s. Ironically, this very adaptability and professionalism to a great extent have led to his relative obscurity. While folk and blues historians frequently cite Lead Belly and Big Bill Broonzy as important artists, Josh is often dismissed as overly slick, a cabaret performer rather than a true folk or bluesman. Josh certainly was a cabaret performer, and a great one, but his roots were as deep as anyone's and his music was by no means limited to facile nightclub fare.

Josh was born in Greenville, South Carolina, on February 11, 1914. His father, Dennis White, was a

tailor by trade and a Methodist minister by avocation. Josh's early childhood seems to have been, by the standards of his time and place, relatively comfortable, but that changed around his seventh year. One day, a white bill collector came to the White's home. As Josh would tell the story, Dennis White asked the man to remove his hat in the presence of Mrs. White, and the man responded by spitting a gob of tobacco juice onto the living room floor. White threw the man out, and shortly afterwards the police arrived. Dennis White was arrested, severely beaten, and confined to a mental institution, where he spent most of the rest of his life.

Josh's mother, left with six children to support, moved in with her parents and did the best she could, but it was a great relief to the family when Josh found a job. Still not ten years old, he was hired as a "lead boy" by a blind street singer, John Henry Arnold. Arnold was a "guitar evangelist," who hoboed from town to town singing gospel songs on street corners. Josh led him on the streets of Greenville and traveled with him as far as Florida, and Arnold also farmed the boy out to other blind singers.

The years he spent on the road with the blind men formed Josh's musical education and also taught him some hard lessons about life. On his first trip with Arnold, he witnessed a double lynching that would remain a bitter memory and fuel some of his most passionate later performances. He was arrested and beaten by police in Florida, and the treatment he received from his employers was a day-to-day grind of humiliation and exploitation. Clothed in rags, he was expected to cut a cute and pitiful figure as he beat a tambourine in time with the guitar rhythms and begged for coins from passersby. "It was a life that no child should know," he would tell a Collier's interviewer. "Roaming the roads, never cer-

tain where I'd sleep, and almost always hungry. . . . But the music — the songs and the guitar, somehow they made up for everything" (Denham 1946).

Most of the musicians Josh met in these years are obscure figures like Arnold, Columbus Williams, or Archie Jackson and are known only from his stories. A couple, though, made it onto records. In Greenville, Josh led two blind brothers, Joe and Willie Walker. Willie only made one record, a Columbia pairing of "South Carolina Rag" and "Dupree Blues," but it proves him to have been one of the most technically expert players in early blues. Josh would later compare him to the pianist Art Tatum; and the Rev. Gary Davis, considered the master of guitar ragtime, named Walker as his only peer in the Carolinas. Blind Joe Taggart, another guitar evangelist, passed through Greenville frequently, and in 1928 he took Josh with him to Chicago for a recording session at Paramount Records. Though only 14, Josh was already a better guitarist than Taggart, and he accompanied the older man on four songs, as well as singing one himself.

Josh seems to have become something of a favorite around the Paramount offices and showed up on records with a couple of other players as well, the barrelhouse pianist Charlie Spand and a White "hillbilly" group called the Carver Boys. While staying in Chicago, he also seems to have met Paramount stars like Blind Blake and Blind Lemon Jefferson, the most famous of the early bluesmen. In later years he would cite the latter as his main teacher, though neither his playing nor his singing show signs of Jefferson's direct influence.

By 1930, Josh had had enough of leading blind singers and returned to Greenville. He attended school, and one of his classmates, Lila Mae Brock,

remembers how he would entertain the other students by telling stories of his life on the road and by singing for them (Brock 1995). Interestingly, she recalls that he sang no blues, but only religious songs and romantic pop numbers. It was while he was at home, laid up with a broken leg acquired in a school football game, that he was sought out by two executives of the newly-formed American Record Corporation. Familiar with him from his Chicago days and appreciating his youthful versatility, they signed him as a solo artist.

ARC was a product of the depression. Hard times had hit the record industry, and prominent companies like Paramount were going under. ARC contracted with the major department stores to make cut-rate records sold under house-brand names (the same record would be in S. H. Kress's dime stores on the Romeo label, in McCrory's stores on Oriole, and in other stores on Banner, Conqueror, Melotone, or Perfect). They needed artists who would work cheaply and could perform to order, and Josh was perfect for the job. In the spring of 1932 he went to New York to make his first solo recordings, and for the next four years he was among the most prolific artists in blues. His supple, swinging guitar work and clear, high voice were immediately appealing to record buyers, and he recorded a string of songs, many of them covers of current hits by other stars. Often using the pseudonym Pinewood Tom, he became a huge seller in the Carolinas, and his records were copied by such famous peers as Blind Boy Fuller. At the same time, he maintained a popular gospel career as "Joshua White, the Singing Christian," the only artist to have strong careers in both fields (the blues alias seems to have been adopted to avoid mix-ups between his religious and secular recordings).

Unlike most of his southern blues contemporaries, Josh not only went to New York to record, but made it his home. He was eager to escape the South, which held few pleasant memories, and welcomed the freedom and excitement of Harlem. Along with the recording work, he soon was making regular radio appearances on the popular "Harlem Fantasy" radio show, an all-Black program on an NBC affiliate, and performing both at uptown rent parties and at informal gatherings of white radio and recording executives. To make his new identity complete, he fell in love with a young New Yorker named Carol Carr, whom he married in 1934, forming a partnership that would last the rest of his life.

Josh made some 30 records for ARC, but this career came to an abrupt end in the winter of 1936. He slipped on a patch of ice while carrying a bottle of buttermilk, and the breaking glass cut through the tendons of his right hand. As a result, he was unable to play and was forced to take a string of temporary jobs, ending up as an elevator operator. During this period, he continued to strum guitar for his own pleasure and at family gatherings, and gradually massaged his fingers back into shape. While he never regained the speed of his youth, he balanced this loss with a further refinement of the left-hand vibrato that had been a hallmark of his gospel work, creating the unique and instantly recognizable sound that would be his instrumental trademark.

Josh was out of music for roughly four years. Then, on New Year's Eve of 1938, he had a stroke of astonishing luck. Leonard DePaur, a composer and choir director, dropped by a party at the apartment where the Whites were staying, and saw Josh strumming songs between playing hands of whist. DePaur was working as musical director for a Broadway-

bound play, *John Henry*, by Roark Bradford (of *Green Pastures* fame) and the songwriter Jaques Wolfe (author of "Shortnin' Bread"), and they were looking for a guitarist and singer who could play a character named Blind Lemon. Apparently, they had heard Josh's old records, but had no idea where to find him, and when DePaur subsequently brought him to their offices they were elated.

John Henry, which starred Paul Robeson as the title character, opened on Broadway in January 1940, received mediocre reviews, and closed in a week. Josh had been singled out for positive comment, though, and the show had introduced him to a new audience. Within two months he was recording again, both solo and with the jazz master Sidney Bechet, and he also formed a backing group with DePaur and some members of the *John Henry* chorus. This group, the Carolinians, got a job at Cafe Society, a popular club featuring Black entertainers, and was signed by Columbia Records that summer to make an album of prison songs, *Chain Gang*.

For Josh, this was the beginning of a new life. *Chain Gang* was protest music with traditional roots and brought Josh into the orbit of the New York left. The left was then in the midst of its first infatuation with folk music; the heroes were Lead Belly and a newly arrived singer from the West Coast, Woody Guthrie. Alan Lomax, who with his father John had made a series of important field recording trips, was promoting folk music on radio. Guthrie and Lead Belly were his favorites, but Lomax realized that their styles were too rough for many listeners, so he brought Josh and Burl Ives in to provide smoother, clearer voices. He was also nurturing a group of young folk enthusiasts, some of whom would soon coalesce as the Almanac Singers.

The Almanacs -- Pete Seeger, Millard Lampell and Lee Hays -- recorded a pair of overtly political albums in 1941, *Songs for John Doe* and *Talking Union* (both included on Bear Family's *Songs for Political Action* CD box, and the latter also available from Smithsonian Folkways), and Josh played guitar and sang on both. Through them, he ended up on the same record label, Keynote, and recorded an album of songs against Jim Crow segregation, *Southern Exposure*. Written with the poet Waring Cuney, with liner notes by Richard Wright, this brought him to the attention of the Harlem intelligentsia as well as a wide audience of American progressives. The most influential of these were Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, who invited Josh to the White House. He had already appeared with the Golden Gate Quartet at Roosevelt's inauguration, but this was the beginning of a more intimate, long-lasting relationship. He would be a frequent guest of the Roosevelts from then on (and after the President's death got his brother Bill a job in Eleanor Roosevelt's home), and the press dubbed him "the presidential minstrel."

Josh's career was further helped by two very different partnerships. First, he and Lead Belly were booked into the Village Vanguard, becoming the first folk act to headline in a New York club and blazing the way for the next stage of the folk boom. Then, immediately after finishing that run, he teamed up with a white Broadway star, Libby Holman. With Holman, Josh performed in elegant clubs like La Vie Parisienne and reached an audience of wealthy sophisticates that would follow him for the rest of the decade.

The war years brought an eighteen-month moratorium on recording, the result of both a shortage of shellac used to make records and a recording ban

imposed by the American Federation of Musicians. Josh continued to be popular on radio and in clubs, however, and in 1943 he began a four-year run at Cafe Society. During this period that he made the recordings on this CD for Moses Asch, founder of Asch, Disc, and finally Folkways Records, and also cut some more commercial records for the Decca label.

This was the artistic high point of Josh's life. His 1930s blues records, while expert and exciting, were relatively unimaginative. He was a more than able youngster, but his work was obviously derivative, and his playing, singing, and choice of material were not particularly distinctive. In the 1940s, he came into his own. He had developed a unique guitar style, marked by single string runs played with unmatched tone and a crystalline vibrato. His singing was clear and warm, every word distinct and conversational. As for his repertoire, it had expanded to include everything from traditional blues and gospel to English ballads, contemporary topical songs, and cabaret jazz.

This was not folk music in the classic sense, but it was the beginning of the folk revival, and other performers looked to Josh's work for inspiration. Pete Seeger remembers seeing Josh "lining out" the lyric to "On Top Of Old Smoky" so that the audience could sing along, and went on to use the technique with the Weavers and throughout his career. Merle Travis took the guitar part of "One Meat Ball" and the lyrics of "I've Got a Head Like a Rock," and reshaped them into his biggest number, "Sixteen Tons." Harry Belafonte adopted Josh's stage manner, the combination of roots music and silk-shirted sex appeal. As for his guitar work, Josh defined a new folk accompaniment style, and his influence can be traced, on down to Dave Van Ronk and the next generation, through the 1960s, and to the present.

Josh White and Josh White, Jr., at the Negro Freedom Rally, 1945.



What particularly distinguishes this album, aside from its variety and the generally high quality of the master recordings, is the amount of topical material. Moses Asch was a man of the left, and Josh's work for him includes a wide range of political songs, both trademark numbers like "Free and Equal Blues" and "The House I Live In," and ephemera written for a particular event and then forgotten. For much of the 1940s, Josh was ubiquitous at benefit concerts around New York. A "name" act, he was much in demand, and he rarely turned anyone down. Newspaper and magazine stories always emphasized this aspect of his music, his "fighting songs" for racial justice and working class unity.

At Cafe Society, though, Josh was at least as much noted for his gentle, romantic numbers and his incredible sex appeal. His most popular stage piece, aside from the hit novelty "One Meat Ball," was an ancient English ballad, "The Riddle Song." Even more than the songs, people often remembered his manner. He sang standing at center stage, his right foot propped up on a chair and a lighted cigarette parked nonchalantly behind his ear. The smoke would form a cloudy halo around his head, belied by his devilish smile and the silk shirt unbuttoned to show his smoothly muscled neck. The sex appeal was as revolutionary as any of his songs: no prior Black male entertainer had dared so openly to seduce a White female audience. It was this as much as his music that brought him to Hollywood. There he appeared in two movies: *The Crimson Canary* (1945), in which he simply did his nightclub act, and *The Walking Hills* (1948), in which he was a partner with Randolph Scott in a gold mining expedition, a sort of role then all but unavailable to Black performers.

In 1950, Josh took his music abroad, accompanying Eleanor Roosevelt on a goodwill trip to Scandinavia,

then heading on his own for Paris and London. He was a sensation, the first traditional blues singer to tour in Europe (Big Bill Broonzy's famous tour was not until 1951). The trip was interrupted, though, by the event that would spell the end of Josh's rise as a folk star. He was in England when his manager, Mary Chase, called with the news that he had been named in *Red Channels*, "the bible of the blacklist."

Josh reacted in the worst way possible. To the astonishment and disgust of his friends on the left, he went voluntarily to testify before HUAC, the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Some maintain that he was the victim of FBI blackmail, but more probably he was simply trying to save his career, which by then was supporting Carol and five children. Be that as it may, his testimony was decidedly ambivalent. He confessed to having been the unwitting dupe of organizations that he had believed to be "innocent," but now realized were Communist fronts, and he repudiated a famous remark supposedly made by Paul Robeson that African Americans would not fight in a war against the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, he proudly stood by his attacks on racial discrimination, reciting the lyrics of "Strange Fruit" and "The House I Live In."

The FBI interviewed Josh shortly after his HUAC appearance and came back in 1954 to grill him for four hours about every benefit he had performed at throughout the 1940s. At both interviews he showed a commendable amnesia, saying he could not remember the names of anyone else who had been present at left-wing events. His recalcitrance and his continued support of civil rights causes continued to make him "unsafe" to the conservative guardians of the airwaves and film world. Meanwhile, his old friends on the left could not forgive his willing cooperation with the witch-hunters in HUAC.

Josh's career was virtually destroyed; for the next five years he did not make an American album, though he continued to record and perform in Europe. He made a come-back in the late 1950s, when the success of the Kingston Trio ushered in a new folk boom, and a series of albums he made for Elektra became ubiquitous in folk record collections. These were followed up with recordings for the major labels ABC and Mercury, several of which also featured his daughter Beverly and his son, Josh Jr., later a successful solo performer. Some of the energy and spirit seemed to have gone out of him, though, and these recordings rarely if ever equaled his work from the 1940s. He was also suffering from health problems: recurrent ulcers, a heart condition, and psoriasis in his fingers that caused horrible pain and often left him raw and bleeding after a concert.

Despite all of this, Josh remained a popular performer through the 1960s. He nurtured young artists like Peter, Paul and Mary and Don McLean and appeared on television shows including the JFK-era "Dinner with the President," during the taping of which Kennedy went out of his way to express admiration for Josh's work. The new generation of blues fans tended to overlook him in favor of his undiscovered 1930s peers who had spent decades in obscurity rather than the spotlight of New York cabarets; but to many people he remained among the foremost voices of the folk revival. He reclaimed some of his reputation as a socially conscious performer, appearing at Martin Luther King's 1963 March on Washington, and was welcomed back into the mainstream-folk fold with an appearance at the Newport Folk Festival in 1966. Today, almost three decades after his death in 1969 from a chronic heart condition, he has been recognized with a commemorative stamp from the U.S. postal service,

and his records are beginning to surface again on both domestic and foreign labels. It is recognition long overdue for one of the seminal artists in American music.

Moses Asch allowed his artists a leeway not granted by other record label owners, and the Asch recordings give the fullest picture available of Josh's repertoire, drawing on all his previous musical experiences. There are gospel and blues numbers from his early days as a "race record" star, songs from *John Henry*, a chain gang song, topical material, ballads, and contemporary pop. Special treats include his few recordings with other New York artists, such as his Asch and Cafe Society compatriot Mary Lou Williams, Lead Belly, and gatherings of left-wing folk stars. Many of the recordings are being released here for the first time, songs that were obviously part of his stage act but somehow failed to be issued on record. As a result, this album provides a unique snapshot of a major artist at the apex of his career.

About the author

Elijah Wald is a musician and writer based in Somerville, Massachusetts. He writes frequently on a wide range of roots and world music styles for the *Boston Globe*, *Sing Out!*, *Living Blues*, and other publications. He is currently (1998) completing work on a biography of Josh White. Anyone with information which might be of use on this project is encouraged to write to him c/o Smithsonian Folkways.

Notes on the Songs

1. One Meat Ball Josh White, vocal and guitar

(Hy Zaret-Lou Singer; from Asch 348-2B/Disc LP 117, recorded September 6, 1944; matrix MA-170)

"One Meat Ball" was Josh's biggest hit by far, and among the most popular songs of the 1940s folk revival. Indeed, it may well have been the biggest seller Asch ever had, though much of its popularity came not from record sales but from Josh's performances of it on live radio and singing it in *The Crimson Canary*, a jazz-oriented murder mystery filmed by Universal Pictures in 1945.

The song was copyrighted by two tin pan alley pros, Lou Singer and Hy Zaret (later known for the lyric to "Unchained Melody"), who had previously given Josh the pseudo-pastoral "The Lass with the Delicate Air." Singer said that they brought the song to Josh and first arranged for him to record it as a wartime V-disc. The cover of the original sheet music describes the song as "presented by Barney Josephson," Josh's boss at Cafe Society, at both his Uptown and Downtown locations. The Uptown version was performed by the singing pantomimist Jimmy Savo. Soon Tony Pastor had recorded it with his orchestra, and the Andrews Sisters picked it up as well, putting it on the flip side of "Rum and Coca Cola" and taking it to number 15 on the pop charts.

Once the song hit, a hot debate ensued about its origins, and *PM* magazine finally devoted a full page to elucidating the mystery (Moorsteen and Morehead 1945). This article, which quotes everyone involved, says the song was derived from a burlesque epic poem, "The Lay of the Lone Fish Ball" apparently written by a Latin professor at Harvard University around 1850. Two other Harvard

men, the poet James Russell Lowell and the folklorist Francis J. Child, then transformed it into an burlesque Italian opera, *Il Pescebello*. Zaret and Singer heard someone sing a partial version of "One Fish Ball" at a party and were inspired to write a modern song on the same theme, using many of the original lines but putting them to a new tune and removing the mock-heroic language.

Though the Andrews' version was the one that made the charts, most people associated the song with Josh. As a *New Yorker* critic put it, "Listening ... to Josh White apply his expert talent to 'One Meat Ball' (which is getting to be something of a nuisance around town), I was moved to wish that the city would make it a crime for anyone else to attempt it. Come to think of it, it already is" (*The New Yorker* January 20, 1945).

2. In My Time of Dying Josh White, vocal and guitar

(unreleased; recorded circa 1945; matrix B6; Smithsonian acetate 402; 16" glass disc)

As "Jesus Gonna Make Up My Dying Bed," this was Josh's first gospel recording, starting his career as "The Singing Christian" in 1933 and remained his most popular religious number. Like its flip side, "Motherless Children," it had been one of the first hits for the Texas guitar evangelist Blind Willie Johnson. To be sure, Josh's verses are quite different, and the song was widely recorded by other artists as well, but the pairing of Johnson's early hits seems more than coincidental. Josh's guitar part suggests a familiarity with Johnson's playing, and his fondness for open D tuning, in which all his early gospel arrangements were set, quite possibly came at least in part from Johnson, who favored the tuning for his matchless slide parts. This was one

of Josh's greatest guitar arrangements and changed little throughout his career. It features some of his most impressive string bends, which shadow the vocal line or answer it in a churchy call-and-response.

3. Free and Equal Blues Josh White, vocal and guitar; Audience-chorus

(Robinson-Harburg; unreleased; from a radio transcription; recorded May 16, 1946; Smithsonian acetate 3653; 12" acetate on aluminum disc)

Yip Harburg, lyricist for dozens of classic songs including the score of *The Wizard of Oz*, wrote this in response to the absurd practice, continued through WWII, of keeping "Black" and "White" blood segregated so that White people could be protected from receiving "Colored" transfusions. He originally planned to use it in his show *Finian's Rainbow*, though it failed to make the final cut. Earl Robinson premiered the song in 1944, with Dooley Wilson (who played "Sam" in *Casablanca*) on piano, and Josh featured it when he appeared on Broadway in Ethel Waters's revue *Blue Holiday* in 1945, performing it with comedian Timmie Rogers and the Hall Johnson Choir. He never recorded it until the 1950s, by which time he seems to have gotten a bit lazy about twisting his tongue around the lyric, and some of the more complicated scientific terms were all but incomprehensible. This 1940s radio version is thus the only one of his that shows the brilliant intricacies of Harburg's rhymes, though even it leaves out the penultimate line, in which the declaration that "every man, everywhere is the same when he's got his skin off" was rhymed with the name of Soviet Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinoff.

4. Number 12 Train Josh White, vocal and guitar

(By Josh White; unreleased; from Disc LP 117; recorded October 25, 1945; possibly matrix 174; Smithsonian acetate 3940; 12" acetate on aluminum disc)

One of Josh's best-loved numbers, "Number 12 Train" had its *raison d'être* in his train imitation on guitar — chugging chords and steam whistle string bends — which was much imitated by young guitar players in the 1950s and '60s. It was the lead song in 1963's *Josh White Song Book*, which quoted Josh as saying of it, "There are very few happy blues. This was written in Philadelphia or Chicago, I can't pinpoint it. I first heard this around 1928 or 1929." Whom he heard it from is not mentioned, but the lyric is a fairly standard "my baby left me" blues. The guitar tricks first surfaced on Josh's *Southern Exposure* album, in the introduction to "Jim Crow Train," but it seems likely that he was already playing "Number 12" and simply lifted its guitar part for the protest song.

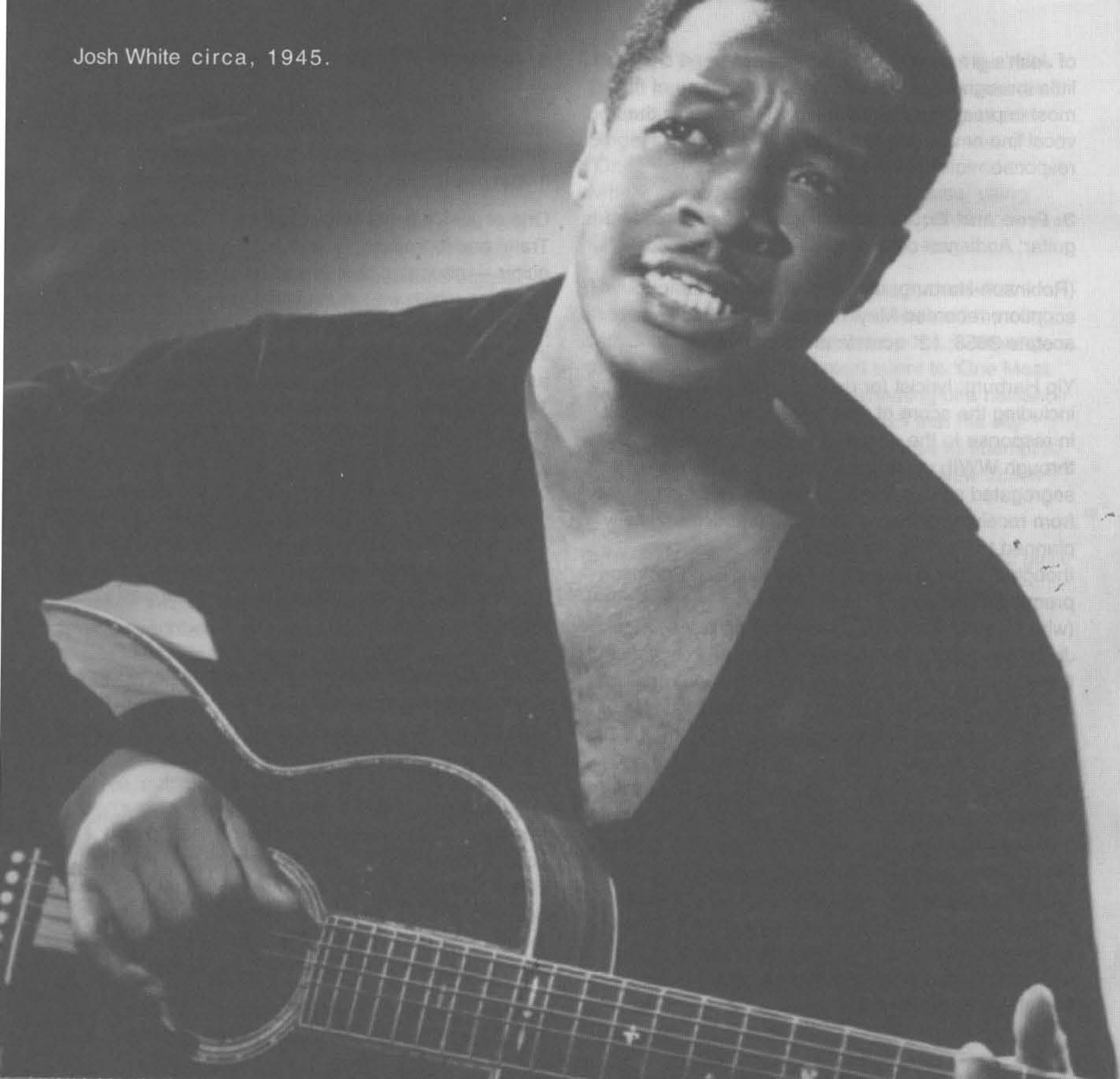
5. Jim Crow Josh White, vocal and guitar; The Union Boys, vocals

(Pete Seeger-Lee Hays; from Asch 346-3B; recorded March 11, 1944; matrix 613)

Lee Hays wrote of this song for his *Workers Almanac*: "Pete Seeger was playing the old old song 'Groundhog' . . . and Pete and I started to slow it down and sing it operatic style, just for the hell of it. The last line of two syllables suggested the phrase 'Jim Crow' and before you could say 'self determination' we had the song written."

A typical protest against the trials of "Jim Crow" segregation, the song was written back in the

Josh White circa, 1945.



Almanac Singers days, and originally sung by Paul Robeson. It was recorded as part of a marathon session by the Union Boys, a folk super group including Burl Ives, Tom Glazer, Alan Lomax, Pete Seeger, Brownie McGhee, Sonny Terry and Josh, and a couple of these hum under Josh's lead. Five of the songs were released on Asch album 346, *Songs for Victory: Music for Political Action*, including this one and "Hold On." With its slow, minor-key melody, this is really more Robeson's sort of material than Josh's, but he handles it quite effectively.

6. Landlord Josh White, vocal and guitar

(Words and music by Gene Raskin, unreleased; recorded October 25, 1945; matrix 906; Smithsonian acetate 651; 12" glass disc)

Many requests have come in for the words and music to this song, which Josh White has been putting on many of his programs," wrote *People's Songs* in the winter of 1947. "He gives it an even rhythm and sings it like a lowdown blues, mad clean through." One of Josh's most effective protest performances, "Landlord" mixes wry humor with a swinging guitar part that recalls the trademark riff of "One Meat Ball." The complex lyric flows smoothly off his tongue, reminding one of the pride he took in his immaculate diction. Surprisingly, he seems to have sung the song only briefly, and no recording of it was released until the 1990s. Gene Raskin, who would win international fame with "Those Were the Days," wrote the song, apparently as an organizing tool for New York's tenants' unions.

7. Betty and Dupree Josh White, vocal and guitar

(from Disc 3004a (661)/Disc LP 117; recorded circa 1946; matrix D223; Smithsonian acetate 3950; 12" shellac disc)

"Betty and Dupree" was among the oldest African-American folk songs in Josh's repertoire. One of the only ballads cast in the standard 12-bar blues form, it seems to have been widespread throughout the southeastern states. Interestingly, one of the first recordings of the song (as "Dupree Blues") was made in 1930 by Willie Walker, a blind musician who was Josh's first guitar hero back home in Greenville. Josh led both Willie and his brother Joe, and he called Walker "the best guitarist I've ever heard." The song would become something of a folk-blues standard, recorded by Brownie McGhee and other revival stars, but Josh's version is quite similar to Walker's, and he probably learned it as a child in Greenville.

8. Trouble Josh White, vocal and guitar

(traditional arrangement by Josh White and Leonard De Paur; unreleased; recorded October 25, 1945; matrix 175; Smithsonian acetate 274; 12" glass disc)

"Trouble" was one of the songs on *Chain Gang* (Columbia C-22), Josh's 1940 breakthrough album. The original set was produced by John Hammond and featured the Carolinians, a group selected from the chorus of *John Henry*, and which included Josh's brother Bill, bass singer Sam Gary, and tenors Carrington Lewis and Bayard Rustin (soon to be a major civil rights leader). The songs were largely drawn from a 1939 collection of convicts' songs, *Me and My Captain (Chain Gangs)*, by the radical folklorist Lawrence Gellert but were substantially rewritten by Josh and the composer/arranger Leonard DePaur.

"Trouble," in particular, used only a couple of lines from Gellert's version; the rest seems to have been Josh's composition. In the notes to an Asch 78

album, *Folk Songs Sung by Josh White*, he described how he wrote it with Bill White and Sam Gary, about an event that "happened right in my own family, to my Uncle Sim. . . . Uncle Sim was a very sharp tempered man. When one of his mules would balk on him, he'd hit the mule up side the head and that mule would go down. . . . A white man got mad when he saw Uncle Sim slap his mule down and he tried to slam Uncle Sim down. My uncle was too excited to notice what color he was fightin' and so, when the scrap was over, the white man went to the hospital and Uncle Sim went to jail. They put him in and threw the key away. . . . Put him away for ninety years, and my uncle didn't feel like he could make it. His hot temper kept on gettin' him in trouble. Whippings sometimes with the butt end of the whip. The hot box. Finally he ran away. . . . Did they catch him? . . . No, he died in the free world."

9. Beloved Comrade Josh White, vocal and guitar (music by Fred Katz, words by Lewis Allan; unreleased; recorded possibly October 25, 1945; matrix unknown; Smithsonian acetate 3704; 12" glass disc [cracked])

"This is dedicated to the late president. It was a favorite of his," Josh says in his introduction to an incomplete take of this song. This recording, made shortly after the death of President Roosevelt, was intended to pay tribute to Josh's most influential patron, whom he would later commemorate with a song written for him by McKinley Cantor, "The Man Who Couldn't Walk Around." Josh had first performed "Beloved Comrade" more than a year earlier in Langston Hughes's B.B.C. radio play, *The Man Who Went to War*, which also featured Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry. He sang it after a scene

in which the heroes are caught in battle and a lieutenant killed. Combining a heartfelt lament with a vow that "the fight will still go on," it was a moving piece, and he recorded it commercially for Decca Records in December of 1944.

10. Hold On The Union Boys: Josh White, vocal and guitar; Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo; and some or all of the following: Burl Ives, Tom Glazer, Brownie McGhee, vocal/and or guitar; Alan Lomax, vocal.

(Based on the song "Gospel Plow"; from Asch 346-1B/Disc LP 117; recorded March 11, 1944; matrix 621)

Written to the tune of "Gospel Plow," a late 19th century religious standard, this was very much in the Almanac Singers tradition, and is sung by a similar, spur-of-the-moment aggregation of lefty folk singers brought together for a single recording session. As usual with the Almanacs, it is Seeger's banjo rather than the guitars that drives the instrumental backing. A celebration of the Allies' united front, the song is an entertaining reminder of what strange bedfellows politics can make, as the singers belt out the names of their heroic leaders: Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Chiang Kai-shek, and Joseph Stalin. Josh also recorded another version of this song, "Keep Your Hand on that Vote," urging "united Negroes" to head to the voting booth.

11. Jelly Jelly Josh White, vocal and guitar (music by Earl Hines, words by Billy Eckstine; unreleased; possibly recorded October 25, 1945; no matrix; from Smithsonian acetate 617; 12" glass disc)

This song was first recorded in 1940 by Earl Hines's band with Billy Eckstine singing, and it became a standard in Josh's performances both on stage and off (where he would sing a set of lyrics that went well beyond the suggestiveness of this version). Of all Josh's 1940s recordings, this was the only one that seems to have attracted any attention from Black buyers, showing up in record store ads in the *Amsterdam News*. The fact that his Harlem neighbors ignored his hard-hitting topical material in favor of racy blues was a source of some discomfort to him. "Negro bobby-soxers just want to hear 'Jelly-Jelly,' 'Outskirts of Town,' 'Did You Ever Love a Woman,'" he said in a 1948 *Ebony* interview. "I wish they'd like to hear songs that really mean something to us. . . . There's nothing to be afraid of and it makes you feel better to stand up instead of escaping all the time" (*Ebony* October 1948).

12. When I Lay Down Josh White, vocal and guitar (from Asch 348-3A; recorded April 19, 1944; matrix 60; Smithsonian acetate 611; 12" glass disc)

This song sounds traditional, but it is unclear where Josh found it. It became one of his favorite "mood" pieces, along with his show-stopping version of the "Riddle Song," and is a fine example of his ballad style. Though he is usually remembered today as a blues singer, in his Cafe Society days Josh was as often hailed for his unique interpretations of Anglo-Irish folk material, and the spare, tasteful guitar arrangements he used on such songs were among his most influential contributions to the folk scene. Drawing on the technical expertise formed in his blues work but putting all virtuosity aside, they framed the lyrics perfectly and quieted New York nightclub audiences in a way other performers could only envy.

13. The House I Live In Josh White, vocal and guitar (music by Lewis Allan, words by Earl Robinson, Chappell Pub. Co.; from Asch 348-3B; recorded September 6, 1944; matrix MA-169)

This was one of Josh's trademark numbers, the song he would use to balance the brutal imagery of the anti-lynching song "Strange Fruit." Lyrics to both songs (and to this disc's "Beloved Comrade") were by Lewis Allan, the pen name of Abel Merepol. Allan was one of the foremost lyricists on the American Left and a frequent collaborator with the composer and singer Earl Robinson, who had appeared with Josh on the radio show "Back Where I Come From." Robinson and Allan wrote "The House I Live In" in 1942, but it did not become popular until 1944, when Josh recorded it, and it was picked up by Frank Sinatra, who performed it in a popular film short. There are reports of Sinatra learning the song from Josh, one saying he came down to Josh's shows to study it, another that he had Josh come up to his place and teach it to him. Josh recited the lyrics of the song during his appearance before HUAC as proof of his patriotism and sang it at virtually all of his concerts.

14. Fuhrer Josh White, vocal and guitar

(Composer unknown; from Smithsonian Folkways 40021, recorded October 25, 1945; matrix 907; Smithsonian acetate 761; 10" shellac disc.)

A rather strange song, not released at the time it was recorded, this is framed as the lament of a homesick German soldier on the Russian front, with alternate moments of genuine pathos and broad satire. According to folklorist Dave Samuelson, an unissued master ends with Woody Guthrie saying, "That's nice; who wrote that?" to which Josh replies,

"I did." Nothing about the song, however, suggests that it could be his composition. All of Josh's own songs are based on folk-blues themes and deal with subjects of which he had a direct knowledge. Both the musical and lyrical style of "Fuhrer" point to a tin pan alley composer, quite likely writing for one of the many Russian-American unity cabarets. "I seen the big red star that scared the pants off the czar," the soldier sings. During the War years, Josh was one of the most indefatigable performers at rallies and benefits, and he often did material on request. Since there is no mention of this song in any newspaper reports of his appearances, and he never recorded it again, it was clearly not one of his regular numbers. It may be that Moses Asch or someone else simply wanted a record of the song and asked Josh to do one to order.

15. Minute Man Mary Lou Williams, piano; Josh White, vocal; Jimmy Butts, bass; Bill Coleman, trumpet; Eddie Dougherty, drums

(M. Ashwood- F. Johnson- C. Hopkins- M.L. Williams; from Asch 2001A; released on LP as Folkways 2966; recorded December 1944; matrix 780)

"Minute Man" is chiefly notable as one of Josh's few recordings with a jazz band, side A of a 78 record featuring Mary Lou Williams, his frequent Cafe Society co-star and fellow Asch artist. Josh often jammed with jazz players, both as a singer and a guitarist, and the ease with which he sings on this track makes one wonder why he did not do more like it. The obvious answer is that there were plenty of decent band singers, but no one else could do his guitar and vocal act.

"Minute Man" was the project of Michael Ashwood, a Harlem playwright. According to the *New York Amsterdam News*, he had written the song in 1942,

and when it was recorded by Josh the paper gave it an impressive spread, noting that royalties were shared by Ashwood and the National Servicemen's Fund of the Disabled War Veterans, the apparent sponsors of the recording (*New York Amsterdam News* 1945). The music was co-written by Freddie Johnson and pianist Claude Hopkins, the band-leader at the club Zanzibar; Mary Lou Williams shared credit as the arranger.

John Henry Excerpts:

16. Take a Gal Like You Josh White, vocal and guitar

(excerpt of theatrical piece, words by Roarke Bradford, music by Jacques Wolfe; unreleased; recorded possibly October 25, 1945; matrix unknown; Smithsonian acetate 606; 16" glass disc)

17. Whatcha Gonna Do (Sometime)

Josh White, vocal and guitar

(excerpt of theatrical piece, words by Roark Bradford, music by Jaques Wolfe; unreleased; recorded possibly October 25, 1945; matrix unknown; Smithsonian acetate 855; 16" glass disc)

In Roark Bradford's and Jaques Wolfe's play *John Henry*, produced in 1939 with Josh in a leading role, a character called "Nigger Named Sam" (changed on Josh's and Paul Robeson's insistence to "Man Named Sam") sings "Take a Gal Like You" to John Henry's lover Julie Ann, trying to lure her away with him. In response to the first verse, an obvious suggestion that she become his prostitute, she says "Aw, you just tryin' to vex me," but in response to the second, with its promises of gifts, she seems to warm to the idea, saying "Hit sounds sort er pleas-

ant, de way you speaks hit. Speak on" (Bradford 1939: p.49).

The remaining verses are traditional, as was much of the material Bradford and Wolfe employed in their production. Whether "Whatcha Gonna Do (Sometime)" was one of their adaptations, or had other provenance is not clear. The song does not appear in the John Henry script, but Josh included it when he recorded *The Story of John Henry*, a one-man version of Bradford and Wolfe's theatrical piece, as his LP debut for the Elektra label in 1954. He had previously done it in 1945 on a superb Decca recording with Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry. Alan Lomax's notes for that release (Decca A-447) described "Sometime" as "the folksong of the period after World War I, a time of soaring boom and sudden, violent depression, a time of questioning for all Americans." Whatever its origins, the song remained a standard in Josh's repertoire, though one suspects more for its mildly risqué humor than any overtones of the Great Depression. "Take a Gal Like You," which seems the stronger song in this recording, was less popular, and Josh revived it only occasionally, as on the *John Henry* record.

18. Don't Lie Buddy Josh White, vocal and guitar; Lead Belly, vocal and guitar

(Arr. Josh White; from Asch 432-3A; recorded April 19, 1944; matrix 63)

On November 25, 1941, Josh and Huddie "Lead Belly" Ledbetter opened as a duo at the Village Vanguard, the first folk act ever to headline in a New York nightclub. The two had appeared together on Alan Lomax's radio program "Back Where I Come From," and it was the show's director, Nicholas Ray, who got them the Vanguard gig. Both

on the program and in the club, Lead Belly was the favorite of the folk cognoscenti but Josh was considered more accessible to the general public. The two would alternate songs and occasionally do a number together, and they were a success, remaining at the club for almost three months. There was some friction—Josh was of a different generation than Lead Belly and sometimes found the older singer's approach to white audiences archaic and demeaning—but the two remained friends until Lead Belly's death. "Don't Lie Buddy" is a beautiful example of their partnership, Josh singing the boasting verses, Lead Belly chiming in with dubious responses, and both joining in on the choruses.

19. Motherless Children Josh White, vocal and guitar

(unreleased; recorded June 9, 1944; matrix 141 or 148; Smithsonian acetate 892; 16" glass disc)

With "Jesus Gonna Make Up My Dying Bed," this made up Josh's first gospel record in 1933. Both were made popular on recordings by the Texas "guitar evangelist" Blind Willie Johnson and covered later by various later singers and gospel groups. "Motherless Children" was particularly popular with blues singers, its theme having a universal, direct appeal that made its religious final verse, which says that "Jesus will be a mother to you," almost seem anticlimactic. In this version, Josh emphasizes the personal and secular aspect of the song by leaving that verse out entirely.

20. No More Blues (No More Bread Lines)

Josh White, vocal and guitar

(by Tom Glazer; from Asch 349-1B/Disc LP 117; recorded June 19, 1944; matrix 158; from Smithsonian acetate 3936, take 1; 12" glass disc)

This is from *Songs of Citizen C.I.O.*, an album of labor and WWII songs sponsored by the National C.I.O. War Relief Committee and featuring Josh and the folksinger-songwriter Tom Glazer. "No More Blues" was written by Glazer, and he thinks Josh read it directly off the page as he sang. "You don't need to memorize in a recording studio," Glazer says. "And I don't think he did those songs again anywhere. He was musically very quick. He would listen to a song once or twice and, if it was simple enough, he would just do it, and if he didn't like it he would turn it down. But I wrote these things in a style that I felt he would cotton to, and he did (Glazer 1996).

21. Mean Mistreatin' Woman Josh White, vocal and guitar

(By Leroy Carr; from Disc 3004B (661)/Disc LP 117; recorded circa 1946; matrix D220)

This was virtually the only one of Josh's early blues hits to show up in his later repertoire. Originally recorded by Leroy Carr in February of 1934 as "Mean Mistreatin' Mama," the song was an immediate success, as evidenced by the covers later that year by two of the most popular figures in blues, Tampa Red and Bumble Bee Slim. Josh's original version, recorded in August 1934, featured Carr himself on piano, with his partner Scrapper Blackwell probably handling the guitar chores. Carr was a major star, the single most influential male singer in the blues genre at least until the 1950s. He and Blackwell almost never worked with other artists, and their decision to record with Josh was a rare and impressive accolade, which they further emphasized by using him as a guitarist on some of their sides. Josh followed up his original version with "New Mean

Mistreater Blues," also with piano accompaniment. This recording was the first to emphasize his clean, supple playing and has a somewhat adapted lyric. All in all, it is one of his most convincing and straightforward blues performances.

22. Freedom Road Josh White, vocal and guitar

(Words by Langston Hughes, music by Emerson Harper, Musette Publishers; from Asch 349-3B; reissued as Smithsonian Folkways 40021; June 19, 1944; matrix MA 154; Smithsonian Acetate 146; 12" shellac disc)

With its swinging bass line, this is among the strongest of Josh's wartime topical recordings. Its lyric was by the poet Langston Hughes, who was closely associated with Josh during the early 1940s. Both lived in the Sugar Hill neighborhood of Harlem, and Carol White remembered Hughes as a regular visitor at their apartment. Josh sang most of the songs for Hughes's radio play *The Man Who Went to War*, and Hughes wrote laudatory liner notes for Josh's first Asch album, *Songs By Josh White*.

At the time it was recorded, "Freedom Road" was a good deal more confrontational than it now seems. It is easy to take it as a straightforward manifesto of racial unity in the face of a common enemy, but it was equally directed at the bitter issue of segregation in the U.S. armed forces. Black recruits were given substandard housing and treatment and, especially when they were northerners billeted in southern towns, they were subjected to curfews, arrests, and beatings by hostile townspeople and the civil and military authorities.

Considering the nature of the anti-Hitler propaganda, this was particularly frustrating. Black soldiers sitting in segregated halls would be shown films

decrying Nazi racism and lauding the Allies' commitment to equality. Black entertainers often highlighted this hypocrisy, and Josh himself sang of it most famously in "Uncle Sam Says," from his *Southern Exposure* album. The problem affected him directly, both because his brother Bill was in the army and because he was trying to get on USO tours in his duo with the White Broadway singer Libby Holman but was continually refused due to a policy against "mixed" acts.

"Freedom Road" links the official message of wartime unity with an exhortation to apply the same standards at home. The named enemies are Hitler and Hirohito, but they are cited as part of a more pervasive problem: "Ought to be plain as the nose on your face/There's room in this land for every race/Some folks think that freedom just ain't right/Those are the very people I want to fight."

23. Miss Otis Regrets Josh White, vocal and guitar

(By Cole Porter; from Disc 3005B (661); recorded circa 1946; matrix D221; Smithsonian acetate 615; 12" shellac disc)

A particularly clever song choice, Cole Porter's mock-elegant society blues was a perfect fit for Josh's sophisticated cabaret approach. In a departure from the complex melodies and clever rhymes of his usual work, Porter took a standard blues form and subject matter and subverted them by interjecting upper crust social niceties into the plot of murder and lynching. He wrote the song in 1934, and it was frequently performed at parties around New York by the actor Monty Woolley, who would sing it in the character of a butler. Josh's style bridged the same social gap as Porter's lyric, and his performance perfectly captures the song's bizarrely schizophrenic charm.

24. Careless Love Josh White, vocal and guitar
(from Asch 550-1B; recorded circa April, 1944; matrix 1215)

"Careless Love" is one of the most impressive examples of the musical interchange between Euro- and Afro-American southerners. Originally a ballad from the white tradition, the lament of a woman seduced and abandoned, it became one of the most popular country blues, losing its linear story and adopting a variety of floating blues verses. Blues and Gospel Records 1890-1943 lists 23 different recordings, including versions by W.C. Handy, Bessie Smith, Lonnie Johnson, Blind Boy Fuller, and Lead Belly.

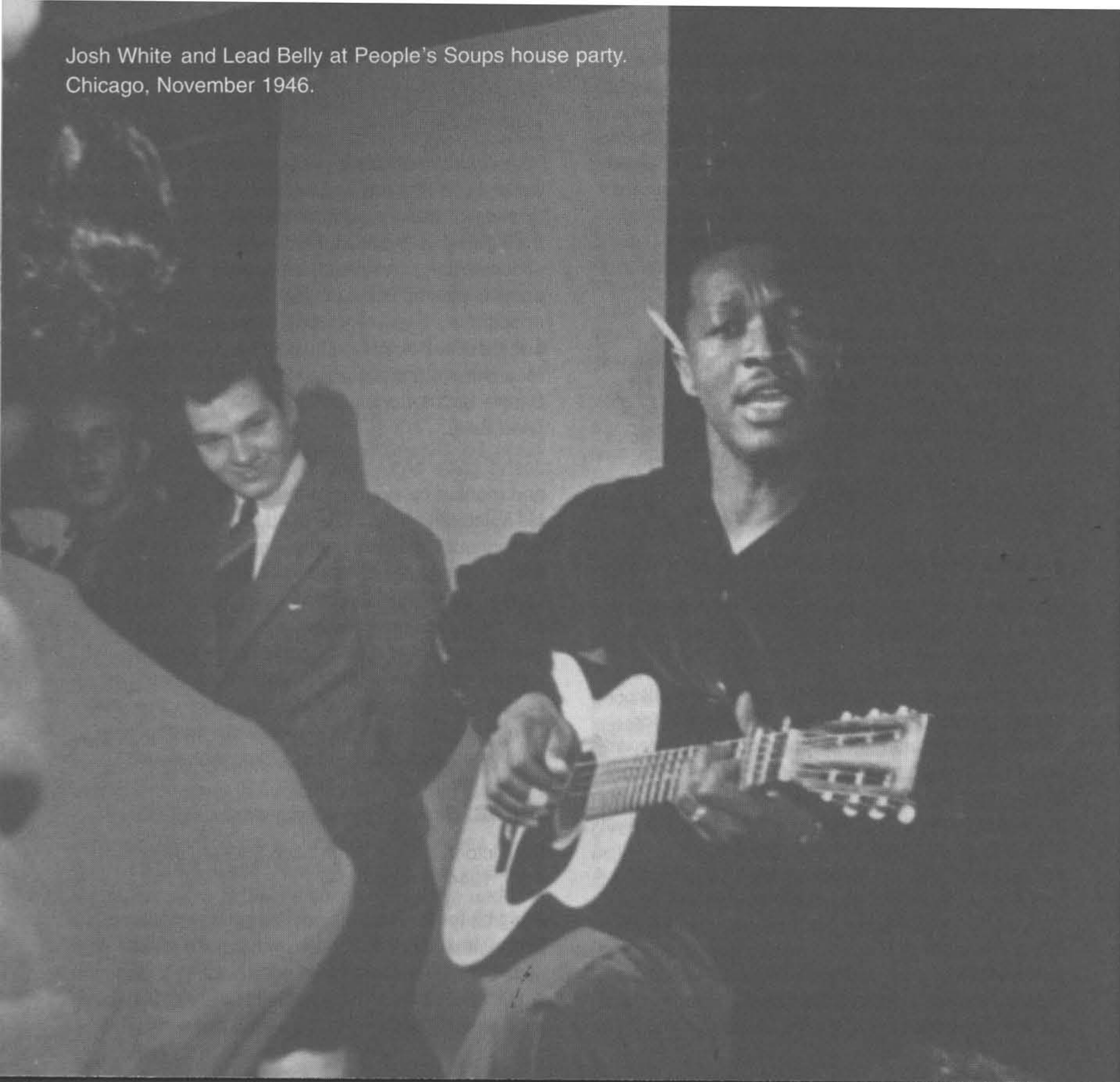
Josh's guitar arrangement, played in open D tuning and marked by sinuous string bends, was one of his masterpieces, and he used it in various ways throughout his career. He first recorded it in 1933 with a religious lyric, "Lay Some Flowers On My Grave." As "Careless Love," it was a highlight of his first 1940 recording session after *John Henry* had introduced him to a white audience, and he performed it both as a solo and in a duet with the jazz clarinetist Sidney Bechet. His most distinctive version, though, was in a topical rewrite that became the title song of his *Southern Exposure* album.

25. T.B. Blues Josh White, vocal and guitar

(by Victoria Spivey; from Asch 550-1A; recorded April, 1944; matrix 1214)

A big hit for the Texas singer-songwriter Victoria Spivey in 1927, this song found a place in both Josh's and Lead Belly's repertoire. Josh's version stays quite close to Spivey's original, with his standard blues licks filling in the space between lines.

Josh White and Lead Belly at People's Soups house party.
Chicago, November 1946.



26. Outskirts of Town Josh White, vocal and guitar

(from Asch 348-2A; recorded September 8, 1944; matrix 159-1; Smithsonian acetate 145; 10" shellac disc)

A popular blues first recorded in 1936 by the slide guitar master Casey Bill Weldon as "We Gonna Move (To the Outskirts of Town)," this was revived with great success in 1941 by Louis Jordan and his Tympany Five. It was the first of a string of hits that would make Jordan arguably the most popular Black entertainer of the 1940s, and was widely covered, becoming a blues standard. Josh based his version on Jordan's, although he adds verses (and the "Great God a-mighty" tag from one of his 1935 duets with Buddy Moss) and reshapes the song into one of his strongest guitar and vocal showcases.

Archivists Remarks

Many of the remaining acetate masters of these Josh White recordings are in amazing shape fifty years later, some of the finest in the Smithsonian collection. I was immediately struck by this when first identifying them in 1991. At that time I decided that this Josh White compilation should be a priority. We have tried to issue the songs recorded for Moses Asch that have not been subsequently reissued by other labels using these masters.

Magnetic audiotape technology did not exist before World War II. It first came into use for audio recording in the late 1940s. Before then, most mastering had been done directly on to discs. All the music on this project was originally recorded by Moses Asch during the 1940s on various types of disc. There were several sorts of disc technology; some machines recorded directly onto aluminum discs, others recorded onto acetate or shellac discs.

Most master discs were recorded at about 78 rpm and consequently could not hold more than four minutes of music. Selections that ran longer often had to be broken up into two parts. Later on, but still before he moved to magnetic tape, Asch used 33 1/3 rpm masters to record longer pieces on disc.

Acetate discs of the type used for recording these tracks consisted of an aluminum or glass base covered with a layer of lacquer. During the war, when many of these discs were recorded, the glass base was used because metal was dedicated to military uses. With the passage of time, the lacquer may begin to peel off the base like old paint, so it is important that acetate discs be transferred to a more stable medium as soon as possible. Shellac discs are more stable than acetate and are more like the vinyl discs we are familiar with. They are, however,

quite brittle. Here at the Smithsonian we have undertaken the slow and laborious task of transferring all 5000 acetates in the collection.

The appearance of magnetic tape marked a revolutionary change in recording because uninterrupted performances could be much longer. Different sections could also be spliced together to create another recording without re-recording the entire performance. Surprisingly magnetic tape masters from the 1950s are still playable and in good shape as of 1998. However, playing them can cause damage and we always make a copy as they are played for they may not be as good the next time.

In the case of many of these recordings, the acetate was either missing, broken or of not good enough quality to reissue as such. In that case we mastered from an early 78 or from magnetic tape masters from the 1950s/1960s. In the case of the tape masters they were frequently earlier copies of the acetates done when the masters were in better condition.

During the 1940s, Moses Asch's studio was an open house to many of the recording artists in the New York area. Many of the acetates in this collection were recorded during this time. Asch's recording log is a fascinating list of many of the top jazz and folk music performers of the day. Visitors included Lead Belly, Burl Ives, Josh White, Sonny and Brownie, Langston Hughes, James P. Johnson, Mary Lou Williams, Coleman Hawkins, and Pete Seeger, among others. During the War there was an extreme shortage of blank acetates. This shortage kept Asch from having the luxury of numerous takes of the same song during each session. For this reason many of Asch's recordings were issued with some mistakes in the performance, for that was all he had.

As we approach the turn of the century more and more of late twentieth century artistic expression is stored on media or in electronic form. These carriers have a short and finite lifespan. It is important that we think in terms of preserving them or there will be nothing left for future generations to appreciate. These discs are already 50 years old and on borrowed time. It is imperative that these recordings be transferred to a more stable medium. The reissue of this material allows both for the preservation of these discs and the exposure to the public of treasures that have been hidden for many years. We hope to continue this work by releasing many more such collections in the coming years.

—Jeff. Place, Archivist
Center for Folklife Programs & Cultural Studies,
Smithsonian Institution

For further information on acetates and their preservation:

Gilles St. Laurent, "The Preservation of Recorded Sound Materials," *Association for Recorded Sound Collections Journal*, Fall 1992, pp. 144-156.

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Discography

Josh White-Vols. 1-6 (Document Records)

These are Josh's complete recordings released under his own name (lacking only some lost sides), in chronological order from 1929 into the mid-1940s.

Josh White: Blues Singer 1932-1936

(Columbia/Legacy) A selection of Josh's early blues recordings, including one song missing from the Document series.

Songs for Political Action

Folkmusic, Topical Songs And The American Left (Bear Family) This includes many of Josh's topical recordings, and those of his associates. The 212-page book, by Ronald D. Cohen and Dave Samuelson, is an invaluable source of information on the subject.

Video

Legends of Country Blues Guitar (Vestapol 13003) and *Blues Up the Country* (Vestapol 13037). These include Josh among other acoustic blues players, filmed in the 1960s.

Credits

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Annotated by Elijah Wald
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This album is dedicated to the memory of Carol White

About Smithsonian Folkways

Folkways Records was founded by Moses Asch and Marian Distler in 1948 to document music, spoken word, instruction, and sounds from around the world. In the ensuing decades, New York City-based Folkways became one of the largest independent record labels in the world, reaching a total of nearly 2,200 albums that were always kept in print.

The Smithsonian Institution acquired Folkways from the Moses Asch estate in 1987 to ensure that the sounds and genius of the artists would be preserved for future generations. All Folkways recordings are available on high-quality audio cassettes or by special order on CD. Each recording is packed in a special box along with the original LP liner notes.

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings was formed to continue the Folkways tradition of releasing significant recordings with high-quality documentation. It produces new titles, reissues of historic recordings from Folkways and other record labels, and in collaboration with other companies also produces instructional videotapes and recordings to accompany published books, and other educational projects.

The Smithsonian Folkways, Folkways, Cook, Paredon, and Dyer-Bennet record labels are administered by the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife Programs & Cultural Studies. They are one of the means through which the Center supports the work of traditional artists and expresses its commitment to cultural diversity, education, and increased understanding.

You can find Smithsonian Folkways Recordings at your local record store. Smithsonian Folkways, Folkways, Cook, Paredon, and Dyer-Bennet recordings are all available through:

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For further information about all the labels distributed through the Center, please consult our internet site (<http://www.si.edu/folkways>), which includes information about recent releases, our catalogue, and a database of the approximately 35,000 tracks from the more than 2,300 available recordings (click on Database search). Or request a printed catalogue by writing to:

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