
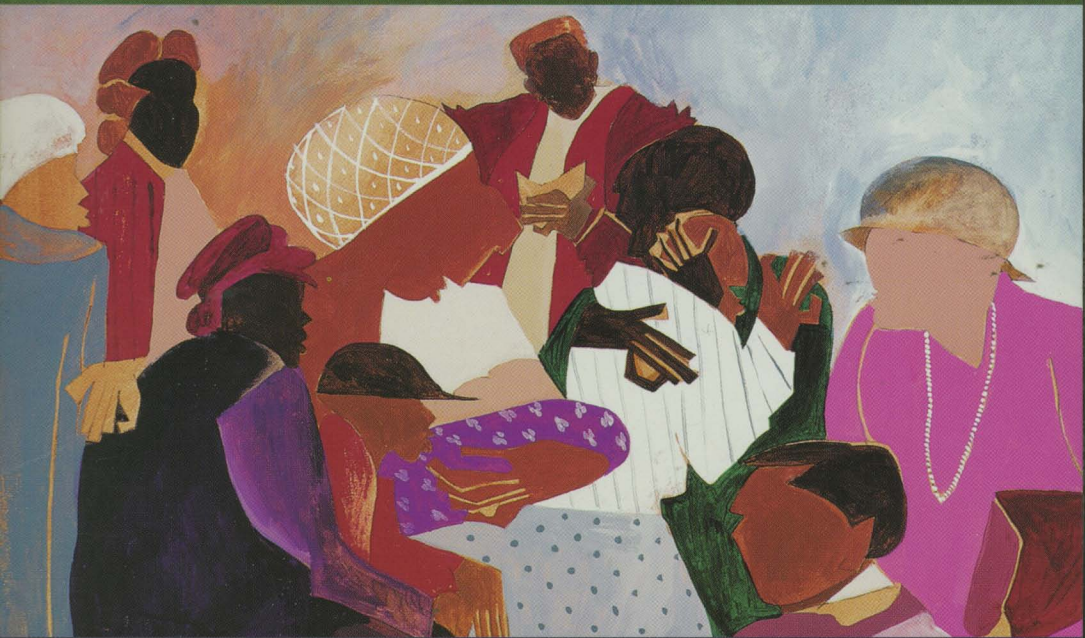


2 CDs  Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

EVERY TONE A TESTIMONY



AN AFRICAN AMERICAN AURAL HISTORY

This double CD draws upon the collection at the Smithsonian Folkways archive to create a history of African American life and culture in sound — an aural history. Encompassing both the African American oral and literary traditions, these 59 tracks feature an unparalleled assembly of voices in music, oratory, poetry, and prose by historically renowned African American musicians, writers, and activists. The sounds collected here are testimony to the power, creativity, and resilience of Black expressive forms that have received recognition throughout the world. 59 tracks run 2 hours, 27 minutes, 40-page booklet.

Every Tone a Testimony

An African American Aural History

SFW CD 47003 ©© 2001 Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

Compiled, annotated, and produced by Robert H. Cataliotti

DISC ONE

The Oral Tradition Langston Hughes; Annie Grace Horn Dodson; Enoch Brown; Lawrence McKiver and Doretha Skipper; Rich Amerson; Mrs. Janie Hunter; Joe Tucker; Children of East York School; Lucy Terry, read by Arna Bontemps

Testimony Against Slavery Phillis Wheatley and Harriet Tubman, read by Dorothy F. Washington; Annie Grace Horn Dodson; Kinsey West; Sojourner Truth and Sarah Parker Remond, read by Ruby Dee; Frederick Douglass, read by Ossie Davis

Reconstruction and Repression Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward; Paul Laurence Dunbar, read by Margaret Walker; Fisk Jubilee Singers; Booker T. Washington; Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry; Fenton Johnson, read by Arna Bontemps; Elizabeth Cotten; Percy Randolph; Inmates of Ramsey or Retrieve State Farms, TX; Ida B. Wells-Barnett, read by Ruby Dee

Voices of Pride and Protest I W.E.B. Du Bois; James Weldon Johnson, read by Margaret Walker; Reverend Gary Davis; Lead Belly; Countee Cullen; James P. Johnson

DISC TWO

Voices of Pride and Protest II Paul Robeson; Langston Hughes; Claude McKay; Sterling Brown; Big Bill Broonzy; Billie and Dee Dee Pierce; Margaret Walker; Gwendolyn Brooks

The Sounds of Twentieth-Century America George "Big Nick" Nicholas; Juanita Johnson & The Gospel Tones; Muddy Waters; Solomon Burke

Voices of Civil Rights and Black Power SNCC Freedom Singers; Martin Luther King, Jr.; Bobby Seale; Angela Davis; Sarah Webster Fabio; Nikki Giovanni; Sonia Sanchez

Contemporary African American Voices Amiri Baraka; Hamiet Bluiett; Jayne Cortez; Golden Eagles; Ishmael Reed; Arrested Development





EVERY TONE A TESTIMONY



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

DISC ONE

THE ORAL TRADITION

- 1 **The Struggle** (0:22) Langston Hughes
- 2 **Field Call** (1:15) Annie Grace Horn Dodson
- 3 **Complaint Call** (0:40) Enoch Brown
- 4 **Intro and Kneebone Bend** (2:51)
Lawrence McKiver and Doretha Skipper
- 5 **Brother Terrapin, Slow Train to Arkansas** (1:56)
Rich Amerson
- 6 **Jack and Mary and Three Dogs** (5:53) Mrs. Janie Hunter
- 7 **Buck Dance** (1:19) Joe Tucker
- 8 **I'm Goin' Up North** (1:22) Children of East York School
- 9 **Pharaoh's Host Got Lost** (1:32) Lawrence McKiver
- 10 **Bars Fight** (1:23) Lucy Terry, read by Arna Bontemps

TESTIMONY AGAINST SLAVERY

- 11 **Earl of Dartmouth** (0:49) Phillis Wheatley,
read by Dorothy F. Washington
- 12 **I Wonder Where My Brother Gone** (1:17)
Annie Grace Horn Dodson
- 13 **Narrative** (0:59) Harriet Tubman,
read by Dorothy F. Washington
- 14 **Speech at Akron Convention** (2:05) Sojourner Truth,
read by Ruby Dee
- 15 **Singing Slaves** (1:03) Frederick Douglass,
read by Ossie Davis
- 16 **Steal Away to Jesus** (1:50) Kinsey West
- 17 **What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?** (2:36)
Frederick Douglass, read by Ossie Davis
- 18 **Why Slavery Is Still Rampant** (1:47) Sarah Parker
Remond, read by Ruby Dee

RECONSTRUCTION AND REPRESSION

- 19 **Free At Last** (1:33) Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward
- 20 **When Malindy Sings** (3:48) Paul Laurence Dunbar,
read by Margaret Walker
- 21 **There's a Great Camp Meeting** (2:01) Fisk Jubilee Singers
- 22 **Atlanta Exposition Address** (1:16) Booker T. Washington
- 23 **John Henry** (4:03) Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry
- 24 **Banjo Player** (0:44) Fenton Johnson, read by Arna
Bontemps
- 25 **Boatman Dance** (1:42) Elizabeth Cotten
- 26 **Shine** (1:03) Percy Randolph
- 27 **Chopping in the New Ground** (1:37)
Inmates of Ramsey or Retrieve State Farms, TX
- 28 **Lynching, Our National Crime** (3:43)
Ida B. Wells-Barnett, read by Ruby Dee

VOICES OF PRIDE AND PROTEST I

- 29 **A Recorded Autobiography** (2:33) W.E.B. Du Bois
- 30 **Listen Lord, A Prayer** (2:55) James Weldon Johnson,
read by Margaret Walker
- 31 **My Heart Is Fixed** (2:04) Reverend Gary Davis
(Rev. Gary Davis/Chandos Music, ASCAP)
- 32 **The Titanic** (4:04) Lead Belly
(H. Ledbetter/Folkways Music Pub., BMI)
- 33 **Heritage** (2:58) Countee Cullen
- 34 **Jungle Drums** (2:32) James P. Johnson
(James P. Johnson)

DISC TWO

EVERY TONE A TESTIMONY

AN AFRICAN AMERICAN AURAL HISTORY

VOICES OF PRIDE AND PROTEST II

- 1 **No More Auction Block** (2:09) Paul Robeson
(Arranged by Lawrence Brown)
- 2 **The Negro Speaks of Rivers** (0:43) Langston Hughes
- 3 **If We Must Die** (0:57) Claude McKay
- 4 **Ma Rainey** (2:06) Sterling Brown
- 5 **Backwater Blues** (2:47) Big Bill Broonzy
- 6 **Married Man Blues** (5:11) Billie and Dee Dee Pierce
- 7 **For My People** (5:41) Margaret Walker
- 8 **The Children of the Poor, Sonnet 2** (0:47)
Gwendolyn Brooks

THE SOUNDS OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICA

- 9 **Body and Soul** (3:48) George "Big Nick" Nicholas
(Johnny Greene/Warner Bros. Music, ASCAP)
Courtesy of India Navigation.
- 10 **How He Delivered Me** (2:39)
Juanita Johnson & The Gospel Tones
- 11 **Long Distance Call** (6:58) Muddy Waters
(McKinley Morganfield/Watertons Music, BMI; Adm.
by Bug Music) Courtesy of the estate of McKinley
Morganfield.
- 12 **Cry to Me** (2:13) Solomon Burke
(Bert Russell/Mellin-Progressive, BMI)
Courtesy of Rounder Records.

VOICES OF CIVIL RIGHTS AND BLACK POWER

- 13 **Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around** (2:31)
SNCC Freedom Singers
- 14 **Birmingham 1963 - Keep Moving** (3:42)
Martin Luther King, Jr.
- 15 **Black Panther Party Platform** (2:59) Bobby Seale
- 16 **Interview (excerpt)** (1:05) Angela Davis
- 17 **Together to the Tune of Coltrane's "Equinox"** (1:40)
Sarah Webster Fabio (John Coltrane/Jowcol, BMI)
- 18 **Nikki-Rosa** (1:12) Nikki Giovanni
- 19 **Liberation/poem** (0:34) Sonia Sanchez

CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN AMERICAN VOICES

- 20 **Dope** (4:48) Amiri Baraka
- 21 **The Village of Brooklyn, Illinois 62059** (3:30)
Hamiet Bluiett (Hamiet Bluiett/Anaya Music Co., SESAC)
Courtesy of India Navigation.
- 22 **For the Poets** (3:56) Jayne Cortez
- 23 **Shotgun Joe** (5:19) Golden Eagles (Jos. Boudreaux/
Happy Valley Music, BMI) Courtesy of Rounder Records.
- 24 **St. Louis Woman** (1:26) Ishmael Reed
- 25 **People Everyday** (3:27) Arrested Development
(Warner Bros. Music/EMI Blackwood Music, Inc., BMI)
Courtesy of Chrysalis Records, under license from EMI-
Capitol Music Special Markets.



INTRODUCTION

EVOLUTION IN SOUND: AN AFRICAN AMERICAN AURAL HISTORY

Every Tone a Testimony: An African American Aural History draws upon the Folkways Records' archive to create a history of African American life and culture in sound — an aural history. Drawn from both the African American oral and literary traditions, this aural history illustrates the evolution of Black expressive forms from their African roots and their re-memberings and adaptations in America, often through the interaction and melding with European and Native American conceptions and forms, to a distinct tradition that has been recognized around the world for its power, creativity, and resilience.

The title of this compilation is taken from a passage in one of the cornerstones of the African American literary tradition, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, published in 1845 ("Singing Slaves," disc 1, track 15), where the ex-slave author reflects on hearing the spirituals. Douglass explains how these sounds revolutionized his conception of himself and his brethren as human beings: "To those songs I trace my first glimmering conception of the dehumanizing character of slavery." He ultimately asserts, "*Every tone was a testimony* against slavery, and a prayer and complaint of souls boiling against slavery, and prayer to God for deliverance" (italics added). Douglass suggests that the meaning he found in these musical expressions was often non-literal and embedded in an aural subtext: "The thought that came up, came out — if not in the word, in the sound; — and as frequently in the one as in the other" (263). What Douglass recognized in the sound of Black expression is a communal rejection of oppression, an essential spirit that refuses to submit. We can talk about — but never quite define — that ineffable spirit that reaches back to Africa as feeling, as soul, as swing, as groove, as boogie woogie, as rock 'n' roll, as funk. Blind Blake called it "*Diddie Wah Diddie*." Cab Calloway called it "*Hi De Hi De Ho*." Little Richard shouted "wop bop a loop bop be bop bam boom!" And Aretha Franklin called it the "spirit in the dark." That spirit can be found in all the selections on these compact discs.

Throughout the two-CD program there are certainly many expressions of defiant rage, denunciation, and resistance to oppression. Yet, *Every Tone a Testimony* does not simply mean overt protest; it means every tone testifies to the humanity of all African Americans and their unwillingness to accept subjugation. Every tone is testimony to African Americans' refusal to accept attempts to limit possibility. Like the ineffable spirit that reaches back to Africa, that testimony can be heard in every one of these recordings.

The impetus to assemble *Every Tone a Testimony* came from the production of the audio compact disc which accompanies general editor Patricia Liggins Hill's *Call & Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition* (Houghton Mifflin, 1998). In the preface to *Call & Response*, Hill and her editorial board of distinguished scholars of African American literature and culture (Bernard W. Bell, Trudier Harris, William J. Harris, R. Baxter Miller, Sondra A. O'Neale, and Horace A. Porter) assert that their landmark anthology is unique in that it "unfolds the historical development of the oral tradition simultaneously with the written literature." During the search for material for the book's accompanying compact disc, it became clear that the Smithsonian Folkways archive held a treasure trove of recorded performances of many of the "texts" — from both the oral and literary traditions — contained in the anthology's table of contents. Much of this compilation's conception and the background information for many of its "texts" are indebted to the ground-breaking collection of primary sources and editorial commentary found in *Call & Response*.

Essentially, *Call & Response* paved the way for this compilation, because what also became clear during the production of the anthology's accompanying disc was that the archives contain a history of African American creative, social, and political expression in sound — the aural history found on *Every Tone a Testimony*. For someone familiar with Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, it should not be surprising that the archives contain this particular history in sound because Moses Asch, who founded Folkways Records in 1948, envisioned and built his record company as a kind of "encyclopedia in sound." Obviously, the rich oral/aural tradition of African American culture became a prime candidate for inclusion in Asch's project.

While the lineage of African American oral and literary expression on *Every Tone a Testimony* follows a single thread through the tapestry of sounds which make up the Smithsonian Folkways collection, that thread is truly remarkable in the scope of its diversity, complexity, and dynamism. The compilation does not claim to be exhaustively comprehensive in its presentation of African American oral and literary forms and styles; however, the range covered by this compilation in particular and the collection as a whole probably has few rivals. (Only five of the fifty-nine tracks come from outside the collection.) The compilation is conceived as a loose history, and the tracks are sequenced in an evolutionary lineage of African American forms. Even though the renderings of calls, shouts, ring games, tales, and spirituals are twentieth-century versions — and thus the modern performance of older forms may exhibit the influence of more modern forms or styles — it is important that these *forms* are represented first on the compilation because they are the building blocks for what follows. It is also important to note that many of these forms and specific "texts" were passed down by word of mouth, and these twentieth-century renderings testify to the vitality of the oral tradition in African American culture. Although the two discs are sequenced in this evolutionary lineage, digital technology makes it possible for and hopefully will encourage listeners to resequence these recordings and listen to alternative lineages and juxtapositions based upon such criteria as genre, theme, content, style, and technique.

The sounds compiled on *Every Tone a Testimony: An African American Aural History* are intended to provide an aural illustration of the evolution of Black American expressive forms. The spirit of these expressions, together with the information, ideas, and sentiments of the singers, musicians, speakers, and writers, testifies to the power of African Americans to use both their oral and literary traditions (and the interaction between the two) as a way of remembering, a way of enduring, a way of mourning, a way of celebrating, a way of protesting and subverting, and, ultimately, a way of triumphing. The history of that journey is embedded in these sounds.

DISC ONE

Tracks 1–10 The Oral Tradition

The oral tradition was an integral part of many African cultures. Africans who arrived in America and other New World destinations via the Middle Passage brought their cultures and histories. Despite attempts by their enslavers to eradicate these links to their homes, African people in the New World tenaciously retained these touchstones of identity, mainly through an oral tradition. In this inhuman, alien environment, often forced to use the language of their oppressors, Africans “re-membered,” adapted, and absorbed expressive forms in their struggle to survive and created the foundation of the African American oral tradition. Three essential retentions, which provided building blocks for this tradition, were the call and response pattern; a sophisticated rhythmic sensibility; and improvisation. The call and response pattern not only outlines the relationship of the individual and the group in a performance context but serves as a metaphor for the essential nature of African American artistic expression; each performance is highly individual but is ultimately communal in nature. These oral forms are often marked by sophisticated rhythmic sensibilities, including the use of such elements as a dominant pulse beat, polyrhythms, and syncopation. These rhythmic underpinnings link the various forms of African American oral tradition to that ineffable life-affirming spirit at the root of African creative expression. Improvisation is integral to oral expressive forms. It provides the artists with an opportunity to exhibit their mastery of form, content, and techniques as well as to interact with an audience in a communal expression. The various forms of creative expression that evolved in the African American oral tradition are essentially concerned with maintaining an identity, surviving and resisting oppression and exploitation, and achieving freedom.

Tracks 11–18 Testimony Against Slavery

The African American oral tradition continued to evolve as slavery became entrenched in American society. Under this oppressive system, the spirituals and work songs emerged as testimony to the creativity, resiliency, and determination of Black Americans to obtain freedom. In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) W.E.B. Du Bois reflected on the significance of this unprecedented creative production:

Through all the Sorrow Songs there breathes a hope — a faith in the ultimate justice of things. The minor cadences of despair change often to triumph and calm confidence. Sometimes it is a faith in life, sometimes a faith in death, sometimes assurance of boundless justice in some fair world beyond. But whichever it is, the meaning is always clear that sometime, somewhere, men will judge men by their souls and not by their skins. Is such a hope justified? Do the Sorrow Songs sing true? (162)

While the oral tradition thrived, the African American literary tradition emerged during the eighteenth century. Despite laws, particularly in the South, which prohibited the acquisition of literacy, African Americans recognized the power of the written word in a Eurocentric culture. The ability to read and write became powerful anti-slave testimony. For example, on the title page of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, the author boldly declared, “Written by Himself,” clearly indicating that he was employing the literacy he had struggled to achieve and master to testify to his life as a Black man in slave-holding America. Poetry, appeals and petitions, and narratives of life under slavery were produced by free or escaped Blacks with the support of White abolitionists in the Northern states and England. Many of these fledgling efforts were modeled on European forms, because in order to get published African American writers had to conform to the literary expectations of the time. The texts that African Americans produced exhibited a number of repeated situations, themes, and rhetorical strategies. In arguing their case for freedom, African American writers pointed out the brutality of the slave system. They pointed out the violation of the basic sanctity of familial ties. They pointed out the hypocrisy of a Christian and democratic nation. And they pointed out themselves as representative figures whose texts testified to their intellectual achievement and the potential of their brethren in bonds. The repetition of anti-slavery testimony served to corroborate indictments against the slave system and also illustrates that Black writers were aware of and responding to each other’s work — and laying the foundation of a literary tradition.

Tracks 19–28 Reconstruction and Repression

With the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation and the Northern victory in the Civil War, the institution of slavery was successfully abolished. However, African Americans faced a long and difficult road to gain full participation in the freedom and opportunity promised by America’s foundational principles. Reconstruction, according to John Hope Franklin’s *From Slavery to Freedom*, “was essentially the problem of how to move the nation toward greater economic and political democracy” (223). The lives of newly freed African Americans were inextricably linked to this process. Although progress was made in education, economic development, and political representation during the first decade after the war, waning Northern and federal enthusiasm for reform, the institution of Jim Crow laws, and the rise of mob violence transformed the late nineteenth century into one of the most repressive eras in United States history. One of the positive effects of

Reconstruction was that it gave increased exposure to expressive forms from the Black oral tradition. As African Americans migrated to the North and Northern Whites and Blacks came to the South intent on educating and uplifting the freed men and women, an unprecedented cultural interaction took place. The power and beauty of these expressive forms forged during the previous two and one half centuries captivated the Northerners, and written collections and commentaries began to be published. Opportunities opened for Black artists to perform the sounds that evolved during their struggle for freedom, and the oral tradition continued to adapt and evolve, providing African Americans with creative expressions that could help them meet the new challenges they faced. The African American literary tradition blossomed during this time, and writers such as Paul Laurence Dunbar and Charles W. Chestnutt received widespread recognition. Many writers turned their attention to imaginative forms, such as fiction and poetry, to examine their collective past, explore their identity as Americans, and combat prejudice. Often, postwar Black writers looked to their folk culture and the oral tradition to inform their literary explorations of African American life and its heritage.

Tracks 29–34 Voices of Pride and Protest I

W.E.B. Du Bois opened his landmark text, *The Souls of Black Folk*, with the prediction that “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line”(5). Providing a foil to Booker T. Washington, Du Bois revealed a new Black national voice demanding voting rights, civic equality, and access to higher education. The pursuit of these demands led to the formation of the N.A.A.C.P. in 1909. The following year Du Bois founded and became editor for the organization’s magazine, *The Crisis*, which provided a forum for discussion of Black political and cultural issues and an outlet for the publication of Black literary productions. Writers like James Weldon Johnson drew on the oral tradition to provide the source for contemporary art. His anonymously published novel, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (1912), is the story of a ragtime pianist who struggles with his identity as a Black artist. Ragtime, blues, jazz, and gospel were musical forms that emerged from the oral tradition. African Americans were performing and composing these sounds, which would soon be captured on the emergent electronic recording technology. As mass communications and marketing grew, the sounds and pulse of African American culture increasingly informed the cultural productions of the whole nation.

DISC TWO

Tracks 1–8 Voices of Pride and Protest II

The Great Migration that followed World War I brought a wide variety of people of African descent together in that city within a city, Harlem. The “New Negro Renaissance” that took place there (and in other Black communities) during the 1920s was a celebration, exploration, and extension of Black heritage. In 1926, Langston Hughes published his essay “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” in *The Nation*. In this cultural manifesto, Hughes urged Black artists to establish their own aesthetic criteria and look to the common folk for the sources of their creative productions.

These common people are not afraid of spirituals, as for a long time their more intellectual brethren were, and jazz is their child. They furnish a wealth of colorful distinctive material for any artist because they still hold their own individuality in the face of American standardizations. And perhaps these common people will give to the world its truly great Negro artist, the one who is not afraid to be himself. (Hill 900)

Certainly the African American oral tradition produced some of the most innovative artists of the twentieth century during the Harlem Renaissance. Blues divas like Gertrude “Ma” Rainey and Bessie Smith, jazz orchestra leaders like Fletcher Henderson and Edward “Duke” Ellington, instrumental virtuosos like trumpeter Louis Armstrong and pianists James P. Johnson and Thomas “Fats” Waller, concert performers like Paul Robeson and Marian Anderson, and versatile entertainers like Lena Horne, Ethel Waters, and Cab Calloway emerged during this era and established the forms, styles, and standards for American music and popular entertainment. While intellectuals like W.E.B. Du Bois debated Alain Locke over the function of Black art — the former arguing it should be propaganda and the latter calling for art for art’s sake — African Americans were excelling in the creative production of music, poetry, fiction, dance, and visual arts. Many African

Americans saw these productions of their best and brightest as representative expressions, which would pave a way for the entire race to gain full access to the American Dream. When the Harlem Renaissance began to decline, partially due to the onslaught of the Depression in the 1930s, the cold realities of American life that hit Blacks particularly hard turned many African American authors, like Richard Wright, Margaret Walker, Ann Petry, and Gwendolyn Brooks, to incorporate protest and reformist themes into their works.

Tracks 9–12 The Sounds of Twentieth-Century America

Musical forms that evolved from the African American oral tradition are *the* sounds of twentieth-century America. James Weldon Johnson was aware of how music rooted in the Black folk tradition was capturing the spirit of American culture during the opening decades of the century. In the preface to *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1927) Johnson observed, "Ragtime has not only influenced American music, it has influenced American life. It has become the popular medium for our national expression musically. And who can say that it does not express the blare and jangle and the surge, too, of our national spirit?" (16). Music that is characteristically African American is recognized as the nation's most outstanding cultural production and worldwide is considered characteristically American. When looking at the evolution of music created by Black American artists over the past one hundred years, four broad but distinctive genres have come into prominence — blues, jazz, gospel, and rhythm and blues (R&B). Within these genres there is a wide range of stylistic variations that have developed through such factors as regional approaches, innovations of succeeding generations of musicians, commercial influences, technology, and social/historical forces. Variations have also resulted from interactions between the genres. What makes the cultural production of these forms such a monumental achievement is that their creators often labored under extremely oppressive social, political, and economic conditions *and* that these forms have reached such spectacular heights of artistic sophistication in a relatively short time. In *Shadow and Act* (1964) Ralph Ellison described the blues "impulse" as the ability to "at once express both the agony of life and the possibility of conquering it through sheer toughness of spirit" (94). This same spirit produced the tones of testimony that Douglass heard in the songs of enslaved African Americans a century earlier, and this creative impulse is the basis for these twentieth-century genres — blues, jazz, gospel, and R&B. Many African American writers have been influenced by these genres in ways that range from subject matter to models for compositional approaches. The four tracks in this section are intended, given the discs' time restraints, to broadly represent the sounds that captured our national spirit in the twentieth century.

Tracks 13–19 Voices of Civil Rights and Black Power

As the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum during the late 1950s and early 1960s, the African American oral tradition provided the soundtrack for the march to freedom. The freedom songs, like "We Shall Overcome," "Oh, Freedom," "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around," and "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," used the same musical building blocks as the spirituals and gospel songs with the addition of topical concerns and overt political demands. The music of the Civil Rights Movement tapped into the spirit of resistance and the determination to overcome that has been a cornerstone of the African American experience — that tone of testimony. Martin Luther King, Jr., testified to the integral role of these songs in *Why We Can't Wait* (1964):

An important part of the mass meetings was the freedom songs. In a sense the freedom songs are the soul of the movement. They are more than just incantations of clever phrases designed to invigorate a campaign; they are as old as the history of the Negro in America. They are adaptations of the songs the slave sang: the sorrow songs, the shouts for joy, the battle hymns, and the anthem of our movement. (61)

The oratory of the Civil Rights Movement was another extension of the Black folk tradition. Perhaps King is the most distinguished oratorical performer of the twentieth century. His landmark speeches, such as "I Have a Dream" and "I've Been to the Mountain Top," are solidly rooted in the Black sermonic tradition and ring true with an intellectual, moral, and spiritual depth that challenges Americans to live up to the promises of the American Dream. The tone and cadences of King's voice are as much a part of the American fabric as the Declaration of Independence or the Gettysburg Address. The influence of the Civil Rights Movement was felt beyond the freedom songs, as folk, soul, and jazz artists composed material inspired by and dedicated to the struggle. By the mid-1960s the emphasis on the integration-focused "Freedom Now" movement began shifting toward the nationalist "Black Power" movement. This spawned a wellspring of African American artistic creativity unrivaled since the Harlem Renaissance. The Black Arts Movement was characterized by commitment to African American independence and empowerment and a celebration of Black cultural heritage — including a connection to African roots and an affirmation of the unity of African people throughout the Diaspora. Black Arts writers attempted to construct a Black aesthetic, often looking to the oral tradition for a model. In "And Shine Swam On," the afterword to the landmark anthology *Black Fire* (1968), Larry Neal asserted:

But our music is something else. The best of it has always operated at the core of our lives, forcing itself upon us as in a ritual. It has always, somehow, represented the collective psyche. Black literature must attempt to achieve that same sense of collective ritual, but directed at the destruction of useless, dead ideas. Further, it can be a ritual that affirms our highest possibilities, but is yet honest with us. (655)

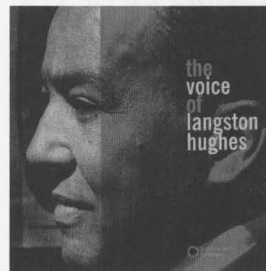
Tracks 20–25 Contemporary African American Voices

Although the Black Arts Movement lost momentum during the mid-1970s, it opened the doors to a tremendous outpouring of African American creative expression. The sounds of African American music continue to be the sounds that capture the pulse of contemporary American life. From the oral-based poetry of the Black Arts era emerged artists like The Last Poets and Gil Scott-Heron, who laid the foundation for the innovations of rap music and hip hop culture — which have provided an expressive outlet for the voices of young, Black America. The jazz tradition received a shot in the arm during the 1980s as a new wave of young musicians, led by the New Orleans trumpeter and composer Wynton Marsalis, synthesized, reconstructed, and extended the innovations that emerged over the half-century between Louis Armstrong and John Coltrane. Black writers have become central voices on the contemporary literary scene. During the last two decades, August Wilson has been the preeminent writer in contemporary American theater, and the novels of Toni Morrison received international critical recognition with the 1993 Nobel Prize for Literature. And all of these creative efforts are firmly rooted in the sounds, expressions, and techniques that African people carried across the Atlantic, clung to, and nurtured throughout their history on this continent. The aural tradition that has produced the expressions heard on these two compact discs — the sounds of Blackness, the tones of testimony heard by a young Frederick Douglass — is certainly alive and well in contemporary America and remains a testament to the creativity, resilience, and indomitability of African Americans.

DISC ONE

EVERY TONE A TESTIMONY

TRACKS 1–10 THE ORAL TRADITION



1. The Struggle (excerpt) ■ Langston Hughes

From *The Voice of Langston Hughes* SFW CD 47001

Almost forty years ago, Langston Hughes (disc 2, track 2) recognized the wealth of Black American history that had been recorded by Folkways. This excerpt was featured as the opening of *The Glory of Negro History* (FC 7752), which Hughes wrote, narrated, and punctuated with recorded performances from the Folkways collection. The selection recognizes ancient African culture and history as the source of African American culture and history, and the sounds of the waves represent the Middle Passage, which marks the beginning of this aural history.

2. Field Call ■ Annie Grace Horn Dodson

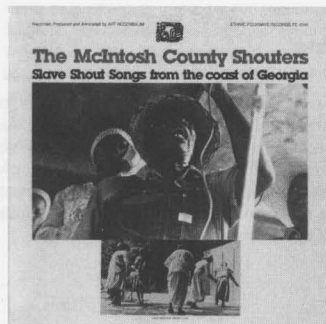
From *Negro Folk Music of Alabama, Volume 1: Secular Music* FE 4417

The “call” or “holler” was one of the earliest African American expressive forms. It served numerous purposes, ranging from individual emotional expressions to communication over distances. Sometimes non-verbal sounds contained specific information or made requests. Dodson’s call was recorded in Sumter County, Alabama, in 1950. A perfect example of a living oral tradition, Dodson learned the calls from her father, Josh Horn, who was born during slavery.

3. Complaint Call ■ Enoch Brown

From *Negro Folk Music of Alabama, Volume 1: Secular Music* FE 4417

As Harold Courlander's original Folkways liner notes explain: "Enoch used this call, or a variant of it, each time he came to the bridge at Livingston. Used in this way, the call takes on a magico-religious aspect, and becomes a means of warding off unseen dangers that lurk at critical places along the road. In Haiti, special shouts or calls are sometimes given when a person approaches a crossroads." The sound of Brown's singing also illustrates how early forms, like calls, can be heard as antecedents of such forms as the spirituals and the blues.



4. Intro and Kneebone Bend ■ Lawrence McKiver and Doretha Skipper

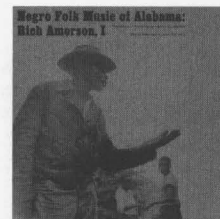
From *The McIntosh County Shouters: Slave Shout Songs from the coast of Georgia* FE 4344

The shout played an integral role in the spiritual and social lives of slaves. Usually held after formal religious services, the performance included a shuffling, countercircular movement; it was not considered dancing, because feet were not crossed. While there was a unified rhythm, participants responded to the call by chanting a chorus and with individual responses, including hand claps, foot stomps, body movements, and vocal exclamations that reflected their feelings. This selection, which is led by Doretha Skipper, was recorded in Eunola, Georgia, in 1983. The group's leader, Lawrence McKiver, delivers an introduction that illustrates the connection to Africa and the vitality of the African American oral tradition. As he states in the original liner notes, "We gon' put it down the old road. If anyone can bring it further back, I want to see him."

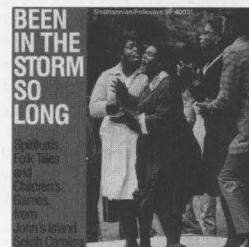
5. Brother Terrapin, Slow Train to Arkansas ■ Rich Amerson

From *Negro Folk Music of Alabama, Volume 3: Rich Amerson 1* FE 4471

African American animal trickster tales were transported from Africa through oral tradition with very little alteration. Using his wits, the trickster sidesteps direct confrontation that would most probably lead to disaster and often subverts by the deception of masking, the seduction of lulling his opponent into complacency, or the chaotic disruption



of the established order. Rich Amerson's "Brother Terrapin," recorded in 1956, is the story of a rabbit challenged to a footrace by a terrapin who has conspired with two brother terrapins to deceive the rabbit by locating themselves at strategic points along the proposed race course. Through communal effort, the weaker group is able to overcome the more powerful group. The terrapins understand the rabbit's preconceived notions about their abilities and his refusal to recognize individual distinctions within the group. At the conclusion of the tale, however, the narrator does not focus on the victory of the race or the winning of the bet; his emphasis is on the lesson. "Who was sharper," he asks, "the rabbit or the terrapins?" He hammers home his point at the end: "You see, it's all in the sense." The trickster triumphs through the sense he exhibits.



6. Jack and Mary and Three Dogs ■ Mrs. Janie Hunter

From *Been in the Storm So Long* SFW CD 40031

The tale exhibits the syncretism of the folk process as seemingly European influences (the tale bears a remarkable resemblance to *Hansel and Gretel*) and Native American influences (references to a bow and arrow and a tomahawk) meld with supernatural elements of African American conjure, ghost, and haunt tales. Mrs. Hunter interacts with her partner and shows that she is not reciting a static text, as she goes back and amends the tale. Her narrative strategy is extremely sophisticated, especially in her use of musical themes to represent different characters and lines of action in the story.

7. Buck Dance (excerpt) ■ Joe Tucker

From *Music from the South Volume 5: Song, Play, and Dance* FA 2654

The "buck" dance was an early term for the percussive form known as "tap" dance. African-based rhythmic sensibility and dance steps merged with British-European forms like jigs and clogs to create this African American form. In this selection, recorded in 1954 in Near Pond, Mississippi, Tucker, accompanied by Scott Dunbar on guitar, turns his feet and the loose boards of a front porch into a drum.

8. I'm Goin' Up North ■ Children of East York School

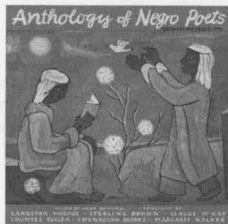
From *Negro Folk Music of Alabama, Volume 1: Secular Music* FE 4417

This selection is a ring game, a popular form of entertainment for children. While ring games can be found in both African and European cultures, African retentions clearly inform this performance, which was recorded in Alabama in 1950. It is the performance of a ring game that provides the key to the character Milkman Dead's quest and the title to Toni Morrison's 1977 novel *Song of Solomon*.

9. Pharaoh's Host Got Lost ■ Lawrence McKiver

From *The McIntosh County Shouters: Slave Shout Songs from the coast of Georgia* FE 4344

In contrast to "Kneebone Bend" (disc 1, track 4), this shout, recorded in Eulonia, South Carolina, in 1981, exhibits the Judeo-Christian influence of biblical imagery on the lyrics. The most pervasive imagery in the oral tradition of African American sacred music is the identification of oppressed Blacks with the biblical Chosen People, their slave-owning oppressors with Pharaoh, and the Promised Land with the North. For enslaved Africans in America the Chosen People imagery provided them with an assurance that, like their biblical predecessors, they would escape bondage in this world. This pattern of religious imagery allowed slaves to organize and resist oppression, because owners heard the lyrics as expressions of devout contentment and remained oblivious to the double meanings. The Chosen People imagery remained appealing to African Americans in the twentieth century, as evidenced by such texts as Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Moses Man of the Mountain*, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I've Been to the Mountain Top" speech, and in such popular recordings as Isaac Hayes's album *Black Moses* and the Neville Brothers' song "Let My People Go."



10. Bars Fight ■ Lucy Terry, read by Arna Bontemps

From *Anthology of Negro Poets in USA* FL 9792

This selection originated in the oral tradition; however, it was eventually written down and is considered the first extant composition by a Black poet in America. Lucy Terry was sold into slavery from Africa and eventually married a free Black man, Abijah Prince, who purchased her freedom. They settled in Vermont, and Terry composed this poem to commemorate a battle between New England settlers and Native Americans. It was passed down orally by local residents from 1746 until it was finally published in 1855.

TRACKS 11-18 TESTIMONY AGAINST SLAVERY



11. Earl of Dartmouth (excerpt) ■ Phillis Wheatley, read by Dorothy F. Washington

From *The Negro Woman* FH 5523

This selection is an edited version of a 1772 poem, which Wheatley wrote in praise of a British colonial official. Kidnaped as a child in Africa, Wheatley was educated by her master in Boston, and she was the first published African American female writer. Her religious verses and neoclassical style fulfilled the expectations of the era's White readership. Yet, as Alice Walker asserts in *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (1974), Wheatley's conception of herself as a writer is the greatest testimony to the Black American spirit of survival and resistance. "It is not so much what you sang, as that you kept alive in so many of our ancestors, the notion of song" (237).

12. I Wonder Where My Brother Gone ■ Annie Grace Horn Dodson

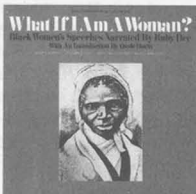
From *Negro Folk Music of Alabama, Volume 2: Religious Music* FE 4418

Recorded in Livingston, Alabama, in 1950, this track illustrates how African American musical forms may have evolved from the non-verbal meaning of the "field call" (track 1), also by Annie Grace Horn Dodson, to lyrical expressions that paved the way for the spirituals. The sentiments of this selection also echo the concern and despair that enslaved people felt over the separation of family members that is expressed in the Wheatley poem. While the violation of the family was frequently brought about through the selling of slaves, relatives were also separated by escapes to the "Promised Land." The "wilderness" to which the singer refers was often a refuge for runaways, and there is a distinct possibility that the "under ground," which provides a place to "lie down," may be a reference to the Underground Railroad's route to the North. Such interpretation of these lyrics illustrates the cloaked meanings that signified a call for both spiritual and immediate relief — escape to freedom — during slavery times.

13. Narrative (excerpt) ■ Harriet Tubman, read by Dorothy F. Washington

From *The Negro Woman* FH 5523

Perhaps the most widely known Underground Railroad conductor was Harriet Tubman. She used spirituals, including her own compositions, to organize and direct escapes. This excerpt is from her narrative, *Harriet, the Moses of her People*, written by Sarah Bradford in 1886.



14. Speech at Akron Convention ■ Sojourner Truth, read by Ruby Dee

From *What If I Am A Woman?*, Vol. 1 FH 5537

Sojourner Truth's dictated autobiography was published in 1850, and her oratory was a mainstay of the abolitionist lecture circuit. This selection illustrates that Truth was also an advocate of equal rights for women. The "Ain't I a Woman?" speech was delivered in Akron, Ohio, in May 1851.



15. Singing Slaves ■ Frederick Douglass, read by Ossie Davis

From *The Autobiography of Frederick Douglass, Volume 1* FH 5522

This excerpt from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845) illustrates how creative expressions from the African American oral tradition were powerful, communal survival mechanisms which provided individuals with the impetus to resist oppression and obtain freedom.

16. Steal Away to Jesus ■ Kinsey West

From *Black American Religious Music from Southeast Georgia* FS 34010

Kinsey West was recorded in 1971 during a choir rehearsal at Smith Grove Baptist Church in Gardi, Georgia. It has been suggested that "Steal Away to Jesus" was composed by the slave revolt leader Nat Turner during the 1820s. Used as a call to organize for revolutionary activity, the song's mournful melody and pious lyrics illustrate how African Americans used their expressive forms to cloak subversive messages with religious content that was acceptable to White listeners.

17. What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July? (excerpt) ■ Frederick Douglass, read by Ossie Davis

From *The Meaning of July 4 for the Negro* FH 5527

Delivered on July 5, 1852, at Corinthian Hall in Rochester, New York, Douglass's oration is, in general, a scathing indictment of the hypocrisy of American democracy, and, in particular, a condemnation of the "Free States," which "nationalized" slavery by allowing the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. This excerpt opens with a quote from Psalm 137, which links African Americans to the enslaved Israelites.

18. Why Slavery Is Still Rampant (excerpt) ■ Sarah Parker Remond, read by Ruby Dee

From *What If I Am A Woman?* Vol. 1 FH 5537

Born to a free Black family in Massachusetts, Sarah Parker Remond was dedicated to abolitionism and gained widespread recognition as an orator, especially through her tours of England, Scotland, and Ireland. She made British audiences aware that involvement with the cotton trade implicated them in the crime of slavery. This speech originally was delivered in 1859 at the Athenaeum in Manchester, England.

TRACKS 19–28 RECONSTRUCTION AND REPRESSION

19. Free At Last ■ Dock Reed and Vera Hall Ward

From *Negro Folk Music of Alabama, Volume 2: Religious Music* FE 4418

This selection illustrates the double entendre of the spirituals' lyrics. It is easy to imagine how this song could mask a demand for freedom in this country with a celebration of a heavenly freedom. In fact, in *Black Song: The Forge and the Flame*, John Lovell, Jr., asserts that Abraham Lincoln would bow his head because he was so moved when he heard this song performed by a group led by the former White House employee Aunt Mary Dines (201). Certainly "Free At Last" would take on a new resonance following Emancipation and the Civil War.

20. When Malindy Sings ■ Paul Laurence Dunbar, read by Margaret Walker

From *Margaret Walker Reads Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar, James Weldon Johnson, and Langston Hughes* FL 9796

Paul Laurence Dunbar is best known for his poetry written in Black dialect; however, he was frustrated because he wanted equal recognition for his non-dialect works. His attempts to capture the Black spoken word in written English illustrate the impact of the oral tradition on the emerging literary tradition. While Dunbar has been criticized because

his dialect poems sometimes present a sentimental perspective on antebellum Southern plantation life, "When Malindy Sings" is almost nationalistic, as the poem's persona asserts the superiority of the Black oral tradition over "de lines an' dots" of composed, European-based forms.



21. There's a Great Camp Meeting ■ Fisk Jubilee Singers

From *The Fisk Jubilee Singers* Directed by John W. Work SA 2372

The Fisk Jubilee Singers were the foremost proponents of the choral style of spiritual performance that emerged after the Civil War. In 1871, they were sent out to raise money for Fisk College in Tennessee. They traveled worldwide, presenting the music as a serious artistic endeavor and avoiding the pandering of minstrel performers. While the melodies and lyrics of the spirituals were preserved, these "concertized" versions often incorporated elements of European choral arrangements. Folklorist and composer John W. Work III arranged and directed this selection, which was recorded in 1955 and led by Mary Ferguson.



22. Atlanta Exposition Address (excerpt) ■ Booker T. Washington

From *Booker T's Child Portia* FH 5521

Booker T. Washington was the most influential African American leader of the post-Reconstruction era. He delivered the "Atlanta Exposition Address" at The Cotton States and International Exposition of September 18, 1895. This recording of Washington reciting an excerpt from the speech seems to be a re-creation, because the text he delivers is an extensively edited version of the one included in *Up From Slavery* (1901). Probably recorded on wax cylinder, this excerpt features the classic refrain, "Cast down your buckets where you are," through which Washington urged Blacks and Whites to work together in the South, firmly believing that African Americans could gradually gain full access to the American Dream through hard work.



23. John Henry ■ Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry

From *Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry Sing* SFW CD 40011

During the second half of the nineteenth century the railroad took on an increasing centrality in the imagery of Black folk expressions. It often represented freedom of movement, but it also stood for an opportunity for advancement through the hard work advocated by Booker T. Washington. "John Henry" is a song that celebrates the hard work of Black men and women. The oral tradition often produced tales or songs concerned with mythical heroic figures, and this ballad celebrates the most powerful, hardest-working railroad worker as he challenges a steam engine. The performance, recorded in 1958, is by the legendary blues duo of harmonica player Sonny Terry and guitarist Brownie McGhee. They engage in some musical onomatopoeia, conjuring the pulse of the steel drivin' man's hammer and the railroad itself.

24. Banjo Player ■ Fenton Johnson, read by Arna Bontemps

From *Anthology of Negro Poets in USA* FL 9792

Fenton Johnson began his writing career as a follower of Dunbar, often depicting the everyday lives of Black folks. The folk tradition not only provided him with forms, such as spirituals and street vendors' cries, but with subjects for his poems. This selection focuses on an itinerant musician, who, with a touch of irony, reveals the impact that the sounds of African American music can have on a listener.



25. Boatman Dance ■ Elizabeth Cotten

From *Shake Sugaree Volume 2* FTS 31003

Perhaps Fenton Johnson heard a banjo player entertain his audience with a traditional banjo tune like "Boatman Dance." The banjo is a direct retention from African culture; it seems likely that Africans carried the "banjar" through the Middle Passage and quickly began constructing the instruments in the New World. They were used extensively by Black Americans for dances and to accompany singing throughout slavery times and up until the early decades of the twentieth century. Elizabeth Cotten was a musician and composer from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, who kept alive a number of unique banjo- and guitar-playing styles. She recorded this selection in 1966.

26. Shine ■ Percy Randolph

From *The Music of New Orleans Volume 1* FA 2461

This selection is illustrative of how the African American oral tradition adapted to urban environments. The cries of street vendors relied on the same creativity and cultural building blocks that rural field workers used. Percy Randolph was a vegetable peddler, itinerant harmonica player, and shoe shine man on the streets of New Orleans. Recorded in 1968, Randolph uses his voice and shoe shine rag to construct a dazzling display of call and response, improvisation, and polyrhythms that is part performance and part self-advertisement.



27. Chopping in the New Ground ■ Inmates of Ramsey or Retrieve State Farms, Texas

From *Negro Prison Camp Work Songs* FE 4475

The work songs that had sustained African Americans through the forced labor of slavery found a new application as prison life was experienced by an inordinate proportion of America's Black population. Once again working under oppressive conditions, African Americans timed work routines, enforced group solidarity, expressed emotions of loneliness and despair, and constructed social commentary through oral expressive forms. This selection was recorded on a prison work farm in Texas in 1951.

28. Lynching, Our National Crime (excerpt) ■ Ida B. Wells-Barnett, read by Ruby Dee

From *What If I Am A Woman? Vol. 2* FH 5538

At odds with the accommodation urged by Booker T. Washington (disc 1, track 22), Ida B. Wells-Barnett overtly challenged mob rule and lynching through journalism in her Memphis-based newspaper and through a number of books. She made it clear that the alleged rape of White women was a smoke screen used to justify the terrorization aimed at controlling Black men. This selection is from an address Wells-Barnett made to the 1909 National Negro Conference.

TRACKS 29–34 VOICES OF PRIDE AND PROTEST I

29. A Recorded Autobiography (excerpt) ■ W.E.B. Du Bois

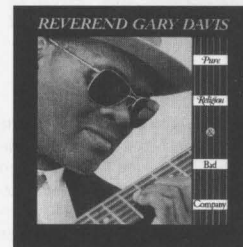
From *A Recorded Autobiography* FD 5511

W.E.B. Du Bois was one of the most influential African American leaders and intellectuals of the twentieth century. Interviewed by Folkways founder Moses Asch, Du Bois discusses his challenge to Booker T. Washington's accommodationist approach to African American advancement (disc 1, track 22) and his role in the founding of the N.A.A.C.P. Du Bois dedicated his life to *action* aimed at securing Black Americans the rights and opportunities promised in the country's foundational principles.

30. Listen Lord, A Prayer ■ James Weldon Johnson, read by Margaret Walker

From *Margaret Walker Reads Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar and James Weldon Johnson and Langston Hughes* FL 9796

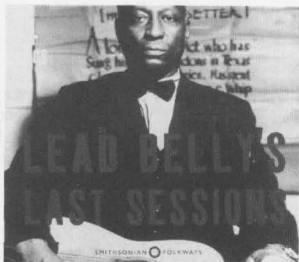
James Weldon Johnson played a seminal role in signaling that Black artists should look to the folk tradition to locate the source for contemporary creative expressions. This selection is the opening prayer from his *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (1927), in which he attempts to capture the power of the Black sermonic tradition in verse. His equation of the voice of the Black preacher with a musical instrument signals his understanding of the aural subtext in Black folk expressions.



31. My Heart Is Fixed ■ Reverend Gary Davis

From *Pure Religion and Bad Company* SFW CD 40035

The early decades of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of a new form of Black sacred music — gospel. Certainly gospel was an extension of the musical elements found in spirituals, but these songs did not come from some anonymous “folk” source. Gospel was composed and also began to incorporate instrumental accompaniment and other elements from secular forms like blues, ragtime, and jazz. This selection, recorded in 1957, borrows the melody of a spiritual, “Twelve Gates to the City” or “O, What A Beautiful City.” Singer, songwriter, and guitarist Reverend Gary Davis moved between blues and gospel material, like his contemporaries Blind Boy Fuller (Fulton Allen) and Charlie Patton, Blind Willie McTell and Blind Lemon Jefferson, and was a primary shaper of the Carolina Piedmont approach to these forms.



32. The Titanic ■ Lead Belly

From *Lead Belly's Last Sessions* SFW CD 40068/71

Huddie Ledbetter a.k.a. Lead Belly began making music as a teenager for rural Louisiana social gatherings. Hard work and prison added to his life experience, but performing a wide range of songs — blues, ballads, spirituals, work songs, and children's games—was his passion. Recorded in 1948, "The Titanic" crosses over a number of Black folk song genres. Illustrating how topical events of the day could be absorbed into the folk tradition, it is a blues-influenced ballad that incorporates elements of the disaster song, the folk hero, and the toast tradition. Disasters like the 1912 sinking of the *Titanic* were a source of fascination for Black Americans. They saw God's wrath descend on a luxury liner with its racist passenger policy. The refusal to carry the heroic Jack Johnson is not only vindicated, but he is able to boastfully swim the Atlantic and proclaim superiority with his ironic "fare thee well."

33. Heritage ■ Countee Cullen

From *Anthology of Negro Poets* FL 9791

This selection features Countee Cullen reading the first three stanzas from his poem, which explores his African heritage, an important theme for many Harlem Renaissance artists. "Heritage" was published in his first collection *Color* (1925). During the early years of the Harlem Renaissance, Cullen was perhaps considered the foremost proponent of the new Black literary movement.



34. Jungle Drums ■ James P. Johnson

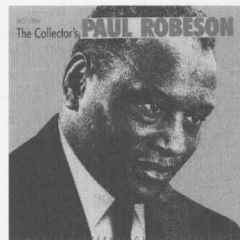
From *The Original James P. Johnson, 1942-1945* SFW CD 40812

Pianist and composer James P. Johnson provided a pivotal link between ragtime and jazz. He synthesized the ragtime, blues, popular song, and classical music he heard as a young musician in New York and became the "father of stride piano." During most of the 1930s, Johnson was absent from the jazz scene, as he spent much of his time composing extended, jazz-influenced orchestral pieces. His career as a performer was revived in the early 1940s, partially due to Moses Asch bringing Johnson into the studio to record for Folkways. "Jungle Drums" is an abbreviated solo piano version of an orchestral work, which employs percussive effects to evoke the sounds of African rhythms.

DISC TWO

EVERY TONE A TESTIMONY

TRACKS 1-8 VOICES OF PRIDE AND PROTEST II



1. No More Auction Block ■ Paul Robeson

From *The Collector's Paul Robeson* Monitor MCD-61580

In 1925, Robeson, accompanied by pianist Lawrence Brown, presented a historic program at the Greenwich Village Theater — the first solo vocal concert of music derived entirely from African American culture. Despite criticism, sometimes from the Black community, Robeson applied his distinctive bass/baritone exclusively to spirituals and secular songs from the Black folk tradition. Eventually, he added world folk music, European concert material, and popular songs. This selection was recorded during the mid-1950s with pianist Alan Booth. This spiritual's overt sentiments of protest suggest that the song emerged following Emancipation, and it may have partially been the basis for the 1960s freedom song "We Shall Overcome." The song has had particular appeal to Black writers; it provided the title to James Baldwin's essay "Many Thousand Gone" (1951) and is featured in a pivotal scene in Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man* (1952).

2. The Negro Speaks of Rivers ■ Langston Hughes

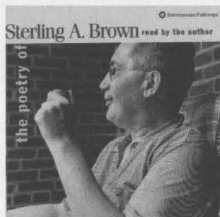
From *The Voice of Langston Hughes* SFW CD 47001

Langston Hughes, more than any other Black writer, is associated with the linking of blues and jazz with literature. He wrote this poem at the age of eighteen as he was crossing the Mississippi River on a train. As he explained in the original liner notes, "Many of my poems have been about the history of the Negro people. In this poem, 'The Negro Speaks of Rivers,' I try to link, in terms of the rivers we have known, Africa — the land of our ancestors — and America, our land today."

3. If We Must Die ■ Claude McKay

From *Anthology of Negro Poets* FL 9791

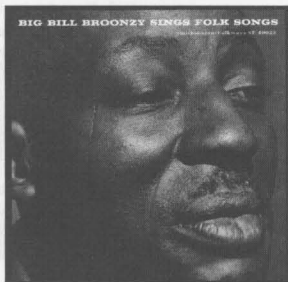
A Jamaican who immigrated to Harlem during the Renaissance era, Claude McKay wrote this sonnet in 1919 in response to the riots and violent suppression of African Americans that took place after World War I. In the recorded introduction to McKay's reading of the poem he explains, "Even though many of my themes were racial, I write my poems to make a universal appeal."



4. Ma Rainey ■ Sterling Brown

From *The Poetry of Sterling A. Brown* SFW CD 47002

Sterling Brown imbued his poetry with sounds, feeling, and techniques of the blues and other African American oral forms. He lived most of his life in Washington, D.C., and was a professor at Howard University from 1929 to 1969. Published in his collection *Southern Road* (1932), "Ma Rainey" is a paean to the "classic blues singer," who functions as a representative figure for the Black community. Brown creates a double-voiced narrative through the testimony of an audience member rendered in dialect and the italicized interpolation of blues lyrics concerned with a community in crisis.



5. Backwater Blues ■ Big Bill Broonzy

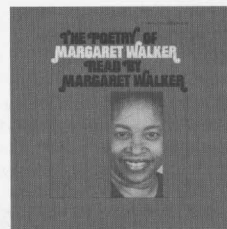
From *Sings Folk Songs* SFW CD 40023

This selection features a country blues version of the song that Sterling Brown interpolated into "Ma Rainey" (disc 2, track 4). Born in the Mississippi Delta, William "Big Bill" Broonzy headed north during the 1920s and became a seminal figure in the first wave of Chicago blues. In the 1930s he performed the blues with small swing ensembles. During the 1950s, when Broonzy was embraced by the folk revival and began recording for Folkways, he returned to acoustic country blues and other traditional material.

6. Married Man Blues ■ Billie and Dee Dee Pierce

From *Music of New Orleans Volume 3* FA 2463

The African retentions of call and response, improvisation, and rhythmic sophistication were employed by Black musicians in the parading brass bands of New Orleans. These musical pioneers also applied their approach to traditional forms such as the spiritual, hymns, ragtime, and blues. The jazz tradition in New Orleans has produced a long line of innovative musicians — from Buddy Bolden to Louis Armstrong to the Marsalis family. Pianist and vocalist Billie Pierce and husband trumpeter Dee Dee Pierce carried on that tradition in local dance halls beginning in the late 1920s until they gained wider recognition through their participation in the Preservation Hall Jazz Band. Billie served as an accompanist to the classic blues singer Bessie Smith prior to moving to New Orleans, and on this recording made in 1954 she melds her familiarity with that style with the city's unique feel and approach to jazz.



7. For My People ■ Margaret Walker

From *The Poetry of Margaret Walker* FL 9791

A critical link between the Harlem Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s, Margaret Walker Alexander exhibited a mastery of literary forms that ranges from sonnets to folk ballads, from long line, free verse sermons to the historical novel. The cornerstone of her career, "For My People" (1937) is both a celebratory catalogue of African American life and history and a militant call for change and self-empowerment. Using the rhythmic pauses and repetition of a Black preacher, the first nine stanzas of "For My People" are dependent clauses that complete a single sentence with the five opening words of the tenth stanza, "Let a new earth rise."

8. The Children of the Poor, Sonnet 2 ■ Gwendolyn Brooks

From *Anthology of Negro Poets* FL 9791

Gwendolyn Brooks's work exhibited a wide range of forms and underwent a dramatic ideological evolution. She used her remarkable technical skills and insight into the African American experience to teach, to entertain, and to illuminate. This selection is the second sonnet from a six-sonnet sequence, "The Children of the Poor" (1949). It is characterized by communal concern, a rejection of inequality, and an implicit search for means to right these wrongs. Although Brooks had established her literary reputation throughout the 1940s and 1950s, during the 1960s she adopted the new Black aesthetic, both learning from and serving as mentor to the emerging voices of the Black Arts Movement.

TRACKS 9–12 THE SOUNDS OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICA

9. Body and Soul ■ George “Big Nick” Nicholas

From *Big Nick* India Navigation IN 10066

Jazz musicians have often applied their skills to popular standards, reconstructing the composition through idiomatic approaches based in the African American oral tradition. In 1939, the tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins recorded two improvised choruses of this tune and set a standard for jazz ballads. His improvisation became an inspiration and model for younger generations of tenor saxophonists, including George “Big Nick” Nicholas. During a 1983 tribute to Hawkins, Nicholas described the impact of the famous solo: “I learned it and I played it and he opened up a new world for me.” A musician’s musician, Nicholas, in turn, became a mentor for a young John Coltrane. This generational exchange of ideas epitomizes the lineages which have evolved for each instrument in the jazz tradition. This selection was recorded in 1985 with John Miller on piano, Dave Jackson on bass, and Billy Hart on drums.

10. How He Delivered Me ■ Juanita Johnson & The Gospel Tones

From *Climbing High Mountains* FTS 31037

Although they are direct descendants of the spirituals, gospel songs are usually accompanied by musical instruments, and often feature the beats and riffs of blues, jazz, and rhythm and blues. Gospel music, in turn, has had an impact on the evolution of these secular forms. The interaction between the sacred and the secular in African American music is embodied in the transformation of Ma Rainey’s blues pianist Georgia Tom to Thomas A. Dorsey, “the father of gospel music.” This selection, recorded by a Michigan-based group featuring Juanita Johnson, Alfred Charleston, James Nails, Ollie Jones, and Thomas Coles, combines a female lead singer in the tradition of Mahalia Jackson, Dorothy Love Coates, and Shirley Caesar with the guitar-based grooves and male vocal harmonies of the quartet style characteristic of such groups as the Dixie Hummingbirds, the Soul Stirrers, and the Mighty, Mighty Clouds of Joy.

11. Long Distance Call ■ Muddy Waters

From *Festival of American Folklife* SI 100

After World War II, the blues that had been carried from the Delta north to urban centers went through a metamorphosis. The South Side of Chicago was a center of blues activity, and guitarist and singer McKinley Morganfield a.k.a. “Muddy Waters” was the king bee. Fronting what was probably the first electric band, Waters created the prototype for the rock ‘n’ roll band that would dominate popular music during the second half of the century. In the

introduction he states, “I am the blues man. I’m Muddy Waters.” He’s testifying to himself as a man and an artist. He has literally and figuratively “made a name for himself.” Even though he was born into a Mississippi sharecropper’s life, he refused to accept limitations. Recorded at the Smithsonian’s Festival of American Folklife in 1968, this performance features Pee Wee Madison and Luther Johnson on guitars, Paul Oscher on harmonica, S.P. Leary on drums, and Otis Spann on piano.

12. Cry to Me ■ Solomon Burke

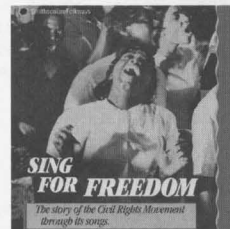
From *Soul Alive!* Rounder CD 11521

The term rhythm and blues (R&B) came about because the sales charts needed a term to substitute for the “race record” label that had been used for Black music up until the 1950s. By the 1960s, the term that was in vogue was “soul music.” With similar instrumentation to urban blues, the vocal techniques of gospel applied to secular lyrics, and catchy riffs and abbreviated solos from jazz, the new sound revolutionized American popular music. The genre blossomed throughout the country, and distinctive regional styles and sounds emerged in different cities. During the early 1960s, Solomon Burke crossed over into the secular world of R&B from a ministry that he had led as a child preacher. This selection was recorded live in Washington, D.C., in 1981. Burke’s backup band, The Realtones, includes Gabriel Rotello on keyboards, Marc Ribot on guitar, Dave Conrad on bass, Bobby Kent on drums, Arno Hecht on tenor saxophone, Paul Littoral on trumpet, and Crispin Cioe on baritone saxophone.

TRACKS 13–19 VOICES OF CIVIL RIGHTS AND BLACK POWER

13. Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around ■ SNCC Freedom Singers

From *Sing For Freedom* SFW CD 40032



This selection clearly illustrates the freedom songs’ “re-membering” of call and response, improvisation, and rhythmic sophistication aimed at encapsulating a message and unifying a movement. “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around” was a traditional song first adapted by the workers of the Albany Movement in Georgia. The SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) Freedom Singers, including Cordell Reagon, Bernice Johnson Reagon, Rutha Harris, and Charles Neblett, recognized that freedom songs provided an outlet of protest for those who might normally have been intimidated by racist authority or mobs, and allowed those outside the struggle to become directly engaged. The performance was recorded in 1962 in Albany by Guy Carawan and Alan Lomax.

14. Birmingham 1963 – Keep Moving ■ Martin Luther King, Jr.

From *Sing For Freedom* SFW CD 40032

This selection was recorded by Guy Carawan for Folkways at St. Luke's Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, in May of 1963. Carawan and his wife Candie had been arrested two days before because Sheriff Bull Connor was trying to prevent Whites from meeting with Blacks. They were released in time to attend this mass meeting. As King exhorts the packed church to "keep moving," his awareness of the movement's monumental historical impact is apparent.

15. Black Panther Party Platform ■ Bobby Seale

From *Huey!/Listen, Whitey!* FD 5402

The Black Panther Party was co-founded in 1965 by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. Harassed by law enforcement agencies and presented in a distorted light by the mass media, the Black Panthers had a ten-point foundational platform which illustrated that their goals and beliefs were focused on community empowerment and self-defense. This selection features Seale reciting the ten-point platform at a rally protesting the incarceration of Newton.

16. Interview (excerpt) ■ Angela Davis

From *Angela Davis Like It Is* FL 5401

Active in SNCC, the Black Panther Party, and the Communist Party, Angela Davis received international notoriety in 1970 when she was placed on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list because she had purchased weapons used in a courthouse shootout in which four people were killed. Davis went underground, was arrested in New York, and was held for extradition in the Women's House of Detention, where this selection was recorded. She was eventually acquitted of all charges. The interview was conducted by journalist Gil Noble and was published in the January 1, 1971, issue of *Muhammad Speaks*.

17. Together to the Tune of Coltrane's "Equinox" (excerpt) ■ Sarah Webster Fabio

From *Together to the Tune of Coltrane's "Equinox"* FL 9715

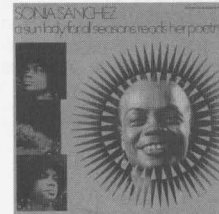
For many of the poets of the Black Arts Movement, the jazz saxophonist and composer John Coltrane's unflagging pursuit of freedom in musical expression became emblematic of the Black struggle for freedom in America. Poet, dramatist, and scholar Sarah Webster Fabio was one of the seminal figures in defining the new Black aesthetic. This

selection illustrates the communal concerns and performance nature of Black Arts poetry as the text is recited to the Coltrane composition "Equinox." The band includes Wayne Wallace on guitar, Denianke (Leon Williams) on flute, Ronald Fabio on bass, Cyril Leslie Fabio on congos, and Lawrence E. Vann on the drums.

18. Nikki-Rosa ■ Nikki Giovanni

From *Legacies* FL 9798

This selection features one of the most widely known poems from the Black Arts era. Steeped in the Black aesthetic, Nikki Giovanni draws upon details from her own life to both celebrate the communal strength of the Black family and reject White standards of judgment.



19. liberation/poem ■ Sonia Sanchez

From *A Sun Woman For All Seasons* FL 9793

Like many of her contemporaries, Sonia Sanchez often uses techniques such as nonstandard punctuation, capitalization, and spelling to break down the language of the dominant culture and restructure it to capture the sound and flow of the Black voice. Her readings are firmly located in the oral tradition as she incorporates singing, onomatopoeic sounds, and dialect into the performance of a text.

TRACKS 20–25 CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN AMERICAN VOICES

20. Dope ■ Amiri Baraka

From *Poets Read Their Contemporary Poetry Before Columbus Foundation* FL 9702

Amiri Baraka was one of the founding fathers of the Black Arts Movement, but during the mid-1970s he renounced nationalism and embraced a Third World Marxism. Like a jazz saxophonist, Baraka improvises the phrasing and timing of his text to deliver a whirlwind, postmodern, down-home sermon that parodies Black preaching while delivering a Marxist take on the role of religion, the media, and the hypocrisy of American democracy.

21. The Village of Brooklyn, Illinois 62059 (excerpt) ■ **Hamiet Bluiett**

From *Birthright* India Navigation IN 1030 CD

This selection illustrates the avant-garde, "free jazz" style that emerged from the experimentation of musicians like Coltrane and Ornette Coleman. Baritone saxophonist Hamiet Bluiett was one of the founding members of the World Saxophone Quartet. This solo piece, recorded in 1977, is dedicated to his hometown of Lovejoy, Illinois, which was called Brpoklyn when it was an Underground Railroad stop during the nineteenth century. While Bluiett engages in free form improvisation, he also keeps a groove percolating by returning to R&B-influenced, honking riffs.



22. For the Poets ■ **Jayne Cortez**

From *Poets Read Their Contemporary Poetry Before Columbus Foundation* FL 9702

Exhibiting the influence of free jazz improvisation as she plays with sounds and images, Jayne Cortez illustrates how Black rage with oppression and exploitation can be both channeled with creativity and tempered with humor. An incantory postmodern collage, this piece is dedicated to two slain writers, Nigerian poet Christopher Okigbo and Black Arts poet and prose writer Henry Dumas.

23. Shotgun Joe ■ **Golden Eagles**

From *Lightning and Thunder* Rounder CD 2073

This selection captures the vitality of the African American oral tradition. The New Orleans Black Mardi Gras tradition of neighborhood "tribes" masking as Indians and challenging each other through the ritualized encounters centered on improvised, polyrhythmic, call and response chants reaches back to the late nineteenth century; the local musical roots of this tradition go all the way back to the Sunday afternoon performances held by enslaved Africans in Congo Square beginning in 1817. The grooves hammered out by the Mardi Gras Indians contributed to the city's distinctive jazz and R&B sounds. This selection, led by Big Chief Joseph "Monk" Boudreaux, shows how the Indians are in tune with contemporary Black life as they recount an all-too-familiar tale of urban violence in the "hood."

24. St. Louis Woman (excerpt) ■ **Ishmael Reed**

From *Poets Read Their Contemporary Poetry Before Columbus Foundation* FL 9702

Ishmael Reed is the premier African American postmodern writer. In 1976, Reed founded the Before Columbus Foundation, which is dedicated to providing exposure for multicultural literature. An exponent of the absorbent "Hoo Doo Aesthetic," Reed resists the imposition of formal or topical boundaries. A disciple of the innovative Black literary pioneer William Wells Brown and a scathing satirist who will turn his ironic humor on *any* subject in the tradition of Mark Twain, Reed delivers a poetic coda to an extended prose rumination on the blues figure of the St. Louis Woman.

25. People Everyday ■ **Arrested Development**

From *3 Years, 5 Months and 2 Days in the Life of . . .* Chrysalis CDP-21929

Providing an alternative to the "gangsta" rap of the early 1990s, Arrested Development reinforced the links between the electronic beats and verbal play of hip hop and the blues instrumentation and gospel/R&B vocals of the African American folk tradition. Addressing the culture of violence and sexism that fostered so much Black-on-Black crime, this track draws upon Sly & the Family Stone's 1968 soul hit, "Everyday People," Jamaican reggae, and the Black nationalist/Afrocentric rap of Public Enemy. Hip hop artists like Arrested Development are electronic griots who call upon African American youth to exhibit social and political awareness and continue to seek empowerment as the struggle for freedom continues at the close of the twentieth century.

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Discography Smithsonian Folkways Recordings features a wide range of recordings of African and African American music and spoken word performances. Individual track listings on this compact disc indicate the original recording from which they were excerpted.

Robert H. Cataliotti is an associate professor of English at Coppin State College in Baltimore, where he teaches American and African American literature. He is a music critic/historian who was the recipient of 1983 ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award and has been published in *Downbeat*, *USA Today*, *The Rocky Mountain News*, New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, New York *Newsday*, *Wavelength*, and *Sing Out!*. He is the author of *The Music in African American Fiction* (Garland, 1995) and the producer and annotator of the compact disc which accompanies *Call & Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition* (Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

Jerry Butler chairs the Art Department at Madison Technical College in Madison, Wisconsin. The oldest of ten siblings, he grew up on a farm near Magnolia, Mississippi, where he began drawing and painting as a young boy. Encouraged by his grandmother, he continued to create works of art throughout high school and as an adult. He graduated from Jackson State College and moved to Wisconsin, where he worked as an art educator in Madison schools. Jerry describes his artwork as "an expression of my personal journey in life.... I work figuratively because it gives me a way to express things common to us all — people's love of life and their ability to have satisfaction from the most common of experiences." He designed and illustrated *Sweet Words So Brave* (1996) and *Freedom Train North* (1998). He wrote, designed, and illustrated *A Drawing in the Sand* (1998) and is working on two new books *The Dew Drop Inn: The Blues and Dance That Dance*, both due out in 2001. For further information go to: www.jbutlerart.com

Credits

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Call and Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition, a comprehensive, chronological anthology of African and African American literature is the fruition of the editors' combined conviction that there is a distinctly black literary and cultural aesthetic, one that originated in the oral traditions of Africa and was kept alive during the American slavery experience. This text represents the centuries-long emergence of this aesthetic in poetry, fiction, drama, essays, speeches, sermons, criticism, journals, and the full range of song lyrics from the spiritual to rap.

For a complete Table of Contents and information on how to order a copy of *Call and Response*, please visit Houghton Mifflin's College English web site at <http://college.hmco.com/english>.

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