

A vintage, sepia-toned photograph of a protest. In the foreground, the backs of three people are visible as they stand on a street. In the background, a large sign is held up, displaying the words 'PEACE', 'FREEDOM', 'JUSTICE', 'FOR EVERYONE', and 'NOW' in a stacked format. The scene includes streetlights and buildings in the distance.

PEACE
FREEDOM
JUSTICE
FOR EVERYONE
NOW

CLASSIC PROTEST SONGS

from SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

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Compiled by Mark Gustafson and Jeff Place; annotated by Jeff Place.

1. **Freedom Now Chant** Mass-meeting participants in Hattiesburg, Mississippi 0:26
2. **Jesus Christ** Woody Guthrie 2:37 (Woody Guthrie / TRO-Ludlow Music Inc., BMI)
3. **Bourgeois Blues** Lead Belly 2:18 (Huddie Ledbetter / TRO-Folkways Music Publishers, BMI)
4. **Black, Brown, and White** Big Bill Broonzy 2:42 (William Broonzy / WB Music Corp., ASCAP)
5. **Baby, I've Been Thinking** Janis Ian 2:41 (Janis Ian / Taosongs Two, BMI)
6. **Blowin' in the Wind** The New World Singers 2:28 (Bob Dylan / Special Rider Music, SESAC)
7. **This Land Is Your Land** Steve Forbert, Jack Hardy, Jill Burkee, and Mark Dann 4:39 (Woody Guthrie / TRO-Ludlow Music Inc., BMI)
8. **Turn, Turn, Turn** Liz Getz 3:04 (Pete Seeger / Melody Trails Music, BMI)
9. **As Long as the Grass Will Grow** Peter La Farge 5:07 (Peter La Farge / ESP Disc Music, ASCAP)
10. **Talking Pay TV** Phil Ochs 2:34 (Phil Ochs)
11. **Masters of War** The Bergerfolk 4:07 (Bob Dylan / Special Rider Music, SESAC)
12. **Waist Deep in the Big Muddy** Pete Seeger 2:57 (Pete Seeger / Melody Trails Music, BMI)
13. **Agent Orange** Peggy Seeger 3:51 (Muriel Hogan / Alkatraz Corner Music Co., BMI)
14. **Strange Fruit** Brother John Sellers 2:20 (Lewis Allen / Music Sales Corp., ASCAP)
15. **How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live** New Lost City Ramblers 3:34 (Alfred Reed / Peer International Corp., BMI)
16. **I'm Going to Write the Governor of Georgia** Champion Jack Dupree 3:13 (Jack Dupree)
17. **When We Make It Through** Barbara Dane 5:25 (Dorie Ellzey)
18. **Evicted Tenant** Sis Cunningham 2:06 (Icie Jewell Lawrence)
19. **Corrido de César Chávez** Los Perros del Pueblo Nuevo 3:02 (Felipe Cantú / Menyah Music, BMI)
20. **Gone, Gone, Gone** Red Shadow 2:14 (Mike Love – Brian Wilson – new words by Red Shadow / Irving Music Inc., BMI),
21. **Spirits of the Revolution** Larry Estridge (Larry Estridge) 5:09
22. **We Shall Overcome** Guy Carawan 3:40 (Ziphilia Horton–Pete Seeger–Frank Hamilton–Guy Carawan, TRO-Ludlow Music Inc., BMI)

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, Folkways Records (now Smithsonian Folkways) has produced and distributed high-quality recordings of American folk music. Moses Asch, founder of Folkways, made a commitment to artists that their Folkways recordings would never go out of print. The Smithsonian keeps that tradition alive. This recording is intended as an introduction to many of these recordings, a chance for listeners to experience them, perhaps again, perhaps for the first time. The Smithsonian has subsequently acquired other fine small labels, and this disc includes recordings from the Monitor and Paredon labels. The songs presented here come mainly from the 1940s to the 1960s.

Many people mistakenly believe that "protest songs" originated with guitar-playing folksingers in the 1960s.

It is highly likely that some form of protest lyrics have existed as far back as humans have made music. Songs have been associated with almost every human conflict in history. In the British Isles, ballads about the latest current events and issues were printed on pages of paper and sold for a few pennies, and these publications were called broadsides. Many songs and rhymes we all know well began as topical or protest songs, their original meaning now lost. "Froggy Went-a Courtin'" has been traced back to the 16th century and discusses a royal romance. "Little Jack Horner" is about a disreputable tax collector in the days of Henry VIII. In the United States, many complaints of the American colonists about the British were accompanied by associated songs.

Since the invention of audio recording, many songs of protest have been recorded. Many of the early country and blues recording artists worked as sharecroppers or in factories. Support for labor struggles and feelings of anger were put into words and performed. There are songs of the sharecroppers, songs of the textile workers, songs of the railroad workers, songs of the miners—and the list goes on. Collections of these songs have been published, and many of these old 78s have been reissued on compact discs.

The 1930s found a group of academics, composers, journalists, and musicians in New York at the beginning of the great "folksong revival." These individuals came from the far left politically and championed the folklore and music of the people. Among this musical world were great popular songwriters, such as Earl Robinson, Yip Harburg ("Somewhere over the Rainbow," "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime"), and Lewis Allan (see track 12), and their lyrics frequently dealt with

social issues. It was out of this environment that Folkways Records emerged. Some artists active in New York in the early 1940s were Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Josh White, and Lead Belly. In this environment, through Asch and then later Disc Records, they expressed themselves politically, and Moses Asch always felt that his records were a vehicle for his artists to speak. One of the great singing groups of the time



was the Almanac Singers (Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Bess and Butch Hawes, Sis Cunningham, Millard Lampell, Lee Hays, and others), whose repertory consisted of

songs for the common people's struggle.

Asch's studio always involved a racially mixed group of musicians, and some of the black musicians present found it safe to express themselves openly in their lyrics in ways they could not in their places of origin. An integral part of the civil-rights movement was its use of song. As long as Africans had been in the United

States, they have used song to communicate their response to their situation. When white owners banned drums because they felt the slaves might be able to communicate with each other by drumming, the slaves adopted Christian hymns, such as "Oh let my people go!" in which the images of imprisoned Jews became metaphors for their condition. The song "Follow the Drinking Gourd" was a veiled reference to the North Star and the path northward, to freedom. Worksongs and shouts included commentaries on bosses and owners. Country bluesmen included references in their songs to the problems they had

living in the South. Charley Patton sang of the evil sheriff Tom Rushen. The civil-rights movement adapted a body of black traditional music and hymns to new uses (Bernice Reagon, notes to SFW 40084).

In the late 1950s, the folksong revival reached its apex. Folksongs became the most popular music in the United States until the great "British Invasion" of 1964



brought rock and roll back to the top. Students across the country took up guitars and banjos. Many of them built their careers on the work of the folksingers that had preceded them, important

figures such as Guthrie and Seeger. As the politically repressive times of the McCarthy years waned, the political left felt that it could express itself again, and many of these statements took the form of folksongs. Sis Cunningham and Gordon Friesen started *Broadside* magazine in 1962 to publish newly created "songs of conscience." *Broadside* was the first magazine that published songs by Janis Ian, Bob Dylan, Tom Paxton, Phil Ochs, Eric Andersen, and others. The appearance of Bob Dylan on the music scene changed the musical approach of almost every current musician; many started writing and trying to sound like him, even though he had based his own persona on Guthrie. It's the image of Dylan with a harmonica rack and a guitar that became the caricature of the "protest folksinger." As quickly as he had arrived, he moved on to other musical endeavors.

Besides *Broadside* were individuals who published and supported topical music. The great bible of the folksong movement, *Sing Out!* magazine, published new and old protest songs (and still does). Former *Sing Out!* editor Irwin Silber and

his wife, activist and singer Barbara Dane, opened Paredon Records in New York in 1970 to document the music of social political movements worldwide.

African-American folksinger Jimmy Collier pointed out that if you want to get your message across, it's best to use the music of the community that you wish to communicate with. Collier found that the urban black community did not respond to new words to American folksongs, but it did respond to new words to rhythm-and-blues songs (personal communication, 2000). As the folk revival ended, hard-edged new songs began to be written using folk-rock and rock music. Punk rock exploded on the scene in the late 70s with the Sex Pistols and their attacks on Margaret Thatcher's administration with "God save the queen and her fascist regime." Protest lyrics are easily found in rap and hip-hop. The early 21st-century war in Iraq has led to a new round of antiwar songs.

Much as *Broadside* and Paredon Records became an outlet for writers of political song, national networks of such writers still exist: there are newsletters,

websites, house concerts, and self-produced cassettes. Seattle resident Jim Page is an example of this: he plays on the street and produces recordings that illustrate his feelings. Billy Bragg adapted Lead Belly's "Bourgeois Blues" into "Bush War Blues" and distributed it through the internet.

In 1987, Ralph Rinzler—folk musician, record producer, and talent scout for the Newport Folk Festival, and then Assistant Secretary for Public Service at the Smithsonian Institution—negotiated the donation of the Folkways label to the museum; the following year, the Smithsonian Folkways record label was founded. Rinzler had been involved in earlier Folkways albums, and he knew the value of the collection. Smithsonian Folkways has always set out to reissue material from its archives with expanded liner notes and updated sound. It has since acquired other smaller, like-minded record

companies: Cook, Paredon, Dyer-Bennet, Fast Folk Musical Magazine, Monitor, Collector, and M.O.R.E. These labels comprise what is called the Smithsonian Folkways Collection, and they include folk recordings in their catalog. More than three thousand titles are available through Smithsonian Folkways via on-demand compact disc and on-line digital download.

This recording hardly breaks the surface of the repertory of songs that are out there. Some "classic" protest songs are not on this disc because this collection draws exclusively, as do all of the releases in this series, from the body of material in the Smithsonian Folkways Collection. This collection is meant to be a series of doors to lead listeners into full recordings by these artists. If you enjoy it, many more great recordings are out there.

Jeff Place, 2009

THE SONGS

1. FREEDOM NOW CHANT

Mass meeting participants in Hattiesburg, Mississippi

(from *Voices of the Civil Rights Movement* SFW 40084, 1997; recorded February 1964)

This recording begins with a short selection from Bernice Johnson Reagon's collection of *Voices of the Civil Rights Movement*, a freedom chant from Mississippi. Bernice Johnson Reagon was a key individual in the civil-rights movement, a participant at many key events, a member of the SNCC Freedom Singers, and later a longtime curator at the National Museum of American History. She is one of the main experts on civil-rights song in the world.

Many songs of the movement came from African-American musical traditions (Reagon, notes to SFW 40084). Many of these songs lent themselves well to what were known as "zipper songs," which had a set chorus or chant, performed in alternation with various and often impromptu verses that were inserted into performances, depending on the particulars of the current event.

2. JESUS CHRIST

Woody Guthrie

Woody Guthrie, vocal and guitar

(from *The Asch Recordings*, vol. 1: *This Land Is Your Land* Smithsonian Folkways 40100, 1997)

The classic image of a folksinger with a harmonica rack and a guitar slung over his shoulder is the image of Woody Guthrie (1912–1967), a prolific songwriter, author, and

artist, who composed more than two thousand songs, including the American classics “This Land Is Your Land” and “So Long; It’s Been Good to Know You.” He made the vast majority of his recordings in Moses Asch’s cramped little New York studio, but these are only about one-tenth of the songs he composed. He was a fine interpreter of traditional American folksongs and country songs and a marvelous composer of topical songs, commenting on the issues of his day.

Guthrie used the melody of the classic folksong “Jesse James” for his commentary on what would happen if Jesus Christ returned to 1940s America.

3. BOURGEOIS BLUES

Lead Belly

Lead Belly, vocal and guitar

(from *Bourgeois Blues* Smithsonian Folkways 40045, 1997)

Huddie Ledbetter (Lead Belly) (1888–1949) was one of the 20th century’s most important repositories of traditional American song. He would hear a song, commit it to memory, and adapt it to make it his own. He performed blues, spirituals, pop songs, children’s games, worksongs, and songs in a myriad of other styles. He was discovered in prison by John Avery Lomax, a researcher in the Library of Congress, and much mythology exists as to the extent that a song he wrote for the Governor of Louisiana, delivered by Lomax, earned him an early release. Moving to New York, Lead Belly was introduced to northern folksong audiences, and he fell into a group of musicians that included Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Aunt Molly Jackson, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, and Josh White. Also operating in the same circle was Moses Asch.

Moses Asch was the perfect person for Lead Belly to record for, and it was a relationship beneficial to both men. Lead Belly recorded the bulk of his material for Asch. Other record companies had difficulty understanding the marketing of Lead Belly’s music, for he was more than a blues singer. The recording of his first album expanded Asch’s

scope from purely being a label of ethnic recordings—an event that would have far-reaching consequences (Place, notes to SFW 40045).

This is one of Lead Belly’s best-known songs. When Lead Belly went to Washington, D.C., to work with Alan Lomax, he was denied a room in a Washington hotel. Lomax remarked, “Washington’s just a bourgeois town anyway.” This became the inspiration for the song. Lead Belly first recorded it in December 1938 in New York. The original recording is now part of the Library of Congress collection.

4. BLACK, BROWN, AND WHITE

Big Bill Broonzy

Big Bill Broonzy, vocal and guitar

(from *Trouble in Mind* SFW 40131, 2000)

William Lee Conley “Big Bill” Broonzy (1898–1958) was one of the most frequently recorded blues artists in the United States from the 1920s until the years immediately after World War II. The postwar years saw the rise of electric country blues in Broonzy’s adopted hometown of Chicago, and Broonzy’s music came to be considered old-fashioned. Broonzy switched his marketing strategy and found a home among the folk-music enthusiasts who for years had embraced country blues performers like Josh White, Lead Belly, and Sonny and Brownie. During the same period, Broonzy was quite popular in Europe. He found a home at the end of his life recording for Folkways, some of the projects done with the help of Studs Terkel.

When Broonzy composed this song, he felt he could not record it, and so he passed a copy on to Pete Seeger (Seeger, notes to FW 5702). This was a controversial song, upsetting both white and black listeners: whites resented Broonzy’s speaking out, and blacks resented the idea of “getting back.” Broonzy claimed he was telling no one to “get back,” but simply referring to his own experiences. He was unable to record it until he got to Europe, in 1951 (Place, notes to SFW 40131).

5. BABY, I'VE BEEN THINKING

Janis Ian

Blind Girl Grunt (Janis Ian), vocal and guitar

(Also known as "Society's Child"; from *The Best of Broadside* SFW #0130, 2000)

Janis Ian (1951–) was born Janis Eddy Fink in New York and raised in New Jersey. She was discovered at a *Broadside* magazine hootenanny at the age of thirteen, after she had sent her first song, "Hair Spun of Gold," to the magazine. As a teenager, she landed a recording contract and achieved success with "Baby, I've Been Thinking" (*Society's Child*), and eventually recorded four albums for Verve Records.

Disillusioned from her experiences as a teenager with record companies, she stopped recording and studied studio engineering in Philadelphia. She moved to California and resurfaced in 1974 with the album *Stars*. The 1975 recording *Between the Lines*, with the hit "At Seventeen," won her the first two of her three Grammys. She spent the years between 1981 and 1993 out of the recording business. She again reemerged with her recording *Breaking the Silence*. Since then, she has continued to record and compose songs for other artists, and for film and television (Jeff Place, notes to SFW #1030). She currently lives in Nashville, Tennessee, and continues to release new music.



This is the song that put Janis Ian on the map. She composed it at age fifteen, about observations she had made within her neighborhood. The original title was "Baby, I've Been Thinking." After the song had been turned down by twenty-two record companies, Verve/Folkways released it. Most radio stations found it too hot to handle, with its message about interracial romance. It took Leonard Bernstein's featuring Janis and the song on his show *Inside Pop: A Rock Revolution* for the song to take off and make its way up the *Billboard* charts. She remembers being a teenager and receiving numerous threats, "a lot of bomb threats, a lot of envelopes with razor blades. It was scary. I didn't understand people wanting to hurt me (*Sing Out!* 43/2, 1998, p. 45). It was years before she felt comfortable performing in the South. *Broadside Records* released this track under the pseudonym Blind Girl Grunt (Jeff Place, notes from SFW #0130, 2000).

6. BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

New World Singers

The New World Singers: Gil Turner, Bob Cohen, Delores Dixon, Happy Traum, vocals with guitar (from *Broadside Vol. 1*; Folkways 5301, 1963)

The New World Singers consisted of Gil Turner, Bob Cohen, Delores Dixon, and Happy Traum. This version of the song was its first version to be recorded. (The New World Singers were also the first to record Dylan's "Don't Think Twice; It's Alright.") Gil Turner (1933–1974) was on the editorial board of *Broadside* magazine and was the emcee at Gerde's Folk City, a well-known Greenwich Village club. Through his club job, he met many of the new songwriters in New York.

As the story goes, Bob Dylan approached Turner backstage with the words to "Blowin' in the Wind" and asked if he could sing it for him. Turner was so impressed that he asked if he could take the song upstairs to the stage and perform it with the group (Cohen, Traum, personal communication, 2000). The rest is history. The song became one of Bob Dylan's most important compositions. It reached international fame after

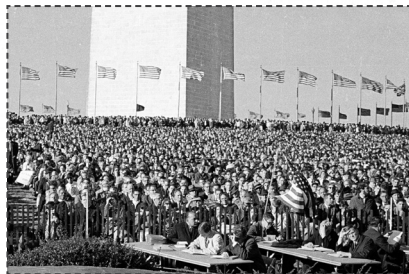
having been recorded by Peter, Paul, and Mary. Dylan had heard a performance of the old folksong “No More Auction Block” and liked the melody, which he adapted for this song (Cohen, personal communication, 2000).

7. THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND

Steve Forbert, Jack Hardy, Jill Burkee, and Mark Dann

Steve Forbert, vocals and guitar; Jack Hardy, vocals and guitar; Mark Dann, bass; Jill Burkee, vocals
(from *CooP – Fast Folk Musical Magazine* (vol. 1, no. 4): *The Political Song Revisited* Fast Folk SE104, 1982)

In 1940, when Woody Guthrie composed his most famous song, “This Land Is Your Land,” it had quite a different form. The best-known version is hardly considered a “protest,” song, but it started out that way. Guthrie frequently heard Kate Smith’s rendition of “God Bless America” on jukeboxes and radio, and felt that its imagery didn’t speak to the Americans he knew, the downtrodden Okies and farmworkers. He composed a new song, which he called “God Blessed America for Me,” using the melody of an old Carter Family hymn, “When This World’s on Fire.” This new song was what would become “This Land Is Your Land,” but with two additional verses, one against private property and one speaking to those “standing in bread lines.” When the song was finally released, it had become the song we all know, minus the two “edgy” verses, possibly because it was on a Folkways children’s album. Woody made a point of teaching his son Arlo the original version, and Arlo and Pete Seeger have performed it that way. No version of Guthrie



himself singing this version was known until 1995, when a 1944 recording of the song turned up in the Smithsonian collections with one of the “lost verses” and was subsequently released by Smithsonian Folkways.

This version of the song comes from the Fast Folk Collection. Fast Folk was founded in 1982 as a musicians’ collective in New York City; it put out a magazine with an associated recording. Founded by Jack Hardy and a group of New York songwriters, it served as a means for writers to critique each other’s work and as a vehicle for publicizing new writers and their compositions. This version of the Guthrie standard is performed by Steve Forbert, one of the most popular of the new writers of the early 1980s, and Jack Hardy.

Steve Forbert was considered one of the great discoveries of the late 1970s, one of many to be called “the new Bob Dylan.” After signing with the Columbia Records affiliate Nemporer, he released several critically and financially successful albums. His song “Romeo’s Tune” made the Billboard top 20 chart. Born in Meridian, Mississippi, in 1955, he moved to New York at age 21 and became involved in the Greenwich Village club scene (Place, notes to SFW 40135).

8. TURN, TURN, TURN

Liz Getz

Liz Getz, vocal and guitar

(from *Liz Getz Sings Folkways* 2443, 1965)

Folksinger Liz Getz, from upstate New York, had two albums released by Folkways in the 1960s. She entertained locally in her home area, and was twenty years old at the time of this recording. She worked as a secretary for General Electric in Schenectady. She currently performs and lives in northern Georgia, and works in the commercial home-building business.

Pete Seeger adapted words from the Bible (Ecclesiastes 3:1–8), set to his own tune, as a plea for peace. The Byrds had a major rock hit with the song in 1965.

9. AS LONG AS THE GRASS SHALL GROW

Peter La Farge

Peter La Farge, vocal and guitar

(from *Broadside Ballads*, Vol. 1, Folkways 5301, 1963)

Peter La Farge (1929–1965) was born in Fountain, Colorado. He was a rodeo rider, rancher, cowboy, actor, and singer. Of Pima Indian heritage, he was an outspoken advocate for American Indian rights. As Skip Weshner pointed out during a period of intense struggle for the civil rights of African-Americans in the United States, American Indians cried out for such a voice from within their ranks, and La Farge was such a voice (notes to FW 2535, 1965). Many of the songs he composed presented the Indians' side of the story. At one point, he served as the president of the Federation of Indian Rights. He recorded five albums for Folkways (Jeff Place, notes to SFW 40130).

As the song tells, Kinzua Dam was built along the Allegheny River in western Pennsylvania and was completed in 1965, creating the Allegheny Reservoir and flooding one-third of the tribal land belonging to the Seneca tribe of the Iroquois nation, despite a 1794 treaty, which recognized the land as belonging forever to the Senecas. Nowadays, one can find colorful travel brochures touting the wonders of Kinzua: "Recreational opportunities at Kinzua are legendary: picture a sparkling lake surrounded by forest and you have the perfect setting for your next vacation" (Kinzua Dam web page). The Seneca have moved, but one can find a gift shop now standing on a bank of the reservoir and selling Indian souvenirs (Jeff Place, notes to SFW 40130, 2000).



10. TALKING PAY TV

Phil Ochs

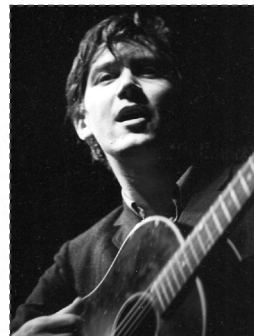
Phil Ochs, vocal and guitar

(from *Broadside Tapes 1* SFW 40008, 1989)

Phil Ochs (1940–1976) was one of the most important and certainly the most prolific of the topical songwriters to record during the 1960s and 1970s. He studied journalism and enthusiastically wrote articles while he began to play guitar and compose songs. His songwriting became an important conduit for his journalism. Shortly before graduation, he left Columbus, Ohio, and headed off to New York City, where he quickly fell in with the "folk scene" that was exploding around Greenwich Village and Washington Square Park. He began to have his songs published in *Broadside* magazine, beginning with "Billy Sol" in issue thirteen. He recorded dozens of his songs for *Broadside* on a home tape recorder. Folkways issued fifteen albums from the *Broadside* recordings (see *Best of Broadside*, SF 40130).

Ochs recorded albums for Elektra, and later A&M, arrangements for the latter being more introspective with lush accompaniment. He continued to be heavily involved in causes he felt strongly about, but became more and more disillusioned with the small amount of change effected by these movements. Personal problems and manic depression hampered his career. On 9 April 1976, he committed suicide (Jeff Place, from liner notes to SFW 40130).

One of the musical forms that have served for "protest songs" is the "talking blues," and here Ochs gives us an example of one of his own compositions. The form was used by Woody Guthrie, who had learned



it from a country music performer named Robert Lunn. It had started out being used in country novelty songs by South Carolinian Chris Bouchillion in the 1920s. Bob Dylan was to adopt Guthrie's style of writing and used the "talking blues" in many of his songs. The form became so associated with Ochs that "protest music" parodies frequently mimicked "talking blues."

11. MASTERS OF WAR

The Bergerfolk

Claudia Jane Berger, vocal and guitar

(from *Bergerfolk*, Vol. 2: *Happy Landings, Family Folk Singing* Folkways 32416, 1973)

The Bergerfolk are a family singing-group from New York state. Steve and Phoebe Lou Berger toured with their five children, Claudia Jane, Jennifer Ann, Margaret Louise, Jonathan, and Emily Kate. When the children were not in school, they played concerts and summer camps, and they toured Europe, the U.S., and Canada. They made four records for Folkways in the 1970s. In this recording, Claudia Jane tackles Bob Dylan's immortal "Masters of War."

Dylan composed the song in January 1963 and based it on the melody of the Ritchie Family rendition of "Nottamun Town," an old British folksong (Harvey, p. 69). It first appeared on the *Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* album.

12. WAIST DEEP IN THE BIG MUDDY

Pete Seeger

Pete Seeger, vocal and banjo

(from *Headlines and Footnotes* Smithsonian Folkways 40111; recorded 21 November 1967)

Pete Seeger (1919–) is the dean of 20th-century folksingers. As of this writing, he has been performing and lending his energies to causes he has believed in for almost seventy years.

Born in a musical family, he grew up surrounded by music. His father, Charles Seeger, was an eminent musicologist; his mother, Constance, was a concert violinist. In addition, his siblings Mike, Peggy, and Penny, and various cousins and relatives by marriage, have had successful recording careers.

Pete Seeger began to record for Moses Asch in 1943. Over the next forty years, he recorded more than five dozen albums for Asch. Seeger is a fine interpreter and presenter of traditional folksongs and an important composer of topical songs. During the folksong revival, he was one of its major figures, a huge influence on many other musicians of that time. Much like Woody Guthrie, he believes strongly in the use of his music for the betterment of humankind. His influence was powerful, despite his being blacklisted during the McCarthy era, when official and unofficial political and economic repression was common. He found other outlets in which to perform, visiting college campuses and staying under the political radar.

This song caused a great deal of controversy. When queried about it, Pete answered that he "had seen a newspaper photograph of troops in the Mekong Delta, and the last line came to me all at once, words, tune, rhythm, I wrote it down in my pocket notebook, but was unable to finish it. It kept coming back to haunt me. Had to do something about it. In two weeks of tussling, I got it finished" (Seeger 1993, cited in Mark Greenberg, notes to SFW 40111, p. 14).

During the height of the folk-music "craze" of the 1960s, Pete was one of the last



artists to continue to feel the effects of being blacklisted, being shut out from network television. Eventually, the Smothers Brothers, a folk and comedy team, asked him to appear on their network show in 1967. Pete planned on singing "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy," but the television censors would not allow it. After protests by Dick and Tom Smothers, it was allowed to be sung on their show the following January (Jeff Place, notes to SFW 40130).

13. AGENT ORANGE

Peggy Seeger

Peggy Seeger, vocal and autoharp

(from *From Where I Stand: Topical Songs from America and England* Folkways 8563, 1982)

Peggy Seeger (1935–) was born in New York to a musical family: her father, Charles, and her mother, Ruth Crawford, were eminent musicologists, and Pete is her half-brother. During her childhood, her parents made anthologies of folksongs, so she was exposed to countless tunes. Starting with piano, she gradually learned to play a host of folk instruments. In 1956, she traveled to England to perform in a television production of *Dark of the Moon*. While there, she joined the Ramblers, a folk group, which included Ewan MacColl. The two started performing as a duo, and were married two years later.

Peggy has written and performed many songs and recorded dozens of albums—solo, with Ewan, and with others. In the early 1990s, she began to sing with Irene Scott. She has also toured and sung on her own.

Agent Orange was a herbicide and defoliant used in the jungles of Vietnam to eliminate the jungle "cover" used by North Vietnamese soldiers. Some individuals exposed to its chemicals later developed cancer, and their children have had birth defects. The song "Agent Orange" was composed by Muriel Hogan, who worked with a Vietnam veteran's organization on the Agent Orange problem. It has been recorded by Kate Wolf and Country Joe McDonald.

14. STRANGE FRUIT

Brother John Sellers

Brother John Sellers, vocal and guitar

(from *Big Boat Up the River and Other Blues and Folk Songs* Monitor 6002, 1961)

Brother John Sellers (1924–1999) was a blues and gospel singer who made a handful of albums in the 1950s and 1960s. Born in Clarksdale, Mississippi, he moved to Chicago, where he performed in churches and clubs. His records were marketed to folk-music fans.

"Strange Fruit" is usually associated with the classic version of the song as recorded by Billie Holiday. Written by Abel Meeropol (Lewis Allan), a New York songwriter, its "strange fruit" is the swinging bodies of lynched blacks. The song decried racism in the South. It carried a strong message, and record companies were hesitant to publish it. The Library of Congress added the Holiday version to its National Historic Registry of Songs in 2002.

15. HOW CAN A POOR MAN STAND SUCH TIMES AND LIVE

The New Lost City Ramblers

Mike Seeger, vocal and fiddle; John Cohen, guitar; Tom Paley, banjo

(from *Songs from the Depression* Folkways 5264, 1959 / *The Early Years, 1958–1962* SFW 40036, 1991)

The New Lost City Ramblers came together in mid-1958, dedicated to preserving and performing important old-time American music that all three members had grown to love. The members were Mike Seeger (1933–), John Cohen (1932–), and banjo player Tom Paley (1928–). The group was formed at a time when many young musicians



were turning to American folk music. Influenced by Harry Smith's *The Anthology of American Folk Music* and classic recordings from the 1920s and 1930s, the Ramblers began to seek more and more older recordings.

This song dates from the Great Depression. It was first recorded by Blind Alfred Reed on 4 December 1929. Reed (1880–1956) was a country singer who lived most of his life in West Virginia. The song has also been recorded by Ry Cooder and Bruce Springsteen.

16. I'M GOING TO WRITE THE GOVERNOR OF GEORGIA

Champion Jack Dupree

Champion Jack Dupree, vocal and piano

(Previously unreleased recording from acetate 630; recorded by Moses Asch in 1946.)

“Champion” Jack Dupree (1909–1992) had a long career on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Growing up an orphan in New Orleans, he learned piano from players in the French Quarter and began to entertain in clubs and bordellos there himself (Santelli 1993:130). He had a career as a professional boxer; hence his moniker. He recorded for Moses Asch after World War II for the Asch label and went on to record for several rhythm-and-blues labels.

Dupree was a victim of racism through much of his life. He abandoned the United States for Europe in the late 1950s. His parents had been killed in a fire suspected to have been set by the Ku Klux Klan (Santelli 1993:130). He spent two years in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp during World War II, only to return to the same racism he had faced before. He stated his feelings in an unreleased song he recorded for Moe Asch called “I’m Going to Write the Governor of Georgia.” In the song, the protagonist returns home to suffer again under the old Jim Crow laws after serving his country proudly overseas. Dupree recorded for nearly a dozen European blues and jazz labels during the second half of his career.

17. WHEN WE MAKE IT THROUGH

Barbara Dane

Barbara Dane, vocal and guitar; Pablo Menendez, vocal and guitar; Jorge Reyes, bass; Frank Padilla, drums; Nina Menendez, Carlos Alfonso, Ele Valdez, vocals (from *When We Make It Through* Paredon 1046, 1982)

Barbara Dane (1927–) is a self-described “people’s singer” (personal communication, 1990), whose repertoire includes jazz, blues, and folk music. An activist, she has used music as a vehicle to promote social change.

Dane was raised in Detroit, Michigan. She saw the effects of the Great Depression on local workers firsthand, and began to sing for justice and against racism while in her late teens. She moved to San Francisco in 1949, and has performed with many giants of the blues and jazz world (including Louis Armstrong, Jack Teagarden, Memphis Slim, Earl Hines, Willie Dixon, Lightnin’ Hopkins, and Roosevelt Sykes). She performed folk music, and sang in support of the civil-rights movement and women’s rights and against the war in Vietnam. She was the first American singer to tour Cuba after the Castro revolution (against the wishes of the U.S. government). She continues to perform in the San Francisco Bay area.

Dane and Irwin Silber founded the Paredon record label in 1970 to document the musics of political movements worldwide. They eventually produced fifty albums. This track comes from that label. The song was composed by activist Dorie Ellzey.



18. EVICTED TENANT

Sis Cunningham

Sis Cunningham, vocal and guitar

(from *Broadside Ballads*, Vol. 9: *Sundown* Folkways 5319, 1976)

Agnes “Sis” Cunningham (1909–2004) and her husband, Gordon Friesen, were the editors and the driving force behind the great topical-song magazine *Broadside*. Cunningham was a one-time member of the Almanac Singers with Woody Guthrie, Lee Hays, Pete Seeger, and others. While working in Oklahoma at a labor school for women, she collected this song from Myrtle Lawrence, a sharecropper, whose eleven-year-old niece, Icie Jewel, had composed it. It was composed “right after one of the biggest floods they ever had in the delta” (from the spoken introduction to the song on FW 5319). During those years, Sis performed with the Red Dust Players, a political theater group in Oklahoma during the 1930s.

19. CORRIDO DE CÉSAR CHÁVEZ

Los Perros del Pueblo Nuevo

Los Perros del Pueblo: Miguel Gabriel Vázquez;

Lorenzo Martinez; David Maestas

(from *Rolas de Aztlán: Songs of the Chicano*

Movement Smithsonian Folkways 40516, 2005)

The United Farm Workers organized to fight the mistreatment of migrant workers in the United States. During the Delano Grape Strike (1965–1970) in 1966, the UFW staged a 300-mile march. This tribute to César Chávez, its leader, was composed during the march



by Felipe Cantù, and it was first performed at the state capitol (Russell Rodriguez and Estévan César Azcona, notes to SFW 40516)

20. GONE, GONE, GONE

Red Shadow

Members unidentified

(from *What Now People*, Vol. 3 Paredon 2003, 1973)

Red Shadow was a group consisting of “three Ph.D. economists and their friends from M.I.T.-land” (notes to Paredon 2003). They released two albums, *Live from the Panacea Hotel* and *Better Red*, now available as one compact disc. Barbara Dane and Irwin Silber started a series of releases on their Paredon label called “What Now People”; much like *Broadside* magazine, these recordings debuted cutting-edge topical and protest songs that the Paredon folks had become aware of. Red Shadow appeared on two of these volumes. Although its members are not identified, one of the cofounders was Ev Ehrlich, an economist and a former Under Secretary of Commerce during the Clinton administration.

Writers did not always use “folk” melodies as the basis of protest songs; here is a case in which one of the Beach Boys’ hits, “Fun, Fun, Fun,” reappears in a new form.

21. SPIRITS OF THE REVOLUTION

Larry Estridge

Larry Estridge, vocal and guitar

(from *Broadside Ballads*, Vol. 7 Folkways 5316, 1973)

Larry Estridge (1948–) was one of the writers and performing musicians in the New York City area who had their music published by *Broadside* magazine and on some of the *Broadside* recorded collections of the 1970s. He was born in New York and graduated from Harvard College in 1970. He wrote songs and articles on political issues. In his mid-thirties,

he discovered an interest in painting, and he eventually moved on to sculpture. He splits his time between New York and Key West.

22. WE SHALL OVERCOME

Guy Carawan

Guy Carawan, vocal and guitar

(from *Folk Music of the Newport Folk Festival*, Vol. 2 Folkways 2432, 1961)

Guy Carawan (1927–) was born in Los Angeles, California. He discovered folk music at the age of 21 and began to research it seriously; at one point, he traveled across the country in an old car with Ramblin' Jack Elliott and Frank Hamilton. Carawan was active in the 1950s and 1960s in New York as a performing folksinger, and as a performer throughout the United States and in Europe, Russia, and China. He collected folksongs in Appalachia and the South. He became involved with the Student

Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and did documentary work for the group. It was he who with Pete Seeger arranged and introduced the song "We Shall Overcome" into the civil-rights movement. He has written four books on folk music and freedom songs, and has been widely recorded. Currently, he and Candie Carawan, his wife and performing



partner, help run the Highlander Center in New Market, Tennessee.

The song evidently comes from the hymn "I'll Be All Right," which Ziphilia Horton of the Highlander School in Tennessee heard African-American tobacco workers singing, and it is was one of the workers who changed the "I" to "We." Since 1946, verses have been added to the song by Ziphilia Horton, Pete Seeger, and Carawan, to make it less union-specific (Mark Greenberg, notes to SFW 40096), and it became the movement's most important song, the traditional "closing song" at rallies, with participants linking arms.

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