FOLKWAYS RECORDS FD 5488

Side One:
1. Up Over My Head
   Betty Mae Fikes, lead
2. Bullyin' Jack of Diamonds
   Doc Reese
3. Give Me the Gourd to Drink Water
   Bessie Jones & Georgia Sea Island Singers
4. Been in the Storm So Long
   Bernice Reagon
5. Guide My Feet While I Run This Race
   Doc Reese
6. Guide My Feet While I Run This Race
   Doc Reese
7. Won't Do
   Carlton Reese & The Birmingham Movement Choir

Side Two:
1. Yes, We Want Our Freedom
   Cleo Kennedy & Carlton Reese
2. Which Side Are You On?
   Charles Neblett & Rutha Harris & group
3. Brown Baby
   Cordell Reagon
4. I'm Gonna Say What I Have to Say
   Phil Ochs
5. I'm Gonna Say What I Have to Say
   Phil Ochs
6. I'm On My Way
   Mamie Brown & The Birmingham Movement Choir

May 7-10, 1964 Gammon Theological Center Old Campus Atlanta, Georgia

Would you like to know more freedom songs and have better singing at your mass meetings and community gatherings? If so, please carefully choose one or two people in your group who are good at singing and song leading and will be able to learn something at this workshop and festival which they can use to help your organization and local movement.

SCHEDULE
Thursday night -------------- Introductions and song swap
Friday morning -------------- Workshop sessions
Friday night -------------- Song Fest (open to the public)
Saturday morning-afternoon-- Workshop sessions
Saturday night -------------- Song Fest (open to the public)
Sunday morning- -------------- Workshop session (closing session)
Sunday afternoon----------- Song Fest (open to the public)

Workshop Sessions
These sessions will benefit both beginners and those more experienced in using singing in the movement. Open only to registered participants.

Repertoire--Freedom songs from different protest areas for mass meetings, demonstrations, etc.

Song leading--Learn from such great leaders as: Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, Ruleville, Miss.; Bernice Johnson Reagon, Albany, Ga.; Betty Fikes, Selma, Alabama; Cordell Reagon, Nashville, Tenn.

Choir Leaders & Singers--Arrangements and techniques of such groups as the Birmingham Movement Choir and the S N C C Freedom Singers.

Songwriting--New songs for the freedom movement: Bertha Gober, Matthew Jones and others plus guest songwriters from the north.

Traditional Negro Folk Music--Learn some of the best old songs that are meaningful today, the stories and background behind them, from Bes­ sie Jones and the Georgia Sea Island Singers and others.

Weekend Concerts--Hear some of the great singers young and old from across the South, from such historic cities as New Orleans, Memphis, Ala., I o dge, Montgomery and others. Also hear guest artists from the north.

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43 W. 61st St., N.Y.C., 10023 N.Y., U.S.A.

SING FOR FREEDOM
LEST WE FORGET VOL 3

Workshop 1964 with the Freedom Singers, Birmingham Movement Choir, Georgia Sea Island Singers, Doc Reese, Phil Ochs, Len Chandler

PRODUCED BY GUY AND CANDIE CARAWAN-HIGHLANDER CENTER

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET
FOLKWAYS RECORDS FD 5488
SING FOR FREEDOM
LEST WE FORGET VOL. 3

Workshop 1964 with the Freedom Singers,
Birmingham Movement Choir, Georgia Sea
Island Singers, Doc Reese, Phil Ochs, Len Chandler

The Sing for Freedom Workshop, held in Atlanta in 1964, was
one in a series organized and sponsored by Highlander Research and
Education Center during the civil rights era. It was particularly success­
ful and broad-based due to the co-sponsorship and hard work of staff members
from both HCRG and SNCC* -- especially Dorothy Cotton and Andrew Young
and Cordell and Bernice Johnson Reagon. The cultural philosophy at
highlander during the 1960's (and during the labor struggles of the 1930's
and some recent struggles in the Appalachian coal fields) embraces
the idea that music and singing can be an effective source of power and
strength in social movements as well as an aid to organizing
community support. It also includes the notion that the young can
learn from the old and vice versa, and that the people deeply involved
in a struggle are their own best teachers and should not rely on more
formally educated people or "teachers" who come from very different
situations.

The Sing for Freedom workshop is an example of these ideas in
action. Similar workshops are currently organized by Highlander
dealing with the cultural history of coal mining communities, farming
areas, industrialized regions, and so on. Again the participants in
these gatherings are young and old, black and white, men and women.
They learn from one another, and they put what they learn to use in
their communities to bring about better living and working conditions.

People who feel isolated in their own situations are strengthened by con­
tact with others working on the same problems. It is always an exciting
experience to exchange songs from different places which have been written
about current issues, and the feelings of self-worth and confidence, the
joy and spirit of celebration, are heightened by sharing in the more
traditional forms of song, dance and music. There are always a part of
Highlander workshops.

The idea of "singing for freedom" is a very old one and it cer­
tainly didn't end with the period we think of as the Civil Rights Movement.
People are singing and working for freedom still, and we would like to
encourage many more workshops and gatherings to stimulate the flow of
songs and change.

Guy & Candie Carawan
Highlander Center, 1979

WORKSHOP REPORT - written in 1964

Sing for Freedom
Festival and Workshop

Old Gammon Theological Campus
Atlanta, Georgia

May 7-10, 1964

Guy & Candie Carawan, Coordinators

Co-sponsored by:
Highlander Center
Southern Christian Leadership
Conference
Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee

At a festival and workshop devoted to songs of the freedom movement,
50 key singers and song leaders came together from seven southern states.
There were several reasons for holding the Sing for Freedom Workshop.

First: It was designed to give song leaders a chance to hear and learn
some of the basic repertoire that has proved useful in the various
struggles across the South. Approximately 20 of the 50 songs published in the recent edition of We Shall Overcome make up this basic repertoire. (Each participant was given a copy
of this publication.)

Second: It was designed to give singers the opportunity to hear a lot
of new material that has grown up around the activities of the
civil rights struggles. It was stimulating for workers from the
various areas to hear vital and exciting songs from elsewhere
and to learn these new songs. A song book of the Sing for Free­
dom festival will be published, containing most of these
new songs.

Third: It was designed to provide some understanding of the roots from
which the freedom repertoire has developed.

Fourth: It was designed to encourage participation of Northern song¬
writers who have been writing songs indirectly related to the
southern struggle.

Fifth: It was designed to give the public the opportunity to audit
two concerts.

In August 1960, Highlander Folk School held a music workshop at Mont­
egrove, Tennessee designed to give impetus to the adapting of songs to the
civil rights movement. There was little material to draw from, so the
singing of freedom songs plays a very important role in the major civil
rights struggle. What was responsible for the growth of this repertoire?
What is the background of these tunes? of the verses? How does this music
relate to the music of the church? of spirituals?

The Georgia Sea Island Singers and Doc Reese, from Texas, presented
old-time slave songs, spirituals and prison songs that speak of freedom in
their own way. It was noted that many songs being sung today are adapta­
tions of old slave spirituals. It was pointed out that our learning to sing the
old (long meter) church music was one of the real breakthroughs in communi­
cating with the people in Albany, Georgia; Birmingham, Alabama; Plaquemine,
Louisiana, and of mobilizing them. Many young people have come to take this
music lightly, to laugh and snicker at it, and to raise questions about
how much the Negro has been brainwashed about his own folk culture, and
whether or not the old music is relevant to today's issues. (See attached article by Josh Dunson, Broadside #46, May 30, 1964)

In the informal moments of a residential workshop, new songs which had been presented in workshop sessions were learned. Northern song writers who brought their contributions to the Southern repertoire were impressed by the force and emotion behind the singing of the regional compositions. Phil Ochs wrote a song during the workshop -- "I'm Gonna Say What I Have to Say". Len Chandler travelled through Mississippi and other areas of the South with Cordell Reagon. They visited the house where Cordell grew up in Waverly, Tennessee. Cordell had talked often about not getting to his father's funeral on time. They went to the graveyard and cut the weeds down over the grave. They talked about freedom and about whether their children would have to go through the difficult changes they were going through in the next generation. Len wrote "Father's Grave" following that experience.

The public concerts were well attended by the Atlanta community. Theodore Bikel came from the Newport Folk Foundation. (As a result, a group of the workshop performers have been invited to the National Folk Festival in July.) An L.P. record and a new book of songs from the Atlanta festival/workshop are being prepared by workshop coordinators, Guy & Candie Carawan. (See Freedom is a Constant Struggle, Oak Publications.)

Ain't Scared of Your Jail
You Should Have Been There

Up Over My Head (new tune & words)
You Can't Make Me Doubt It
I've Got a Job

Great Day For Me
Nothing But a Soldier

Non-Stop and a Half Won't Do
Go Tell It on the Mountain

That's All Right
Go Ahead
I'll Be Alright

Freedom Train
Let the Circle Be Unbroken

Nothing But a Soldier
We Ain't Gonna Run No More
I'm Gonna Say What I Have to Say

Keep On Keeping On
The Times They Are A-Changing

Throw Me Anywhere, Lord,
In that Old Field
Give Me the Gourd to Drink Water

Juba
Go Down Old Hannah

SIMPLETE OF NEW REPERTOIRE INTRODUCED AT WORKSHOP

Ain't Scared of Your Jail
You Should Have Been There

Up Over My Head (new tune & words)
You Can't Make Me Doubt It
I've Got a Job

Great Day For Me
Nothing But a Soldier

Non-Stop and a Half Won't Do
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Keep On Keeping On
The Times They Are A-Changing

Throw Me Anywhere, Lord,
In that Old Field
Give Me the Gourd to Drink Water

Juba
Go Down Old Hannah
FROM: Broadside #46, May 30, 1964
(The National Topical Song Magazine)

SLAVE SONGS AT THE "SING FOR FREEDOM"
By Josh Dunson

The "Sing for Freedom" held at the Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia, May 7th thru 10th under the sponsorship of SNCC, SCLC, and the Highlander Folk School and directed by Guy and Candie Carawan was a great meeting ground where few slept and all sang. During the five workshops and three concerts, the best of the freedom movement's singers were learning and teaching, adding new verses to the songs that have marked a heritage and of different people of the world.

If you miss me at my girl friend's house, and can't find me no where, Go on over to the picket line, I'll be doin' my lovin' there.

There were new songs like "You Should Have Been There", which arose out of the American voter registration struggle (it and others are to appear in Broadside when Len Chandler comes back from the South with the tapes he made that weekend) and Charles Sherrod's "ballad-type narrative with a gospel chorus, "Nothing But a Soldier" (in this issue). There were moving and subtle anti-slavery songs of Bessie Jones and the Sea Island Singers, and the prison work songs and stories of Doc Reese, who served four years in the Texas prisons in the early 1940's. There were the northern ballad-makers: Phil Ochs with his new song "Links on the Chain"; Len Chandler and Tom Paxton; and Theo Bikel singing the freedom songs of his heritage and of different people of the world.

The aim of the festival, as verbalized by Guy Carawan, was to expose the leading singers from the different areas of the South to the 40 or 50 freedom songs that have grown in the last three years. A free copy of WE SHALL OVERCOME (the SNCC book published by Oak, $1.95) was given to all who registered, and a great part of the workshops was spent in learning the techniques of such diverse styles of freedom singing as those of the Birmingham Gospel Choir and the Albany singers. More than with spreading existing songs newly created, Guy was concerned that the young singers of today be exposed to their own roots, exemplified by the music of the Sea Island Singers and Doc Reese. In many ways, the meeting of the young and the old was strained. The older singers wondered if by all that "shouting" the "kids" were not ruining their voices, and the "kids", in some cases, seemed ashamed of the "down home" and "old-time" music. To a significant number, though by no means to all, the slave songs seemed out of place at a "sing for freedom." Emotions came to a head at the Saturday morning workshop while the Sea Island Singers were showing how their songs were sung and danced to.

Charles Sherrod started the discussion off by frankly asking; "Why?? Why sing those songs here?"

Bessie Jones tried to explain. "Your children are gonna call your music old later on, too...You should know the bottom before you come to the top."

Bessie tries to explain that the slave songs were "the only place where we could say we did not like slavery, say it for ourselves to hear."

An older woman says: "We can hear those songs any time back home, I came here to sing freedom." There is a loud undertone and much cross discussion.

Guy recognizes Len Chandler. The effect of what Len says is very strong. His words go something like this:

I went through this scene, man. I was ashamed of Grandmother's music. I went to school to get the degrees, in Akron, and things were all put up in a nice little box, a package of the Western World's music. But there was nothing in that box about my music. Why, even the spirituals were fitted out for a white audience, made to sound nice and polite -- you know the bit: Marian Anderson, Paul Robeson...It wasn't until this white professor took me to his house to listen to some tapes that I started to know what my music is about. it took a white man to teach me -- about my own music! Why this music (Bessie Jones') is great, and the boys on the radios and the T-vees have stopped you from hearing it -- but this is it, man, this is the stuff...

Carlton Reese, director of the Birmingham Choir, understands "why we hear the slave songs, but why the children's game songs?" Bessie says, "We could not read, and the master thought he would trap us with no existence, he thought we could do nothing about it. But we did, even as children, with this music. And it is our own, it is ours, it came from ourselves."

The discussion becomes sharp, personal. Tom Paxton tells of the racism in the white tradition that had to be rejected before he could seize on what was solid. Cleo Kennedy, the amazing soloist from the Birmingham Freedom Choir, says she sees the need for these songs at one time, but not now. Amanda Bowen, a slight girl of perhaps 90 pounds who spent two months in a rotted jail in Americus, Georgia, becomes angry. Her eyes flashing sparks, her words magnetizing, she cries: "I'm tired of going to church and listening to teen-agers giggle and laugh when the old songs are sung. I want to know what the old songs are, I want to sing them. I want to know that my parents were working for 15 cents a day, what these songs are in most of what means!" The first real applause and "Amen's". "That child can speak, now!"

Andy Young, a secretary of the SCLC, drives home a key point with an example. "We all know you can't trust a Negro on a negotiating committee who doesn't like his people's music. We found that out in Birmingham... CORE tried to organize Plaquemine, Louisiana, but they did not do too well. Their people were mostly from the North, and really did not know how to sing. When we came to Plaquemine, we had hundreds in the streets in a few days. That's because we learned how to sing in the old church way."

At the concert that night, the Sea Island Singers were the only group to receive a standing ovation. Many of the people who had come to Atlanta ashamed of their own vibrant tradition went away with a deepening sense of pride in it. A number left somewhat troubled, not convinced, but thinking.
On the weekend of November 17, 18, 19, 1978, a special workshop was held at Highlander to pay tribute to the lives of Sam Reece and Jim Garland -- both veterans of the struggle for justice in the Kentucky coal fields. Sam, a long-time friend, supporter and neighbor to Highlander, had died in July, leaving us with a great sense of personal loss. He had been in contact with Highlander since 1959 when he was a young organizer in Harlan County before moving to Washington state to work in the shipyards. He had recently visited Myles Horton and other staff members on his travels through the mountains gathering materials for a book on his reminiscences of life and struggles in Kentucky from the 1930s through more recent times. Soon after he completed his book, he also passed away.

Music and singing had been an important component of the lives of both men. Jim Garland wrote dozens of songs during his lifetime -- from fighting songs of the 1930s to laments about the strip mining destroying his mountain community in the 1970s. Right up until his death he was expressing himself in song. Sam likewise knew the biting impact of songs. "Which Side Are You On?", written by his wife Florence during the fight for a miners' union in Harlan County in the 1930s, became one of the most widely known and sung anthems of the labor movements in this country. Florence has continued to write other songs and poems, always with enthusiastic encouragement from Sam. It seemed fitting to honor the lives of these men with a gathering to support the struggle for better conditions in coal mining communities and to encourage the use of music and song in those struggles.

Participants were invited from throughout the coalfields -- from eastern Kentucky, Tennessee, southwestern Virginia, and West Virginia. We contacted community leaders, people currently involved in strike situations and other community campaigns, active union members, and any older people who remembered historical events in this region -- many of whom had written or sung songs about them. This latter group included Nimrod Workman, Sara Ogan Gunning (sister to Jim Garland), Florence Reece, Tillman Cade, Myles Horton. As soon as the invitations went out, we knew the time was right for such a workshop because the response was overwhelming.

The fabric of the workshop was rich in diversity, ranging in age from very young miners and union members to people in their seventies and eighties. There was much listening back and forth between these two groups. The older people spoke and sang movingly about their sometimes bitter, sometimes exhilarating experiences. They exhorted the young to be prepared for a long battle, to keep the union strong, and to take the union seriously and make sure it expressed the needs and wishes of the rank and file. The younger people sang and spoke of what it is like now in the 1970s in coal mining communities.

Striking miners and their families from Stearns, Kentucky, and Jerico in Harlan County, brought a sense of immediacy to the workshop by describing their ongoing strikes and tactics for seeing those situations through to a conclusion. The miners from Jerico brought along a file of strike-breakers being transported into the mines in an armored truck. There were women miners at the workshop and women interested in getting jobs in the mines. There was an all-women string band from Kentucky. Bill Worthington and Earl Gillmore talked about the experiences...
of black coal miners. There were also people involved in other projects around the mountains and making use of song -- a woman from West Virginia resisting on Army Corps of Engineers dam, a woman from a textile mill community in Georgia. There was hardly enough time in the weekend to hear many stories from all the communities represented, let alone some evolving steadily to accommodate the weaknesses of time. We had to stay up until all hours of the night, listening, thinking, singing, playing, dancing, laughing and sometimes crying.

The weekend was divided into specific workshop sessions. After a general get-acquainted when everyone described his or her living and working situation, we had an afternoon of tribute to Sam and Jim. Older people who knew them well, family members, and old friends, shared with us some remembrances and songs. Tillman Cagle, who knew both men very well and had himself lived throughout those terrible and impressive days of the 1930s in Harlan County, was especially helpful in conveying to us the realities of those times -- the struggles, the humor, the hope, the humor and the determination. We were stimulated and encouraged by Florence and Sarah who remembered whatever he forgot and by Nylor Horton and Mimrod Workman who also were participants in those historic times. Many younger people were then moved to express what they knew of these two men and what they feel and understand from the past, and the ways it relates to their lives now.

Hazel Dickens then convened a workshop of current songwriters talking about how and why they write songs, what they hope to convey with their music, what kinds of situations they find themselves in where music is helpful and how they play a role. Each sang some of his or her own songs. It was a diverse group of writers -- Hazel, Ron Short, Karl Gilmore, Phyllie Boyens, Joyce Brookshire, D.V. Hinson, Anne Romine, Angie Stagley, Sarah Gunning, Florence Reece and Mimrod Workman.

Saturday evening we opened Highlander to a wider public -- friends and neighbors whom we knew would enjoy and learn from such a wonderful gathering of talented singers, musicians and people. We knew too, that many more people wanted to pay tribute to Sam and Jim. We had a concert which lasted for several hours -- rich in music, spirit, ideas. We knew the folk from Stearns and Jericool spoke and the audience contributed $200 which was divided between the support committees for these two strike situations. Florence Reece was given a standing ovation when she spoke of the need for all of us to continue the struggles which were as much a part of the life of Sam and Jim. Phyllie Boyens then led the gathering in "Which Side Are You On?"

The final session on Sunday morning was a wrap-up in which we discussed the possibilities for putting to future use the potential demonstrated by the weekend. There was agreement that while it was an exciting and renewing experience to come together at a place like Highlander to share the music and spirit, it was even more important to make sure the music and spirit is there in continuing communities when it is needed -- at Stearns and Jericool and other situations where people are struggling with very real problems. Everyone agreed that we must surely stay in touch and reinforce each other, and also make contact with many more people around the region who support the same struggles that we do and who are interested in music and the important cultural heritage of the coalfields.

Perhaps the best summary statement of the workshop came from a young woman involved in the two-year strike at Stearns, Debby Vannover. She said she was deeply moved by the music and all the statements at the concert the night before. She felt she had never really understood before what a long and important history there was behind the current campaign for a union and decent working conditions at Stearns. She also felt that if the community people at home who hadn't been able to make up their minds "which side they were on" could just hear an evening like that one, they would surely be won over and give the strikers their support. Debby Vannover went back home and organized a concert for the Stearns community, inviting all the musicians and singers she met at the workshop. The concert was December 15 and a number of workshop participants went to it. (The strike continues at Stearns, now 2½ years old.)

Other workshop participants, taking the notion seriously that the music belongs in the communities, organized a support concert at Jericool which was held December 22. Again several of the musicians from the workshop attended and shared their songs. Kate Long from West Virginia had, since the workshop, written a wonderful humorous song about the Jericool strike which she did for the miners and their families. They loved it and all wrote down the words so they could continue singing it after Kate went back to West Virginia.

"I go to work in a steel-plated box, I carry shot-gun shells down in my socks, Folks liked me more when I had chicken pox, I go to work in a steel-plated box."

(The strike at Jericool also continues with no indication it will be resolved soon.)

One thing that was very clear from the workshop was that the response since in the form of letters, phone calls and personal contact with people that there is tremendous potential for future exchanges between people involved in the issues of coalmining and the culture that has been an important part of mining struggles over the years. Highlander will surely continue the effort to keep the exchanges flowing.
A Proposal:

There is a great deal of follow-up work that can be done related to this workshop. We are seeking funding to support that work.

Workshops at Highlander or other central locations:

It would be very useful to have one or even two large workshops a year drawing participants from a four-state area. This helps people stimulate one another with information, ideas and support so they can continue to work at home. These workshops could contribute to building a much larger network of cultural workers throughout the region.

Spin-off programs in coal mining communities:

A basic conclusion of the recent Highlander workshop was that the music really belongs in the communities. Follow-up programs could be planned in a wide variety of situations -- community gatherings, schools, libraries, senior citizen centers. Workshops for potential songwriters or community leaders. For this to happen, someone must have the ability to travel, contact people and help set up at least the initial program.

Collecting and circulating song material:

An informal songbook or a songwriters' newsletter, inexpensive and accessible, could easily be done following any of these workshops. There is a great wealth of song material coming out and it only needs to be circulated. The participants from the Highlander workshop went away with many new songs fresh in their minds. It would be very helpful if now they could receive words and music in order to keep them circulating.

A record album can also be a very important asset to the spread of this music. Following the workshop at Highlander in 1972, we produced the album Come All You Coal Miners featuring the songs of four major songwriters from the coal mining experience. It has had a great impact on this region because it is one of the very few albums available of songs relating to the problems and struggles of mining communities. It was also used as part of the soundtrack for the award-winning film Harlan County, USA.

A Celebration of Black Culture & History

and

A Forum: Black Issues in the Knoxville Area

A rich exchange of older black songs and stories and more recent freedom & contemporary songs

Featuring

Bessie Jones & the Georgia Sea Island Singers

This group preserves and performs the oldest legacy of black culture in America. From St. Simons Island, Georgia, they do spirituals, folk tales and children's games, and present them in a rich context of history and philosophy with humor and a sense of struggle and survival. Bessie has been here many times before and is remembered by all who have met her as an exciting performer and person.

Matthew Jones

Matthew grew up in Knoxville and along with his family, helped launch the A.L.C. movement here. He then traveled throughout the South working with SCLC and the Freedom Singers who helped spread information about the struggle to the rest of the country. Matthew is a talented song-writer and a marvelous singer.

Saturday March 3

1-3 p.m.

Highlander Center, New Market, TN

933-3643