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Jazz, Civil Rights, and Black Power:

A New Conceptualization of Musicians as Activists

By

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Abstract

Jazz is seen as one of the greatest contributions to American music, through its use of rhythm, syncopation, and freedom of style. As a form of artistic expression, jazz is generally disregarded when entering the discussion of music and social movements, particularly the Civil Rights movement. Though jazz musicians have been identified as Civil Rights activists, they are not understood as pursuing their activism through music outside of Civil Rights organizations. This thesis examines key musicians during the 1950s and 1960s, namely Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Charles Mingus, Max Roach, Abbey Lincoln, and Nina Simone, and their use of music to express allegiances and political messages outside the organized movement. This thesis argues that the lack of acknowledgment in their political endeavors is due to the relationships that these musicians formed with their audiences, resulting in the reception of this music without harsh backlash and repercussions.

Introduction

The actions of public figures presenting themselves as activists often become a spectacle. Witnesses and respondents often only exacerbate tensions and antagonistic public opinion. When individuals, like entertainers, dare to use their platform for activism, public responses can be damaging to their careers and reputations. One case still fresh in our minds is Colin Kaepernick kneeling during the national anthem to stand against police brutality and the oppression of Black Americans, causing major waves across the country.[1] The backlash incurred by Kaepernick by the audience of people watching led to graver consequences than he anticipated—including being benched and being unable to re-sign in the NFL.[2] This stark response cements in our minds the minefield of navigating activism when in front of an audience.

This did not stop jazz musicians in the 1950s and 1960s from professing their opinions on the state of the world during the height of the Civil Rights movement. In similar fashion to Kaepernick, musicians used their prowess and platform to protest injustice towards Black Americans and to express their solidarity for change and civil rights. These musicians often go unrecognized as being activists prior to their involvement with formal organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) or the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). So how did musicians make use of jazz to participate informally in the Civil Rights and Black Power movements through the reception of the music by listeners, ultimately influencing the evolution of the movements thereafter?

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[1] "Colin Kaepernick | RFK Human Rights," ROBERT F. KENNEDY HUMAN RIGHTS, accessed April 20, 2024, https://rfkhumanrights.org/colin-kaepernick.
[2] Christopher Brito, "Colin Kaepernick Says He's Willing to Come Back to the NFL as a Backup Quarterback - CBS News," April 19, 2022, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/colin-kaepernick-nfl-backup-quarterback/.

Seeking an answer to this question will allow us to critically analyze the impact that jazz music had on the mid-twentieth century and to emphasize the greater importance of musical expression throughout social movements. These answers will also qualify these musicians as leading activists rather than talking heads following the movements. Whereas prior scholarship on musicians as social activists has explored the ways that social movements inspired their music, this study intends to analyze the nature of musicians acting ahead of organizations and the utilization of their relationships with their audience to enter the social movements occurring around them. This study also aims to witness shifts in the music through its messaging, influences, and lyrics (when present), and map the resulting shifts onto the social movements, and the musician's subsequent involvement in these movements. These analyses culminate to form the argument that musicians and social movements act independently in the formation of jazz protest music, and the wide public reception of this music led the organizations to enlist musicians for their ability to reach a wider audience.

Though this genre evolved away from its origins in vice, some critics maintained that the music carried with it an innate sexual promiscuity and expressed distaste of those who performed it. In actuality, the public's major aversion to the performers of this artform was often due to the race of these men, and later women, who were primarily African American. Since jazz's inception, it has been met with force and denunciation from those who did not understand it. For its fans, jazz was able to reach everyday people at a deeper level and inspire strong reactions from those who listened to it. For its opponents, jazz was widely debated and often denounced as immoral, with some going so far as to demand its legal prohibition.

One case of this was in Tacoma, Washington, in 1922, where a judge ruled that jazz was "immoral, and fined the perpetrators of a lower district dance hall for permitting jazzified strains

to float through the hall."[3] In another, a Princeton University professor went on record stating, "Jazz, for example, I think, was invented by imps for the torment of imbeciles. True, it does not contain any distinct immoral teaching, because music is not a didactic art, but jazz does contain a real immoral influence, because it confuses, bewilders, benumbs, and befuddles the mind through the ears."[4]

Jazz musicians had traveled across the country and even around the world, bringing with them their music, style, and ideas. Jazz was now being performed everywhere, but issues of patronage and the conduct of club owners were still of great concern. Jim Crow laws allowed club owners to cater their clubs exclusively to white patrons, while employing Black jazz musicians. This mode of audience/artist segregation persisted from prior to World War II, where it was rarely accepted to have integrated bands, let alone let bands perform for integrated audiences. Some notable clubs that operated under this segregated model were the Cotton Clubs, one in Harlem and the other in Hollywood; both maintained strict rules against the integration of patrons.[5] Louis Armstrong as well as Duke Ellington performed in these clubs, much to the frustration of younger musicians.[6] There was a good deal of conflict among musicians and their willingness to perform for segregated audiences, as well as refusal to express acknowledgment and support of the ongoing social movements.

In the face of this segregation, some white musicians stood up for their colleagues; Artie Shaw, a white jazz clarinet player and band leader, opted to cancel his tour of the South in 1941

[3] "Jazz Music Banned," *East Oregonian*, March 4, 1922.
[4] "No Art Exempt In Moral Law, Says Dr. Van Dyke," *The New York Herald*, March 13, 1921.
[5] Ted Gioia, *West Coast Jazz: Modern Jazz in California, 1945-1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 17.
[6] Ingrid T. Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call out to Jazz and Africa* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/6647366.

when told to fire Black trumpet player Oran "Hot Lips" Page.[7] In other cases, band leaders were attacked—in 1956, when Nat "King" Cole was assaulted on stage in Alabama for having an integrated band. The racial hostility which inspired this attack was only later compounded when images of Cole with white, female fans were released.[8]

Scholarship regarding the jazz musician as a social activist and active participant in social movements have so far adopted the perspective that the movement and events drive the musicians.[9] The discussion of music and Civil Rights tends to forget jazz as a whole genre and instead focuses heavily on African American Spirituals, Gospel, and Folk music, such as the SNCC Freedom Singers, with the only concession towards jazz being R&B.[10] The ways social ideas of race affected the culture of jazz and impacted the musicians themselves has been analyzed extensively, given that scholars have long tied jazz music's origins and evolutions to issues of racial discrimination and segregation.[11] Meanwhile, literature on the Civil Rights and the Black Power Movements makes little reference to musicians and performers as public figures who aided organization within in these movements.[12]

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[7] Artie Shaw, 100 Years Of Jazz Clarinetist Artie Shaw, interview by Terry Gross, 1985, https://www.npr.org/2010/05/19/126972706/100-years-of-jazz-clarinetist-artie-shaw.
[8] Mark Burford, "Sam Cooke as Pop Album Artist—A Reinvention in Three Songs," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 65, no. 1 (2012): 113–78, https://doi.org/10.1525/jams.2012.65.1.113.
[9]Patrick Lawrence Burke, *Come in and Hear the Truth: Jazz and Race on 52nd Street* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 101; Gioia, *West Coast Jazz*, 17; Frank Kofsky, *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s* (New York, NY: Pathfinder, 1998), 78, 244.
[10] Reiland Rabaka, *Civil Rights Music: The Soundtracks of the Civil Rights Movement* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016), 105, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/10782301; Kerran L. Sanger, *"When the Spirit Says Sing!": The Role of Freedom Songs in the Civil Rights Movement*, Garland Studies in American Popular History and Culture (New York: Garland, 1995), https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/2529452; "Music in the Civil Rights Movement | Articles and Essays | Civil Rights History Project | Digital Collections | Library of Congress," web page, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, accessed February 22, 2024, https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-rights-history-project/articles-and-essays/music-in-the-civil-rights-movement/; "Freedom Singers," *SNCC Digital Gateway* (blog), accessed March 17, 2024, https://snccdigital.org/inside-sncc/sncc-national-office/freedom-singers/.
[11] Gioia, *West Coast Jazz*, 17.; Kofsky, *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s*, 100, 466-467.
[12] Emilye Crosby, *Civil Rights History from the Ground up: Local Struggles, a National Movement* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2011).

Jazz as a genre of protest music did not create spectacular phenomena at this time due to not broadcasting their music to the whole world, instead performing for smaller audiences that came willingly came to hear them. The only two cases in this study not performing their works in small venues are Duke Ellington and Nina Simone, both of whom received poorer reception upon initial debut. The omission of jazz from the discussion of music and Civil Rights is likely due to the intimate venues in which they performed, and the strong rapport and relationship between the jazz musician and the self-selecting audience member. The relationship established between the two allowed musicians to perform confidently and invite their listeners to engage in deeper thought on what they were hearing. The type of audiences that attended night clubs, a group which was depicted as inclusive and intellectual, may have been more willing to receive this music positively.[13] The lack of uproar in response to these acts of protest, like in the case of Kaepernick, led to this lack of widespread awareness of these musicians as activists prior to joining movement organizations.

Jazz musicians as activists in this period can most cleanly be broken down into two coalitions. The first group are musicians more heavily involved with or committed to the traditional Civil Rights Movement, namely Duke Ellington, Mingus, and Louis Armstrong. The second consisted of those primarily of the younger generation of the jazz avant-garde, including Nina Simone, Max Roach, and Abbey Lincoln, who expressed stronger ties to militancy and the emphasis on African culture found in the Black Power Movement. This distinction between the non-violent civil disobedience of the classical Civil Rights Movement and the formal calls to

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David Brun-Lambert, *Nina Simone: The Biography* (London, UK: Aurum, 2013), 113-114 and 145-147; Mark Newman, *The Civil Rights Movement* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Kevin Boyle, *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age* (New York, NY: Picador, 2011), 5

[13] Iain Anderson, *This Is Our Music: Free Jazz, the Sixties, and American Culture*, The Arts and Intellectual Life in Modern America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 74, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/6202000.

action and resistance to violence with violence is seen in the music between the coalitions of jazz artists, both in the tone in which it is performed, as well as their actions off stage. Both groups of musicians created music throughout their careers that spoke out about the experience of being Black in America, such as Armstrong's "Black and Blue" and Simone's "Blackbird." During this period of increase struggle and tension, the music produced carried with it a greater weight as well as more strictly articulated messages, aimed at the present issues of equality and violence against Black Americans. This form of protest music was utilized to adapt the musical space of jazz to a socio-political sphere to address broader issues of the world.

From 1955 to 1967, and even beyond into the late twentieth century, jazz experienced exponential growth; this thought-provoking music challenged those engaged in the space of jazz and pushed the boundaries of the music into the political sphere, as the world around them acted as a mirror of this exponential growth in tension and violence.[14] As social movements organized and progressed, through meetings, rallies, sit-ins, and boycotts, jazz musicians became both indirect and direct actors. The annual convention of the NAACP saw Max Roach and his soon-to-be wife Abbey Lincoln perform their album *We Insist! The Freedom Now Suite* in Philadelphia as well as different organizations utilizing jazz musicians for benefit concerts.[15] The Civil Rights movement by 1955 had already made strides towards the goal of equality and civil rights. Groups such as the NAACP won multiple legal cases in the 1950s, most notably the 1954 court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education*.[16] The years following *Brown v. Board of Education* would see an uptick in action taking place by the movement in the form of sit-ins and

[14] Ingrid T. Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call out to Jazz and Africa* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4.
[15] Arizona Sun, "Jazz Entertainer at Convention," July 13, 1961; Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 152.
[16] Mark Newman, *The Civil Rights Movement* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 5, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/5365135.

boycotts while those opposed would respond with murder and lynching of Black men and women, arrests of protestors, and assassinations of key figures in the movements.[17]

As the violence of the late 1950's and 1960's continued, the notion of "Black Power" evolved from differing responses to the assault of James Meredith. During his "March Against Fear," Meredith vowed in protest to walk across Mississippi against "the pervasive fear" that Black residents were subject to.[18] Martin Luther King, Jr. assured the path of non-violence, whereas Stokely Carmichael promoted self-defense, triggering early discussions of militancy and ultimately leading towards the offshoot of the Civil Rights Movement that would soon be known as Black Power.[19] This movement not committing to non-violence sparked much more charged pieces of music. Musicians aimed these songs at the events taking place around them and used their music to express their opinions, as well as disagreements, on these matters.

These respective movements and organizations developed, evolved, and responded as pivotal moments occurred across the country, such as acts of violence against Black people, political movements, or the enforcement of Jim Crow laws. Along with the public bearing witness to these events, musicians across the country—particularly jazz musicians—responded in the most effective ways they could, through their music. It is widely accepted that the evolution of social movements and music flows thusly: a national event occurs, followed by organizations' response, and then the musician (following the organizations) creates music in honor and support of the larger movement.[20] This flow of influence is built upon an existing

[17] "History of Lynching in America | NAACP," accessed March 19, 2024, https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/history-lynching-america.
[18] Peniel E. Joseph, ed., *The Black Power Movement: Re-Thinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1–2, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/5922537.
[19] Joseph, 2.
[20] Gioia, *West Coast Jazz*, 17; Patrick Lawrence Burke, *Come in and Hear the Truth: Jazz and Race on 52nd Street* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 101, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/7246281; Frank

model described in David Ake's *Jazz Matters*, used to depict different factors and their effects on jazz, including gender, class, and sexuality.[21] The model in Figure 1 adapts this mode of thinking into the societal and political influences on jazz.

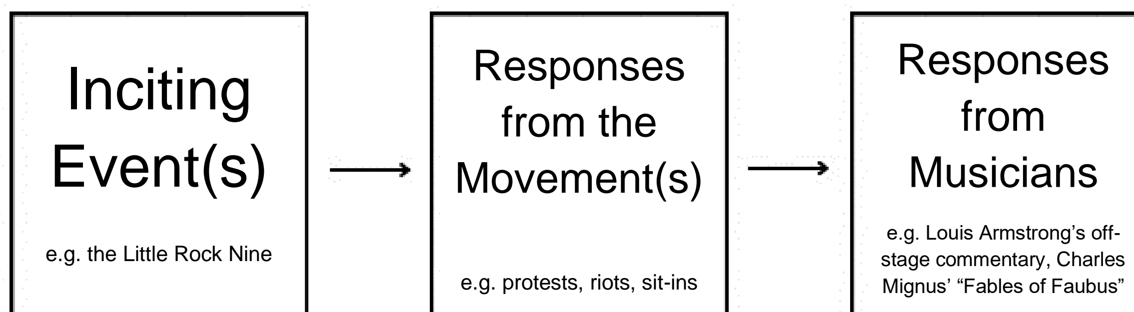

Figure 1.

A challenge to this model arises when the musician responds independently of the movement and creates their own form of protest through music. This protest music is performed before the national stage, spreading messages of unrest and disdain for the current state of affairs outside of, and alongside, the formal movements responses to similar events. This alternative flow of social movement evolution places jazz music not as a result or byproduct of these movements. Instead, this model sees the musicians and their music as independent, active members of these movements—if not acting ahead of them—responding to the event directly rather than going through the movement. Once musicians are recognized by political organizations, the two are then able to collaborate and build off one another toward an

Kofsky, *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s*, Expanded and rev. 2nd ed (New York: Pathfinder, 1998), 244, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/3616855.
[21] David Andrew Ake, *Jazz Matters: Sound, Place, and Time since Bebop*, Roth Family Foundation Music in America Imprint (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 4, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/11283197.

omnidirectional flow of influence. This new way of thinking centers the musician as a political activist, and their music as political activism.

The Influence of Relationships on the Musicians, the Audience, and the Movement

To understand the impact of jazz and its role in the social movement evolution, the relationships within jazz must be explored. The performance of jazz music creates a space that is influenced and textured by those in its presence. The act of performing protest songs in settings where protest songs are not expected, such as night clubs, creates an opportunity where the artist extends an invitation to their listeners to internalize what they are hearing. The moment that a jazz musician pushes the limits of their space—by testing a new style of music, or by expressing an idea in a new way— they enter an exchange with those listening to them. The way that the music is received by these listeners may be positive or negative; either reception will be in turn received by the musician, who will then acclimate to this shift in relationship. When the musician performs a piece that addresses their identity as a Black American who is witness to the events of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, they racialize themselves. They are no longer simply a musician or a performer, but a Black musician and a Black performer. The medium of jazz allows the musicians to participate more effectively in identity-driven political spheres than simply speaking or joining in the events of movements.

Certain spaces create certain forms of jazz. The dynamics between patrons, owners, and musicians are key to understanding this alternative model of social movement evolution. The cultivation and recultivation of jazz space impacts what is performed, how it is performed, and how it is received. A performer's willingness to perform provocative music in certain spaces could be dangerous to the performer if the proper relationship between musician and listener is not present. Conversely, patrons may not feel confident to express themselves if, for example, a

club owner restricts who can and cannot enter the establishment. Jazz musicians have strategically worked within the spaces they co-created with their audiences, occasionally being able to use their status to significantly influence the interpersonal dynamics in the space. Musicians have used their platforms to reach their patrons and create a bond where all parties are comfortable; only when this common understanding is achieved is the musician free to experiment.

James Gordon Williams' *Crossing Bar Lines* developed and categorized the concept of understanding the ways in which musicians act within spaces and use space to their advantage. This work expresses the ability to create a "Black musical space" in which musicians can utilize their music, specifically their improvisation, to express the causes of Black Americans and address social inequalities.[22] The intricacies of performing jazz and improvising in it to affirm one's humanity, as Williams suggests, can be used in many ways, including speaking about Black social death, or (as in the case of this paper) social inequality, violence, and racism.[23] Williams' argument expresses the impact and practice of Black musical space through improvisation.[24] This stems from its conceptual nature and by the lived experience of the performer.[25] This paper aims to expand upon Williams' notion of practicing space through improvisation to explain that musicians use improvisation to invite their audience to join in caring about the causes they are singing about. Examination of live recordings stresses the explicit invitations from musicians to the audience to turn their minds on as they take in the

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[22] James Gordon Williams and Robin D. G. Kelley, *Crossing Bar Lines: The Politics and Practices of Black Musical Space* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2021), 4, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/12513726.
[23] Williams and Kelley, 4.
[24] Williams and Kelley, 131.
[25] Williams and Kelley, 131.

music. The musician implores their listeners to think critically, opening a dialogue with their audiences rather than singing or talking at them.

This study also employs the interpretation of jazz as form of cultural expression rather than only as music, as put forth in *The Culture of Jazz* by Frank Salamone. This interpretation is necessary in order to further define interpersonal confidence and trust in jazz relationships, in that the freedom to express oneself is dependent on that sense of security. Jazz as an artform adapts well to protest and activism. Stylistically, jazz is performed best when in front of a live audience where the musician can play off the listener and inform and re-inform the ways they improvise, constantly altering the flow of their music based on the crowd's response. This back-and-forth dynamic creates a dialogue between artist and listener that is unique to jazz. Performance spaces, then, need to be conducive toward facilitating the audience's trust in the musician, generating confidence in the musician. This confidence allows musicians the freedom to perform culturally expressive jazz and to engage in a conversation with those listeners in the space about what is happening outside the space. This conversation is meant to inspire thought among patrons and urge them to take notice of the struggles of Black Americans.

The space of the jazz in the night club is not always this space of shared experience. The formulation of relationships within this space is crucial to the production of such protest pieces. Some night clubs worked to prevent this type of inclusive space specifically to deter the expression of ideas and commentary on the state of the world. The Cotton Club was one such establishment. This prominent jazz club was owned by Owen Madden, a gang leader running a portion of the Gopher Gang from Hell's Kitchen.[26] Madden intended to cater to white patrons

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[26] T. J. English, *Dangerous Rhythms: Jazz and the Underworld*, First edition (New York, NY: William Morrow, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2022), 169, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/12780551.

through naming it the Cotton Club along with decorating the interior in a southern plantation style along with jungle motifs and caricatures of Black characters.[27]

Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington both were frequent headliners at the Cotton Club while it was open, using this club—distasteful as it was—to their advantage. Armstrong personally was referred to as Uncle Tom as well as being described as a "racial cop-out" for the way that he carried himself as an entertainer.[28] The same was true for Duke Ellington, as his music, specifically at the Cotton Club, was described as the "jazzed up" music of a "contented slave."[29] The relationship between performer and patron in segregated clubs does not inspire the required confidence in an audience for a musician to express oneself politically. In contrast, audience members in a club like the Five Spot, with its intellectual clientele and integrated setting, promote this freedom of speech shown by Charles Mingus. The Cotton Club was a glaring example of a larger issue of mistrust in white patrons who were amused by Black performers, a phenomenon named specifically by Langston Hughes who wrote that white patrons would gawk at Black performers "like amusing animals at the zoo."[30]

The Cotton Club maintained a policy of having exclusively white patrons while employing Black musicians. The distinctly white clientele of such an establishment did not affirm a space in which musicians could push the boundaries of their craft or try to express their

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[27] "Duke Ellington and The Cotton Club," accessed April 22, 2024, https://www.jazz88.org/articles/Duke_Ellington_and_The_Cotton_Club/; Samuel Charters and Leonard Kunstadt, *Jazz; a History of the New York Scene*, 1st ed. (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1962), 217, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/2077763?sid=61723833; "A Tale of Two Harlems: The Legacy of Jazz and Racism at the Cotton Club," Curationist, accessed April 22, 2024, https://www.curationist.org/.
[28] Ben Schwartz, "What Louis Armstrong Really Thinks," *The New Yorker*, February 25, 2014, https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/what-louis-armstrong-really-thinks.
[29] Quoted in Shane Vogel, *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret: Race, Sexuality, Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 83, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/7644167.
[30] Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea: An Autobiography*, 2nd Hill and Wang ed, American Century Series (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 225, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/1492568.

personal views. Most of these patrons were upper-class white men and women who were expecting the club's orchestra to emulate orchestras they had heard elsewhere.[31] While requiring that these musicians conform to the caricature of a Black bandleader, the act of performing for white audiences did allow musicians such as Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong to make strong names for themselves as "respectable" musicians in the eyes of the white American world. Once they attained this status, these musicians were eventually able to express their opinions with little fear of damning repercussions. The Cotton Club of Harlem also allowed for musicians to have their performances broadcast on the radio, which only further elevated the careers of Ellington and Armstrong.[32] This notion of Black performers and white audience members is reminiscent of the relationship of slave and master depicted in the work *Dangerous Rhythms*, creating a space that did not allow for the promotion of provocative music that honestly describes the white supremacist oppressive realities of America.[33]

This hostility was perpetuated in the Little Cotton Club, also known as the New Cotton Club, of Culver City in California.[34] This club tried to capitalize off the success and popular reputation of the Harlem Cotton Club by mimicking their aesthetic and policies regarding patronage. In the late 1940s, the owner of the club at the time, Harold "Hal" Stanley, removed an integrated group of audience members, stating, "I'm not running a Cricket Club."[35] His remark was in reference to the Cricket Club, another night club in the area that was known for being

[31] Charters and Kunstadt, *Jazz; a History of the New York Scene*, 218.
[32] Margaret Pick, "A Night at the Cotton Club: Music of Duke Ellington, Harold Arlen & Cab Calloway," accessed February 3, 2024, https://riverwalkjazz.stanford.edu/program/night-cotton-club-music-duke-ellington-harold-arlen-cab-calloway.
[33] English, *Dangerous Rhythms*, 9.
[34] Peter Vacher, *Swingin' on Central Avenue: African American Jazz in Los Angeles* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 50, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/10380418.
[35] Gioia, *West Coast Jazz*.

more accepting of integrated patrons. Due to a fast spread of negative publicity, the Little Cotton Club was forced to close.[36]

This instance of a club's closure due to public intolerance speaks to the states of mind of patrons and participants in jazz. The unwillingness of patrons to attend the club following Stanley's controversial actions exemplifies the way that listeners were thinking about the world they were in and the space they took up through engaging with venues like the Cotton Clubs.[37] Equally, artists exerted their refusal to engage with hostile spaces by cancelling performances and tours, employing their prestige and the power of their relationships. One example of an artist utilizing their influence in this way is Nina Simone, who partnered with the Musical Protective Union in 1960 and refused to perform after not being paid in full prior to showtime.[38] The impact that both the performer and the audience member have on each other persists throughout the history of jazz; when the cultivated space is inclusive, the music tends to mirror that sentiment.

The antithesis of the Cotton Club of Harlem may very well have been Café Society. This club was the first in many ways, including being the first club for integrated patrons in New York, as well as allowing integrated bands to perform.[39] Prior to this, clubs would only have white or Black performers on stage at any one time. The impact of this seemingly small act of staging integrated bands was profound to the space of the club. Through its policy on integration, the Café created a potent space for musicians to experiment as well as speak freely. Long before the creation of pieces like "Alabama" and "Mississippi Goddam," Billie Holiday heard stories of the lynchings of the 1930s, as did Abel Meeropol, who was inspired to write the song that would

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[36] Gioia, 17.
[37] Gioia, 17.
[38] "No Pay, No Play, a Chicago Union Tells Show Producer," *Jet*, March 3, 1960, http://archive.org/details/sim_jet_1960-03-03_17_19.
[39] William R. Taylor, ed., *Inventing Times Square: Commerce and Culture at the Crossroads of the World* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1991), 176, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/1221909.

become “Strange Fruit.”[40] The inclusive space and audience within Café Society allowed—both literally and figuratively—Holiday to perform the song in 1939 and call out the injustice taking place in the country. Through the performer/audience relationships in the Café space, Holiday entreated her audience to bear witness the atrocities that have taken and were currently taking place in the country. Holiday’s vocals invite the listeners to do more than hear her sing, but listen to her words, as she calls them to action.

The space that jazz creates allows musicians to exchange ideas with their audience and use their craft to express their own experiences. The Five Spot was a notable night club for the jazz avant-garde, where many young musicians congregated to discuss topics beyond jazz and work these outside factors into their music.[41] This space created by young musicians led to these artists discussing, jamming, and collectively responding to the world around them, as seen in the case of Charles Mingus and “The Fables of Faubus.” When reflecting on the importance of the audience, Max Roach said, “The audience wouldn’t come to see any of the improvisational people, commonly called [Roach laughs] ‘Jazz’ musicians, if they weren’t communicating. It’s a world of sound that you make people understand.”[42]

The bonds between jazz performers and listeners change dramatically outside the structure of the night club. Musicians cannot expect to build the same relationships with uninvested attendees at concert halls or benefit dinners as they would with passionate patrons at jazz clubs. Three of the key musicians in this study held multiple concerts in Carnegie Hall where they showcased new music addressing racial injustice. Inside grand and gilded auditoria,

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[40] Josephson and Trilling-Josephson, *Cafe Society*, 41, 46.

[41] David Lee, *The Battle of the Five Spot: Ornette Coleman and the New York Jazz Field* (Toronto: Mercury Press, 2006), 11, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/6205952.

[42] Malik Ali, “What this music is really about”: An Interveiw with Max Roach | Arts | The Harvard Crimson, April 13, 2001, https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2001/4/13/what-this-music-is-really-about/.

jazz is experienced very differently than it is inside darkly lit rooms filled with smoke. When the space of jazz provides a platform for a much larger audience, as it does when Ellington, Simone, and Armstrong perform in Carnegie Hall, the artists become more than only musicians.

Their music was amplified into a far-reaching message on the state of their world, and their performance shared their often intimate and vulnerable experiences. This opportunity to spread their message widely did not always work to the benefit of the musician—broader audiences were less likely than club-goers, for example, to have rapport with the arts. Individual night clubs acted almost as incubators of ideas, where the space is warm and safe enough to express more radical messages to receptive ears. As musicians toured the country, stopping at many individual clubs, they spread little seeds of thought which contributed to the ever-evolving relationship between musician and listener.

These musicians spread their messages through music as movement organizations did the same. The two entities, musicians and organizations, worked independent of one another to shed light on injustice and lived experience. Musicians eventually became intertwined with the organized movements, but upon initial entry to the political sphere, musicians acted independently, using their notoriety and acclaim to propel them into different spaces where they could discuss these topics. The protest music analyzed in this study was created for the purpose of musicians—who were making use of their voices, instruments, and places on stage—to act as leading political activists outside the traditional movements, with the intent of promoting their ideas and using their influence to drive the movements' evolution. Rather than write this music under the banner of the NAACP, SNCC, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), or the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), these musicians performed under their own power to express solidarity with the movements and its leaders as peers. This application of their own

prestige and reputation allowed for a wider spread of these ideas, as opposed to aligning themselves with movements that were often met with roadblocks and violence.

These musicians spoke out and undertook musical activism out of necessity, not for the benefit of organized activist groups nor for their own financial gain. In late 1969, Nina Simone said, "I hope the day comes when I'll be able to sing more *love* songs, when the *need* is not quite so urgent to sing protest songs."[43] The gravity and pressure Simone felt explains that musicians could not wait for the movements to act first, and then frame their response around the movements' or wait for the movements to request their allyship. On the contrary, musical protest was on a rapid timeline. Songs were written hours after national events took place, like "Mississippi Goddam" following of the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church and "Why? The King of Love is Dead" after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.[44] Following the musicians' initial independent entry to the political sphere, the movements had time to catch up, and the musicians ultimately fell in with these organizations to help drive them through their music through sponsorship of performance tours and benefit concerts.

***Black Brown and Beige*, "Fables of Faubus," and the Little Rock Nine**

Because jazz artists were often reduced to being "just musicians" (not political operatives) in the public eye, they often counterintuitively had even more room to speak freely on the issues that Civil Rights and Black Power leaders were addressing under heavy scrutiny. Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and Charles Mingus, for example, were all actively speaking politically, but because they were viewed as "just musicians," incurred far less public backlash.

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[43] Phyl Garland, "Nina Simone The High Priestess of Soul," *Ebony*, August 1969, 158.
[44] Nadine Cohodas, *Princess Noire: The Tumultuous Reign of Nina Simone*, 1st ed (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010), 144–45, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/7932733; *Nina Simone Why The King of Love Is Dead (Live)*, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3jiFbOMr8E.

All three were revolutionary to the art in terms of style, reach, and acclaim for the genre. They used their prowess as musicians and as public figures to enter the political sphere of the country through their music by engaging with their audiences during performances of protest—for the purposes of this thesis, "performances of protest" refers to the musicians' outward expression of political opinions, not literal musical performances. They used their own distinct point of entry, either through performance, or outright formal address, to reach their audience directly, and speak to them about the issues and violence that their community has been subjected to.

Duke Ellington produced an extensive and distinguished discography over the course of his career as a bandleader and performer. His music ranges from orchestral works to film soundtracks, writing pieces for many different audiences. Duke Ellington maintained an ability to blur the lines of where jazz ended and other circles began, blending classical music with jazz, such as other giants in the world of music composition such as George Gershwin.[45] Along with his integration of classical and jazz themes, Ellington's works, most notably described in his suites or movement-based albums, are categorized as program or programmatic music. This is referring to works of music that depict a narrative that develops over the course of the piece or across movements of a larger work.[46] This method of creating a narrative to guide the listener through is present in both *Black, Brown, and Beige* as well as "New World A-Comin'."

The work *Black, Brown, and Beige* showcases the implementation of this alternative model through the engagement that Ellington has with the audience and their response to the piece. It was initially created to be an opera by the name of *Boola*, but due to the lack of support

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[45] Mark Swed, "Commentary: The Duke Dilemma: Symphonic Ellington Is a Mainstay — but Still in Need of Revival," Los Angeles Times, February 3, 2022, https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/story/2022-02-03/commentary-duke-ellingtons-symphonic-jazz-led-the-way-but-what-then.
[46] Roger Scruton, *Programme Music*, vol. 1 (Oxford University Press, 2001), 1, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.22394.

and funding, it was redone as a musical suite.[47] The piece was set to be performed in Carnegie Hall on January 23, 1943, as a part of a concert for a "benefit for the Russian war relief."[48] He wrote this work over the course of ten years along with research on Africa and slavery, with his collection of literature totaling around 800 books "on [B]lack history."[49] As musicians gained notoriety and spread beyond the limiting boundary of the night club, they were able to spread their messaging to wider audiences. These were much different venues than the jazz clubs of Harlem that Ellington began playing in, and closer in kind to the halls that he was performing in when he toured England.[50]

The audience of this Carnegie Hall concert is representative of the stature of the venue itself, with individuals of importance such as Eleanor Roosevelt in attendance.[51] This showcases the ability of Duke Ellington to wield his prominence and prowess as a musician to extend beyond the clientele of the smaller jazz night club and reach into the political sphere. Now that Ellington had the attention of the upper echelons and was being presented in a political space for war relief efforts, he had the opportunity to perform a piece to express the experience of African Americans. Ellington framed this work as a "tone parallel to the history of the Negro in America."[52]

The suite is broken into three movements, totaling six songs. The first of these sections is "Black," which expresses the early experience of African Americans, with the arrival in America

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[47] Garth Alper, "Black, Brown, and Beige: One Piece of Duke Ellington's Musical and Social Legacy," *College Music Symposium* 51 (2011), https://www.jstor.org/stable/26513063, 1.
[48] A. H. Lawrence, *Duke Ellington and His World: A Biography* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 315, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/4436634.
[49] Lawrence, 315.
[50] Lawrence, 315.
[51] Lawrence, 315.
[52] "Duke Ellington Daily Musical for Negro Progress Exposition," *Jackson Advocate*, July 13, 1963.

with the brass section opening the section with work songs that play throughout the first pieces of the first movement.[53] This was accomplished through the use of a plunger mute used by trombone player Sam Nanton to mimic the sound of a man singing a work song.[54] The second section, "Brown," which analyzes the experience of African Americans in the military with a noted "parody of two Civil War Marching tunes."[55] The last two songs make up the final movement, "Beige." These songs represent the period African Americans faced in between the end of WWI and WWII, opening with loud themes of the 1920's and the Harlem Renaissance through to the urbanization of African Americans.[56]

As Ellington showcased his work to the crowd, he made a point to describe each movement and what it represented.[57] Ellington asserts his role as a spokesman on behalf of Black Americans by concluding his presentation with telling his audience, "Black, Brown, and Beige are Red, White, and Blue."[58] Ellington enters into this political sphere as an activist and not as an entertainer by engaging with the audience and inviting them to think critically about what they had just heard. This presentation of bringing to light the struggles of Black America to upper class individuals is bold, and Ellington's work was criticized for this effort.

The audience in attendance at Carnegie Hall does not appear to have the same relationship with Ellington that smaller clubs do. Critics within jazz magazine *Down Beat* applaud the music but take issue with the programmatic nature of the suite, claiming "it stands by itself as good music with development of the piece itself and not depending on color effects to

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[53] Mike Levin, "Detailed Appraisal of Ellington Concert," *Down Beat*, February 15, 1943, http://archive.org/details/sim_down-beat_1943-02-15_10_4.
[54] Lawrence, *Duke Ellington and His World*, 317.
[55] Levin, "Down Beat 1943-02-15."
[56] Alper, "Black, Brown, and Beige"; Levin, "Down Beat 1943-02-15."
[57] Lawrence, *Duke Ellington and His World*, 316.
[58] Levin, "Down Beat 1943-02-15."

tell people what is going on."[59] This complaint about the messaging of the piece was emulated by other critics such as John Briggs of the *New York Post,* stating "Mr. Ellington was saying musically the same thing he had said earlier in the evening, only this time he took forty-five minutes to do it."[60] The majority of complaints by critics center around the length of the work, and the seemingly pointlessness of Ellington's explanation before the piece. This dominates the conversation so much so that the purpose of the work is lost; the complaints about Ellington explaining his work overshadowed the content of what was being said. This afront to Ellington's statement and the overall rejection of the piece may be representative of the audience's political opinions.

His attempt to merge classical and jazz styles, compounded with trying to speak to the politics of the country resulted in negative reception on most of these fronts. Classical music critics did not care for the way Ellington shed the common rules of classical writing, and jazz fans were not expecting a piece seemingly out of character compared to his other popular works.[61] At this time, there was significant tension and violence against Black Americans as mass migration took place from the South to northern urban areas causing race riots in Detroit and Harlem.[62] Performing a piece stating all that Black Americans had done for the country, including fighting in an ongoing war, while they are currently fighting their own countrymen at home, communicates the degree to which musicians like Ellington were willing to use their status on stage to address issues in the country. Following the negative reviews from his first

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[59] Levin.
[60] Mike Levin, "Duke Fuses Classical and Jazz! Stuff Is There, Says Mix, Needing Development To Attain New Art Form," *Down Beat*, February 15, 1943, http://archive.org/details/sim_down-beat_1943-02-15_10_4.
[61] Lawrence, *Duke Ellington and His World*, 318.
[62] Mark Newman, *The Civil Rights Movement* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), ix, 115.

performance at Carnegie Hall, along with the continuation of riots against Black Americans, Ellington returned with another new work.

At the end of that same year, in December 1943, Ellington went back to Carnegie Hall with *New World A-Comin'*. He wanted this work, like his last, to discuss the topic of race in America. The piece's name comes from a book of the same name written by Roi Ottley.[63] The novel by Ottley is noticeably similar to the narrative of *Black, Brown, and Beige*, of "the Black man's past in America and his hopes for a better future."[64] This book also predicts and hopes for a social revolution for Black Americans following the end of WWII.[65] This piece is less grandiose and aggressive than *Black, Brown, and Beige*, with this work only using a piano and accompanying orchestra.[66] It was also seen more so as a symphonic work rather than a distinctly jazz piece, due to its implementation of symphonic winds and strings, and was received as such.[67]

After the introduction of this piece, *New World A-Comin* was rewritten into only a piano solo, which was able to be performed in clubs without the need for an orchestral accompaniment.[68] Doing so made the piece more versatile and allowed Ellington the freedom to perform this piece in any venue, in front of any audience. This new version was debuted at a benefit concert sponsored by the NAACP in 1951.[69] Both of these pieces, *Black, Brown, and*

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[63] Lawrence, *Duke Ellington and His World*, 322.
[64] Lawrence, 322.
[65] Derek Jewell, *Duke: A Portrait of Duke Ellington* (New York: Norton, 1977), 91, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/137689.
[66] Jewell, 91.
[67] David Schiff, "Symphonic Ellington? Rehearing 'New World A-Comin',"' *The Musical Quarterly* 96, no. 3/4 (2013): 461, 465.
[68] Thomas Cunniffe, "Duke Ellington's Sacred Concerts," *Jazz History Online* (blog), April 1, 2019, https://jazzhistoryonline.com/duke-ellingtons-sacred-concerts/.
[69] Schiff, "Symphonic Ellington?," 460.

Beige and "New World A-Comin," were then used in a concert held at the San Francisco Grace Cathedral on September 16, 1965, which became known as Duke Ellington's *Sacred Concert*. It featured a reworked version of the piece "Come Sunday" within the *Black, Brown, and Beige* album.[70] This rerecorded version of "Come Sunday" contains lyrics sung by Mahlia Jackson "pleading with the Lord to 'see my people through."[71] This addition was sparked from Charles Mingus' "Fables of Faubus," which employs provocative lyrics against the governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus.

Charles Mingus, bass player, band leader, and composer, has utilized his craft in multiple ways to protest the state of the country and its treatment of Black Americans. The Five Spot is a club in Greenwich Village, New York, where Mingus performed many times to hone his craft of protest.[72] This club was a haven to musicians who would become major names in the world of jazz, such as Thelonius Monk, John Coltrane, and Cecil Taylor.[73] The club was created for a working-class clientele, but became a hotbed for jazz in the 1950s.[74] By the time of Mingus' performance, the club was depicted as hosting a public that was "overwhelmingly young, white, and intellectual."[75]

Mingus took advantage of a specific performance on April 4, 1964, where he debuted a piece called "Meditations on Integration."[76] This work features harsh, discordant sounds to

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[70] Lawrence, *Duke Ellington and His World*, 366.
[71] Claudia Roth Pierpont, "Black, Brown, And Beige," *The New Yorker*, May 10, 2010, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/05/17/black-brown-and-beige.
[72] Brian Priestley, *Mingus, a Critical Biography* (London ; New York: Quartet Books, 1982), 154, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/541846.
[73] Lee, *The Battle of the Five Spot*, 11.
[74] Lee, 11.
[75] Anderson, *This Is Our Music*, 74.
[76] Priestley, *Mingus, a Critical Biography*, 154.

showcase how this so-called meditation is much more tumultuous than it should be.[77] This seems to be a response to the commonly described "slowly but surely" stance that individuals take when arguing that the progress of civil rights is moving too fast. Mingus developed his works of protest through collaboration and conversation with his band mates. In the case of "Meditations," Eric Dolphy was the main contributor to Mingus's inspiration.

Dolphy was the alto saxophonist in Mingus's band, a clarinetist and flautist, as well as a solo performer at the Five Spot.[78] Mingus states in an interview that Dolphy mentioned that something similar to concentration camps from Germany was happening in the South, and this conversation resulted in the writing of "Meditations."[79] The free space within the Five Spot showcases the types of discussion that could be had among musicians at this time. The relationships formed within the night club create a floor for political discussion. This creates confidence in players to showcase new ideas, or a newer avenue to express old ideas. This piece was played across Europe on tour during that year as Mingus was running a workshop and recorded most performances he played.[80]

A similar dialogue between Mingus and a band member took place years prior, with drummer Dannie Richmond. This musical conversation took place in September of 1957, immediately following the events of the Little Rock Nine.[81] Faubus was the governor of Arkansas who did not adhere to the Supreme court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*, which supported the integration of schools, and called the Arkansas National Guard to prevent the

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[77] *Meditations On Integration*, 2020, https://open.spotify.com/track/0TuOLBBuNboYMw0F8ontXJ.
[78] Vladimir Simosko and Barry Tepperman, *Eric Dolphy: A Musical Biography and Discography*, Rev. ed, A Da Capo Paperback (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996), 15, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/4418498.
[79] Priestley, *Mingus, a Critical Biography*, 154–55.
[80] Simosko and Tepperman, *Eric Dolphy*, 15.
[81] Priestley, *Mingus, a Critical Biography*, 86.

students from entering.[82] During a music session playing an unnamed piece, Mingus calls out to the band in the middle of playing "tell me someone who's ridiculous."[83] Without missing a beat, Richmond calls in response "Governor Faubus!"[84] This developed into the works "Original Faubus Fables," and later on a redone version "Fables of Faubus." Both pieces contain the same set of lyrics between Mingus and the band in a call and response fashion, with the chorus singing:

> Mingus: Name me someone who's ridiculous, Dannie.
> Richmond: Governor Faubus!
> Mingus: Why is he so sick and ridiculous?
> Richmond: He won't permit us in his schools!
> Mingus: Then he's a fool!
> All: Oh boo![85]

Later in the song, Mingus asks further for Richmond to name a group who are ridiculous, and Richmond responds with a longer list, including Rockefeller and Eisenhower.[86] This piece was written, performed, and recorded in night clubs, for the average jazz listener to be a part of. In the original recording, the piece opens with Mingus asking individuals not to clap or rattle the ice in their glass or to ring the cash register.[87] This piece would not have been able to have been live recorded for its initial debut without the security that the patrons of the Five Spot afforded Mingus.

[82] Diane Andrews Henningfeld, ed., *Little Rock Nine*, 1st Edition, Perspectives on Modern World History (Farmington Hills, Mich: Greenhaven Press, a part of Gale, Cengage Learning, 2014), 38, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/10043120.
[83] Priestley, *Mingus, a Critical Biography*, 87.
[84] Priestley, 87.
[85] *Charles Mingus – Original Faubus Fables*, accessed February 16, 2024, https://genius.com/Charles-mingus-original-faubus-fables-lyrics.
[86] *Charles Mingus – Original Faubus Fables*.
[87] *Charles Mingus – Original Faubus Fables*.

This work is an overt commentary on the status of the country and Mingus pulls zero punches in his lyrics, with calling out Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan right alongside the politically and culturally esteemed American leaders he names.[88] The charged nature of this piece along with the raucous tones in "Meditations" both appear on the same album, and both were performed together as Mingus toured Europe as well as America.[89] Mingus continued this expression until 1962, when he performed at a SNCC sponsored benefit called the "Salute to Southern Students."[90]

Beyond the utilization of lyrics to express their messages on Civil Rights and their opinions on reactions to the movement, musicians could also use their notoriety and status to simply speak on these matters. One of the strongest examples of this is the case of Louis Armstrong. There is no record of a clear protest song within his repertoire, though his performances nod subtly toward those ends. The song "Black and Blue," which most notably was performed by Armstrong, touches on the topics of racial discrimination and violence, with lyrics such as:

> How will it end? Ain't got a friend.
> My only sin is in my skin.
> What did I do to be so black and blue?[91]

These lyrics and this piece address the larger issue of violence committed against Black Americans over the course of the twentieth century thus far, not regarding a specific event. This is a similar operating procedure as Ellington through *Black, Brown, and Beige*. Both Armstrong and Ellington were not given the utmost levels of respect from their musical peers, because they

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[88] *Charles Mingus – Original Faubus Fables*.
[89] Priestley, *Mingus, a Critical Biography*, 118.
[90] Ingrid Monson, "Monk Meets SNCC," *Black Music Research Journal* 19, no. 2 (1999): 191, https://doi.org/10.2307/779341.
[91] *Louis Armstrong - Black And Blue*, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LDPUfbXRLM.

were not actively speaking out against injustices in the Black community.[92] There were claims by some, such as Charles Mingus, who did not think highly of musicians such as Ellington and Armstrong and those who promoted them for their lack of action and utilization of their platform to push for progress.[93] These accusations were substantiated in the claim that their musical forms of protest are not a sufficient use of the prowess both musicians had attained at a global scale.

The way in which Armstrong handled the events of the Little Rock Nine is a much greater example of the effect that musicians can have on others. At the time of the events of Little Rock High School were taking place, Armstrong was performing in Grand Forks, North Dakota.[94] A college senior by the name of Larry Lubenow working part time for the Grand Forks Herald was asked to do an interview with Armstrong for an article.[95] Lubenow stated that he asked Armstrong if he was aware of what took place, and upon informing him of the events Armstrong went on a tirade against Governor Faubus, President Eisenhower, as well as Secretary of State John Dulles.[96] In his critique of Faubus, Armstrong refers to him as an "ignorant plowboy" and claimed that Eisenhower was "two faced" for letting Faubus "run the country."[97] As a result of these events, Armstrong canceled a music tour of the Soviet Union that was being sponsored by the State Department.[98]

When asked why he chose to cancel his tour, Armstrong told journalists, "The people over there ask me what's wrong with my country. What am I supposed to say? The way they are

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[92] Priestley, *Mingus, a Critical Biography*, 87.
[93] Priestley, 87.
[94] "Satch Speaks Twice," *Down Beat*, October 31, 1957.
[95] "Remembering Louis Armstrong's Little Rock Protest," *Weekend Edition Saturday* (NPR, September 22, 2007), https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=14620516.
[96] "Remembering Louis Armstrong's Little Rock Protest."
[97] "Remembering Louis Armstrong's Little Rock Protest"; "Down Beat 1957-10-31."
[98] Joshua Berrett, ed., *The Louis Armstrong Companion: Eight Decades of Commentary* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1999), 186, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/3626192.

treating my people in the South, the government can go to hell."[99] Because of his pre-established place in the hearts and minds of white Americans, these strong comments did not lead to violence against him, nor the loss of potential work opportunities. In fact, Armstrong still performed as a US ambassador in South America in November of the same year.[100] The only notable concert cancellation was at the University of Arkansas, when the student senate that organized the concert cancelled after Armstrong expressed not wanting to perform in the state because "Faubus might hear a couple notes—and he don't deserve that."[101]

This fervor did not die out with one interview, but the target shifted away from the government and towards his road manager Pierre Tallerie.[102] Tallerie spoke on behalf of Armstrong claiming that he was sorry for his rant and for canceling the State Department tour.[103] This sparked another interaction between Armstrong and the press, where he told them, "As much as I'm trying to do for my people, this road man, Tallerie, whom I've respected for 20 years, although I've suspected him of being prejudiced, has worked with Negro musicians, and made his money off of them, has proved that he hates Negroes the first time he opened his mouth."[104]

Between these two public viewings of Armstrong's thoughts on the government as well as specific individuals, there was tremendous response. After his first interview against Faubus and Eisenhower, in which he claimed that the President had "no guts," members of the U.S.

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[99] Berrett, 186.
[100] Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004), 64, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/5529327?sid=61724539.
[101] Von Eschen, 64.
[102] "'I'm Still Louis Armstrong–Colored': Louis Armstrong and the Civil Rights Era," That's My Home, May 11, 2020, https://virtualexhibits.louisarmstronghouse.org/2020/05/11/im-still-louis-armstrong-colored-louis-armstrong-and-the-civil-rights-era/.
[103] "'I'm Still Louis Armstrong–Colored.'"
[104] "'I'm Still Louis Armstrong–Colored.'"

Army's 101st Airborne Division were issued by Eisenhower from Fort Campbell in Kentucky to Little Rock.[105] There are some who believe, Lubenow states, that Armstrong's outward opinion was what sparked President Eisenhower to step in with the National Guard and enforce the Supreme Court decision.[106] Even though this is simple conjecture, the possible connection is enough to substantiate the claim that Armstrong firmly crossed the boundary from performer into activist, more so than he had prior.

The influence that these musicians can have on one another as well as on the way they are commenting on their surroundings gave way for more musicians to begin using their craft to address the world in a more meaningful way. Their names became connected not only to music, but to activism, and this led organizations to acknowledge their efforts and utilize them as public figures, entertainers, and spokesman of their cause to further their progress. In 1963, Miles Davis performed at a benefit concert for voter registration in the South sponsored by SNCC, CORE, and the NAACP.[107] This practice of protesting through prowess and song was used by younger, angrier musicians, who were more militaristic and nationalistic in nature. These musicians as well proved to be assets to the dominant social movement by performing at benefit concerts across the country.

***We Insist! The Freedom Now Suite* and "Mississippi Goddam"**

As the Black Power movement developed out of the traditional Civil Rights movement, collective action towards militarism and aggression increased through organization. Prior to this, African Americans living through the events of the Civil Rights movement became increasingly

[105] Henningfeld, *Little Rock Nine*, 19.
[106] "Remembering Louis Armstrong's Little Rock Protest."
[107] Monson, "Monk Meets SNCC," 191.

less patient with the advancement of progress. This lack of patience became prevalent in musicians as well, with their lyrics and tone of music becoming more charged and disgruntled. Prime examples of this are Max Roach, Abbey Lincoln, and Nina Simone, all of whom used their music to enter a dialogue with the traditional movement, as well as with the public, to air their grievances with the state of progress and introduce themselves as activists to the world.

The iconic work *We Insist! The Freedom Now Suite* was written initially by Max Roach, (a jazz drummer) and Oscar Brown Jr. (a writer and singer).[108] This piece was depicted as a bringing "listeners a part of the 'Sit-In Story,' in music."[109] Though the piece is written by Roach and Brown Jr., it is performed by Roach and his future wife, Abbey Lincoln.[110] The *Freedom Now Suite* covers the history of Black Americans and African independence, with songs rooted in the experiences of enslavement from Africa, slavery in America, and the ongoing struggle for civil rights.[111] Similarly to Ellington's work, there was not a definitive catalyst that sparked the urge of musical expression, beyond a statement that it was composed in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.[112]

This piece was written to highlight the state of the Black American, where they have come from, and where they are trying to go. The cover of the album, however, showcases closer ties to the present state of the movement at the time of the album's release. The cover shows three Black men sitting at the counter of a diner with a white waiter behind the counter. This

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[108] Albert Anderson, "The Week in Records," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, February 24, 1961, https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83025247/1961-02-24/ed-1/seq-12/.
[109] Anderson.
[110] Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln, *We Insist! Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite*, accessed February 29, 2024, https://www.allmusic.com/album/we-insist%21-max-roachs-freedom-now-suite-mw0000194826.
[111] Roach and Lincoln.
[112] Max Roach, "Jazz, No. 2, 1962," in *Freedomways Reader: Prophets in Their Own Country*, ed. Esther Cooper Jackson and Constance Pohl, Interventions--Theory and Contemporary Politics (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 360–63, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/4220798.

album was released in December of 1960, following a year of counter sit-ins starting in February of that year by students.[113]

The opening track of this five-movement album is “Driva’ Man,” using a slave chant about the slave master calling to his slaves to work faster and threatening to whip them.[114] The lyrics and vocals from Lincoln set the tone of this album as a direct retelling of the Black experience. The experiences and feelings of slaves is clear in the vocals by Lincoln, saying:

> When his cat ‘o nine tail fly,
> You’d be happy just to die.
> Runaway and you’ll be found,
> By his big old red bone hound.
> Pater roller bring your back,
> Make you sorry you is black.[115]

This song is followed by “Freedom Day,” moving through history with lyrics such as “Slave no longer, slave no longer, this is Freedom Day.”[116] This piece is much higher energy and faster pace with an improvised solos from the saxophone player, trombonist, and Roach on drum set.[117] The lyrics express disbelief in the rumors that the slaves heard that they were freed. The most compelling message comes at the end of this track in the final verse, with Lincoln singing:

> Freedom Day, it’s Freedom Day
> Free to vote and earn my pay,
> Dim by path and the way,
> But we’ve made it Freedom Day.[118]

These words emotionally touch those who are listening and subvert the upbeat and uplifting sound of the piece. The energetic sound combined with empty lyrics communicates

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[113] Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 154.
[114] Roach and Lincoln, *We Insist! Max Roach’s Freedom Now Suite*.
[115] Roach and Lincoln.
[116] Roach and Lincoln.
[117] Roach and Lincoln.
[118] Roach and Lincoln.

what Freedom Day should have been, not what it was, underscoring the type of day the Black community was still struggling to reach. The final word from Lincoln and the accompanying music ends on a dissonant minor chord, strikingly different from the rest of the piece; where "Freedom Day" usually ended on a higher note, in this final phrase the last syllables fall a half step down, leading to a feeling un unfulfillment.[119]

The apex of this album lies in its third movement, titled, "Triptych: Prayer / Protest / Peace." This singular piece is broken down into three sections, the first of which being Prayer. This section only contains Lincoln and Roach, with Lincoln vocalizing in a gospel style with no actual, verbal lyrics and Roach accompanying her on the drum set in a slow somber tone.[120] Following a drumroll that gets progressively faster and louder, Lincoln screams as we enter Protest.[121] She screams on and off in ranging tones and volumes for roughly a minute and fifteen seconds as Roach plays in a frantic cacophony symbolizing the protest to the current state of the country and the experience of protesting for civil rights in America.[122] This moves into the Peace section of the song, returning to the hymn-adjacent vocalization along with Roach's accompaniment. The violent middle section of this song stands in stark contrast to the other two sections as well as the overall mood of the album thus far. The two prior tracks contain slower, stoic, and somber tones to them, while this third piece is turbulent, aggressive, and urgent. This change in tone is representative of the musicians shift within the movement from the traditional non-violent tactics towards a more militant and nationalistic stance.

[119] Roach and Lincoln.
[120] Roach and Lincoln.
[121] Roach and Lincoln.
[122] Roach and Lincoln.

This shift towards militancy and nationalism is palpable through the rest of the album, with the last two tracks "All Africa" and "Tears for Johannesburg" are meant to illustrate the fight for equality in Africa.[123] The first of these two pieces contains additional members of the rhythm section with conguero (a person who plays conga drums) Babatunde Olatunji playing a spread of percussive instruments while Lincoln lists off over thirty different African peoples.[124] This is done with vocalizations taking place in the background by Max Roach.[125] The final track of the album returns to Lincoln's vocalizations, but in a mournful sound reminiscent of wailing.[126] This whole album, but primarily the last two tracks, were so political in their messaging that the album was banned from the Republic of South Africa.[127]

This album was released as a studio recording, receiving generally positive reviews from *Down Beat* and *Metronome* magazines, describing it as "devastating music… an artistic triumph" and "literally pulls the listener out of his chair, charges straight to his emotions… it *must* be heard," respectively.[128] The positive reception of this album came from both the musical community as well as the political community. In the year following the release of this album, it was performed live for the first time at a benefit concert sponsored by CORE on January 15, 1961.[129] This album was performed live in other settings following this benefit concert, such as the fifty-second annual convention for the NAACP later in the same year.[130]

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[123] Roach and Lincoln.
[124] Roach and Lincoln.
[125] Roach and Lincoln.
[126] Roach and Lincoln.
[127] Ali, "What this music is really about."
[128] "The Candid World of Jazz," *Down Beat*, June 22, 1961, http://archive.org/details/sim_down-beat_1961-06-22_28_13.
[129] Christa Gammage, "'We Insist! Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite'—Max Roach (1960)," n.d.; Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 152.
[130] The Crisis Publishing Company Inc, "Youth At Convention," *The Crisis*, 1961-09 1961.

These settings of performance speak to the way musicians thought about the movement and how it was progressing, how the movement thought of these musicians as spokesman, as well as their views of the American people. Abbey Lincoln identified herself as a Black Nationalist in late 1961, claiming that "[B]lack nationalism is a dirty word, something one is supposed to be ashamed of, I really don't understand why."[131] Lincoln continued to state "I, personally, see no reason why white men have to suffer because [B]lack men have suffered. I would like to love them both, but first I have to love myself, and I can only do that by understanding who I am."[132] This connection towards African equality as well as resentment towards the white Americans that oppose her showcase her allegiances towards the Black Power movement in place of the traditional Civil Rights movement.

These same sentiments of resentment are felt by Max Roach as well, who takes a certain degree of offense to white musicians claiming to contribute to the genre of jazz. Roach first states that "Jazz is an extension of the Black artist being relegated to practice his or her craft," to make the point that "this is why I say the white musician has never made a contribution of any consequence, is not making a contribution of any consequence, and will never make a contribution of any consequence to what is known to this society as Jazz."[133] These distinctly charged emotions throughout their music and actions establish Roach and Lincoln as political actors through their craft to provide commentary on their country. The pair verbalize and publicize their views outside the umbrella of the formal social movements through their own

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[131] Barbara Gardner, "Abbey Lincoln - Metamorphosis," *Down Beat*, September 14, 1961, http://archive.org/details/sim_down-beat_1961-09-14_28_19.
[132] Gardner.
[133] Roach, "Jazz, No. 2, 1962," 361.

concerts and music, as well as within the organizations, performing in the "Salute to Southern Students" benefit alongside Mingus and Simone.[134]

The act of speaking out to affirm one's allegiance to a movement may be implicit or unspoken for a time but may require an overt statement to ensure the recognition as a political activist if provoked. Such statements have been restated by Nina Simone over the course of her career. The work of Nina Simone as a political actor, however, does not start with "Mississippi Goddam," though this was her most targeted and poignant piece thus far. This piece was in direct correlation with the current events of violence during the Civil Rights movement, similarly to Mingus' "Fables of Faubus." The urge for Simone to write "Mississippi Goddam" came from multiple factors, but the first act to spark this fervor was the murder of Medgar Evers.[135]

Evers was an organizer and leader in the NAACP who established the Jackson, Mississippi office in 1954, during the weeks following the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.[136] He became an Assistant Field Secretary for the NAACP in the same year and investigated violence committed against Black people in Mississippi through the murders of local activists such as Reverend George Lee as well as against civilians such as Emmitt Till.[137] He maintained his position until June 12, 1963, when he was shot in his driveway by white supremacist Byron De La Beckwith.[138] This murder, followed by the bombing of the 16th Street

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[134] Monson, "Monk Meets SNCC," 191.
[135] Garland, "Nina Simone The High Priestess of Soul."
[136] Medgar Wiley Evers, Myrlie Evers-Williams, and Manning Marable, *The Autobiography of Medgar Evers: A Hero's Life and Legacy Revealed through His Writings, Letters, and Speeches* (New York: Basic Civitas/Harper Collins, 2005), 14, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/5710213.
[137] Evers, Evers-Williams, and Marable, 15–17.
[138] Evers, Evers-Williams, and Marable, 262.

Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama just three months later, was the tipping point for Simone.

On September 15, 1963, a bomb was placed just outside the basement of the church and was set off prior to the first youth service, killing four children.[139] The church had become a base of operations for the Civil Rights movement in Birmingham, referred to as a type of "Ground Zero" where the NAACP would organize and have guest speakers.[140] Both of these events prompted major response from the movement and its leaders, as well as artists such as poets and musicians.

Following these two events, a fire was lit inside Simone to shift into a more active role in the struggle. After hearing over the radio about the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing, Simone went to her in-house studio and began writing.[141] Truthfully, her first reaction was to go to the garage to build a "zip gun," but was persuaded against it by her husband, Andrew Stroud.[142] This gut reaction towards violence appears to be a sign of change in Simone, who months prior held meetings with officers in SNCC to help organize marches.[143] This also sets her apart from the traditional Civil Rights movement leader Martin Luther King, Jr., who said in his eulogy following the bombing "in spite of the darkness of this hour, we must not despair. We must not become bitter, nor must we harbor the desire to retaliate with violence."[144]

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[139] Tracy David Snipe and Sarah J. Collins Rudolph, *The 5th Little Girl: Soul Survivor of the 16th Street Baptist Church Bombing (the Sarah Collins Rudolph Story)* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2021), 84–87, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/12449423.
[140] Snipe and Collins Rudolph, 48–49.
[141] Cohodas, *Princess Noire*, 144–45.
[142] Alan Light, *What Happened, Miss Simone? A Biography*, First edition (New York: Crown Archetype, 2016), 98, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/10505852; Cohodas, *Princess Noire*, 145.
[143] Cohodas, *Princess Noire*, 139.
[144] "For Addie, Carol & Cynthia: 'They Have Something to Say', by Martin Luther King Jr - 1963," Speakola, June 6, 2020, https://speakola.com/eulogy/martin-luther-king-for-four-victims-birmingham-bombing-1963.

It was expressed that Simone did not care for protest songs, claiming that they were "too simple and unimaginative," and feeling that they often ended up "stripping the dignity away from the individuals they celebrated."[145] Prior to her joining the protest genre of music, Simone was seen as a powerful voice of soul—often compared to Billy Holiday—as a "supper club songstress for the elite."[146] Her association with elite spaces is notable, as Simone's first entry into the protest genre took place in a concert held at Carnegie Hall, much like Duke Ellington. "Blackbird" was performed for the first time at this concert, on a recording that would become *Nina Simone at Carnegie Hall.* Much like the response incurred by Ellington, the message of this piece was apparently missed by those listening. It was received as a piece about unfulfilled love.[147] It was not until Simone spoke to *Jet* magazine where she stated that the piece was meant to address the racial crisis facing the country.[148] Simone learned her lesson, and her next protest piece left no room for misinterpretation.

"Mississippi Goddam" was written within an hour and was put into the next performance she was scheduled for, a club in Los Angeles named Small's Paradise West.[149] Simone performed the piece in September of 1963, and received loud applause from her audience. Each time she performed the piece throughout the early 1960s, she introduced it the same way, including at her performance at Carnegie Hall the following year; "the name of this tune is Mississippi Goddam, and I mean every word of it."[150] Rather than being a work of slow and melancholy lament, this work had and upbeat pace and tempo, with nothing but harsh and biting

[145] Cohodas, *Princess Noire*, 145.
[146] Garland, "Nina Simone The High Priestess of Soul."
[147] Cohodas, *Princess Noire*, 136.
[148] "New York Beat," *Jet*, August 15, 1963.
[149] "Paradise West," *California Eagle*, September 26, 1963.
[150] Nina Simone, *Mississippi Goddam- Live At Carnegie Hall, New York, 1964*, 1964, https://open.spotify.com/album/6WP4eNaAHl2a1KNp4QN6Nr.

lyrics. Through her experiences performing this song in different venues and starting them the same way prior to Carnegie Hall, Simone established her relationship with the audience. This relationship is for the musician to verbalize and vocalize what her audience has been seeing and thinking.

The aggressiveness of her lyrics permeates the entire piece, with references to the ongoings of the movement as it unfolds. Her verses contain talks of "hound dogs on my trail" and "school children sittin' in jail," referring to the Children's Crusade in Alabama which led to police officers and dogs attacked children marching in protest.[151] The work also contains two sections of call in response between Simone and her trio, first of which being Simone reiterating bigoted words hurled at Black Americans, and the second being the goals of the Civil Rights movement and her commentary on the progress being made.[152] The response heard from the trio in both sections is "too slow," meaning the way Black American workers are seen by white Americans, and that the progress of the Civil Rights movement is moving too slow.[153] The chorus of the piece runs:

> Alabama's gotten me so upset
> Tennessee made me lose my rest
> And everybody knows about Mississippi Goddam[154]

This chorus opens the piece and over the course of her performances she has altered this chorus to further annunciate the point of the song, with a recording in 1966 replacing "Tennessee" with "Watts" in light of the Watts Riot, as well certain recordings during 1967-1968

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[151] Simone; "The Children's Crusade," National Museum of African American History and Culture, accessed February 28, 2024, https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/childrens-crusade.
[152] Simone, *Mississippi Goddam- Live At Carnegie Hall, New York, 1964*.
[153] Simone.
[154] Simone.

replacing it for "Lurleen Wallace," former governor of Alabama.[155] The ritual updating of her lyrics to maintain an up to date status of her work cements Simone as an activist, a woman providing a constantly refreshed commentary on the state of her country. This constant rewriting promotes active engagement from her audience and forces them to listen to what she is talking about, as what made her "lose [her] rest" yesterday is not the same was what should make you lose your rest today.

This is even more apparent when commentary is inserted between verses. During the performance of this work in the days following the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr., Simone talks to her audience following the first call and response sections. Simone states:

> If you have been moved at all
> And you know my songs at all,
> For God's Sake, join me.
> Don't sit back there,
> The time is too late now,
> Good God,
> You know?
> The king is dead,
> The king of love is dead.
> I ain't bout to be non-violent, honey![156]

The outward expression of frustration and urgency of this piece, combined with the added degree of violence following the death of King seats Simone in a position closer towards the ideology of the Black Power movement than the Civil Rights movement, further away from the non-violent action of organization that she participated in previously. Regardless of connections to movement ideology, Simone, Roach, and Lincoln, used their lyrics to express themselves as

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[155] Nina Simone, *Mississippi Goddam*, vol. The Very Best of Nina Simone 1967-1982-Sugar in My Bowl, 1998, https://open.spotify.com/track/175Ef68hYgpfcm6zeKCH0L; Nina Simone, *Mississippi Goddam- Live at the Newport Jazz Festival, 1966*, vol. You've Got To Learn, 1965, https://open.spotify.com/track/175Ef68hYgpfcm6zeKCH0L.
[156] Simone, *Mississippi Goddam*.

activists separate from the movements, watching the way that the movements have struggled with the country in its fight for rights, taking to the stage to express their sentiments. Following all these independent entries to the political sphere, these musicians fold into the movements, acting now within them to promote them and help push them further, no longer acting wholly separate or integrated within.

Connection between Jazz, the Movement, and the Recognition of Musicians as Activists

The distinct formation and maintenance of the connections between jazz and the Civil Rights movement are often overlooked. The genres of music that are commonly linked to the Civil Rights movements are often limited to spirituals and folk music vocalizing through lyrics and music the ongoing struggles that are taking place. This is widely accepted to be the standard mode of operation, with the movements driving this musical evolution through their actions and decisions. Musicians, especially jazz musicians, use their music as a point of entry into the political and social spheres. They enter these spheres through their audience, extending an invitation to them to listen deeper and to think harder about what is expressed to them. Doing so instead of using the movement's organizations as their point of entry leads to the musicians' response being independent from the organized movements.

This connection between jazz and the civil rights movement has likely so far been missed in the scholarship because of jazz musicians' independence in comparison to other types of artists who wrote protest music. This autonomy is crucial to understanding jazz musicians as being entertainers as well as activists who perform their activism through entertainment. Performing these works at benefit concerts sponsored by organizations meant the musicians were meeting different kinds of audiences than night clubs or concert halls. Musicians use their status to draw in fans and ask them to listen by engaging with audiences who came without pretense of

politics. The way in which these musicians used their craft to participate in activism sets them apart from other members of society who kept their career and craft separate from their feelings on protest and activism. This distinction elevates the musician to a level of performance activism that had not yet been established.

The music that was created and performed independently received so much positive feedback and acclaim throughout the country that political organizations such as the NAACP, CORE, SNCC, and the SCLC reached out to these musicians. These organizations recognized these musicians as formal advocates and activists whose voices had the ability to spread their shared message throughout the country. Even the music that can be interpreted as a response to these movements can still be seen as using the same mode of inspiration as other inciting events. The recognition of musical evolution as a separate agitator acting alongside traditional social movements, then working within the movements after initial entry, leading to music now being made about the movements as well, shows an omnidirectional response to significant events and drives further connections between the separate responses to produce adjacent responses.

Jazz is the best suited genre to bridge the gap between music and the Civil Rights movement due to the genre being created by African Americans with the purpose of vocalizing their struggles. Jazz music grew out of folk music and spirituals, and seeing as these genres are associated with the movement, it stands to reason that jazz should as well. This music is a form of political and cultural expression, not just music. This is achieved through the complement of instrumentation to either evoke emotion on its own, express a message previously voiced, or further accentuate and emphasize the lyrics being sung.

The style of this music as well lends itself greatly to be employed in this way. The call and response in "Fables of Faubus" and in "Mississippi Goddam" are clear in their articulation of their struggle, their issue, and who they take issue with.[157] The creation of motifs in their music through their instrumentation can be carried by the phrasing of the lyrics, adding emphasis to the words that they are saying, further articulating their frustrations. These frustrations have the freedom to be properly received by their listeners through the creation of the relationship between the musician and the audience. Audience members attend jazz performances similar to the way members attend marches, rallies, and speeches. People of different walks of life congregate in one location for a similar purpose, to listen to the original works of a performer, whether that be music or a speech addressing injustice. The relative safety of the space within a jazz concert derives from the trust that all those partaking in this event approve of jazz, those who make it, and resonate with its artistic expression of the world.[158]

The entry of the musician into the spheres of politics and social movements places them adjacent to the Civil Rights organizations in terms of how they view the ongoings of the country. Nina Simone's response to the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in "Mississippi Goddam" was written an hour after she heard the story on the news.[159] The movements response to this included a telegram from Martin Luther King, Jr. to the governor of Alabama blaming him for the death of the four children in the bombing.[160]

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[157] *Charles Mingus – Original Faubus Fables*; Simone, *Mississippi Goddam- Live At Carnegie Hall, New York, 1964*.
[158] Josephson and Trilling-Josephson, *Cafe Society*, 39; Gerald Horne, *Jazz and Justice: Racism and the Political Economy of the Music* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2019), 207, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/11903184; Frank A. Salamone, *The Culture of Jazz: Jazz as Critical Culture* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2009), 20, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/7412425.
[159] Cohodas, *Princess Noire*, 145.
[160] National Park Service, "16th Street Baptist Church Bombing (1963) (U.S. National Park Service)," accessed March 14, 2024, https://www.nps.gov/articles/16thstreetbaptist.htm.

Both these responses were done within days of the event occurring, and both reached out to their own audience to garner support and shed light on the injustice taking place. Musicians such as Simone were not restricted the way Civil Rights leaders were, since their speech and organization and actions represented a formal organization and required an extra level of caution. The independence of the musician, compounded with the medium of music being synonymous with personal expression, allows for the free critique of the politics of the country and the way in which the world is (and, more often is not) responding to these events.

There is a certain degree of freedom of speech with little threat of repercussions when discussing protest jazz music. These musicians are established, renowned individuals, who had created around them a community of like-minded individuals, individuals who had similar thoughts on jazz and racial politics. This community created itself through the self-selection of audience members, all of whom stand on common ground as loving the art of jazz. The capitalization on this relative lack of threat can be seen in the acts of Louis Armstrong. He utilized his status as a musician and entertainer to both reach his music-loving audience about this issue at a level that they would be able to hear and identify with, and to inflict palpable damage to the nation's government through his cancellation of his tour of Russia.[161] Armstrong leaning into his notoriety became a tool that could be used by others who were sympathetic to the movement, and following this event began to protest alongside other entertainers such as Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, and Lena Horne, among others in picket lines in Atlanta.[162]

Benefit concerts acted as the merger between social movement organizations and jazz musicians, with all the above-mentioned musicians participating to promote the movement

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[161] "'I'm Still Louis Armstrong–Colored.'"
[162] Cohodas, *Princess Noire*, 136.

through their music.[163] These benefits also allowed for collaboration between entertainers of all kinds, not just musicians. Acting couple Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee came together with Sidney Poitier to create the short film *Uhuru*, which was inspired by the *Freedom Now Suite*.[164] Benefit concerts blended the sphere of jazz with the space of social progress, political change, and civil unrest. The concept of performing at benefits is not unique, as Duke Ellington debuted his own *Black, Brown, and Beige* at one of these types of concerts—though in the case of Ellington the benefit was not towards the Civil Rights movement.[165] Similar to Armstrong, Ellington chose a specific political point to critique the actions of the country, drawing attention to the way the country has been acting towards its own citizens while it tries to address the way it is acting towards other countries.

This unique entry point leads to a different relationship between the musician and the movements in the cases when they do overlap. The creation of protest music by these musicians prior to their engagement with the movements allowed them to perform these pieces in spaces that were seemingly untouched by the movement, and later brought the movement into these spaces. This action places musicians alongside these movements rather than underneath them, letting them act independently and in their own style to shape the movements' progression. Roach's *Freedom Now* suite was not recorded in a live setting such as Mingus' "Fables of Faubus," but was allowed to be performed live at the 52nd annual convention of the NAACP for the roughly 1500 members and was promoted through local and national news outlets.[166] Later in

[163] Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 154.
[164] "Strictly Ad Lib," *Down Beat*, May 11, 1961, http://archive.org/details/sim_down-beat_1961-05-11_28_10.
[165] Lawrence, *Duke Ellington and His World*, 315.
[166] Arizona Sun, "Arizona Sun. [Volume] (Phoenix, Ariz.) 1942-196?"

that same year, the NAACP sponsored Roach to go on tour across the nation performing the *Freedom Now Suite*.[167]

This sponsorship brought the NAACP into the night club, fully utilizing the space of the clubs. The ability for Roach to travel the country performing this protest album and being sponsored by the NAACP gave the movement new voices, and broadened the way their messages were expressed, now through the lens of jazz. This brought organizations such as the NAACP directly into the space of the jazz club, rather than jazz trying to work its way into the socio-political sphere. Roach and Lincoln also performed at benefits for different organizations, such as the SNCC and CORE in addition to performing for Malcolm X.[168]

Though this is not always the case, musicians do create artwork based on reactions to these movements. The reactions that musicians had to social movements have always been the point of reference when establishing relationships between the two. This is due to there being clear links between pivotal events and musicians' responses. In an instance of the music evolving from responses by the movement, the music of John Coltrane plays well into this specific event. Coltrane wrote the song "Alabama" following the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing, but rather than responding directly to the event without the consultation of the movement, Coltrane based the rhythm and tone of this work off the eulogy given by Martin Luther King, Jr. three days later in honor of three of the girls who had died.[169]

These types of songs are widely accepted and used to promote the general flow of influence model due to the expressed clear messaging in rapid succession to these events taking

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[167] "Caught in the Act," *Down Beat*, August 31, 1961, http://archive.org/details/sim_down-beat_1961-08-31_28_18.
[168] Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 157.
[169] Matt Micucci, "Nov. 18, 1963…John Coltrane Records 'Alabama' - JAZZIZ Magazine," November 18, 2016, https://www.jazziz.com/nov-18-1963-john-coltrane-records-alabama/.

place. Following the death of Martin Luther King, Jr., there was a large influx of music written by musicians that had been participating in benefits and had clearer established ties to the movements. This can be seen again through Nina Simone in her rework of “Mississippi Goddam” to include the words “the king of love is dead” and then creating the song “Why? The King of Love is Dead.”[170] These songs were performed at the same time at the Westbury Music Festival, with “Why?” being written a day prior by Gene Taylor, Nina Simone’s bassist.[171] This is the clearest example of the impact that the events of the country and the goings on of these movement had on musicians.

Though not written upon his death, Martin Luther King, Jr. also inspired John Coltrane to produce the work “Reverend King” with his wife Alice Coltrane on the *Cosmic Music* album.[172] This work is not widely accepted as a part of the protest genre of music as it was not released when it was written, but released following the death of Coltrane, this piece works to showcase the impact and inspiration that these movements had on musicians both before and after joining these organized efforts. Other examples of this are reactions to the death of Malcolm X, with Archie Shepp releasing *Fire Music* in late 1965; the third track of this album was an ode, entitled, “Malcolm, Malcolm – Semper Malcolm.”[173] The impact that Malcolm X and the Black Power movement had on Shepp and the continued efforts of the movement following his death prompted another album from Shepp years later entitled *Poem for Malcolm.*[174] Further, the notions of Black Power and Black Nationalism bled into the music of Max Roach and Abbey

[170] Simone, *Mississippi Goddam*; *Nina Simone Why The King of Love Is Dead (Live)*.
[171] *Nina Simone Why The King of Love Is Dead (Live)*; “Song of the Day: Nina Simone, ‘Why? (The King of Love Is Dead)’ - JAZZIZ Magazine,” January 18, 2021, https://www.jazziz.com/song-of-the-day-nina-simone-why-the-king-of-love-is-dead/.
[172] *Cosmic Music*, 1968, https://open.spotify.com/album/5iq4f0Z80VlZfEoBrdlejM.
[173] *Fire Music*, 1965, https://open.spotify.com/album/1vz97Cr9Jw5A4tJnA7dLNk.
[174] *Poem For Malcom*, 1969, https://open.spotify.com/album/2rfjn5cAyoNWAoVFdcO4LH.

Lincoln that the next album they produced following *We Insist* was called *Percussion Bitter Sweet* and led with the song "Garvey's Ghost."[175] This piece was meant to pay homage to the proponent of Black separation, Marcus Garvey.

These musical pieces of protest that respond to social movements or the deaths of leaders must be considered alongside the rest of the artists' histories and discographies. Reducing musicians who do create responsive songs of protest as being only responsive to social movements—as opposed to sometimes actually acting ahead of the movements—negates all their own experience and agency. These artists often acted of their own free will to express their own opinions; they were not mouthpieces to express the opinions of the movements. Though they used their voices and their songs to promote social movements and act as conduits of their ideas into new spaces, their initial act of resistance was through their own music and performance of their songs. These musicians did not consult organizations when writing lyrics or when planning show tours. They experienced the events of the country, and independently wrote and produced these songs of protest to express their stance on the country to their listeners. These musicians need to be seen as activists just as much as they are musicians because they blended their activism into their music and professed both on stage.

All these pieces—in their inspiration, creation, and performance—work to spread the messages of social movements into new spaces. The collection of individuals for the purpose of listening to music became a channel to spark discussions on the state of the world. Musicians provide commentary among their peers in a safe environment through their craft, and as a result, spread this commentary to others. The atmosphere of the jazz show provided the room for

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[175] *Percussion Bitter Sweet*, 1961, https://open.spotify.com/album/6MIK88yegzaV7eT2yr1IaR.

musicians to speak on the topics outside their sphere and discuss how it is impacting the lives of everyone who can hear it. Still, it must be clear that not all spaces facilitated honest and open relationships between the musician and the audience.

Segregated spaces, such as the Cotton Club, did not allow the musician to form a relationship any deeper than a performer to an audience. These musicians did thrive in integrated spaces like the Café Society, which made space for a much more human dynamic; no longer were the performer and audience two-dimensional characters, this was a whole and faceted person performing in front of an audience of whole and faceted persons who came to listen. This shift made room for the musician's opinions to be expressed in the form of protest songs. These performances however are not perceived as rallies and marches and do not incur the same degree of violent response and over-policing. Records for sale are not seen as propaganda, though some would argue against the merit of jazz. Jazz allowed for these musicians to come together and turn their musical stage into a political platform, and most importantly to ask their listeners into join the movement.

Conclusion

Through the use of different venues and different audiences, musicians have been able to use those relationships to their advantage. Musicians engage with a live audience to express their thoughts and opinions about events taking place outside the room they are performing in. They make use when they receive assurance from the audience, whether it be a smaller night club, a benefit concert, or an upper-class concert hall. The security of the space musicians perform in gives them the freedom to express themselves without fear of dangerous backlash and let them participate in the world around them through the safer lens of music. Jazz musicians created their

own community of social organization through their clubs, their cohorts, and their audience members. Without this space and freedom of expression, the protest genre of jazz would not exist outside the social movements of Civil Rights and Black Power.

Once this space was deemed safe to protest in, these musicians did so. They sang and played about the ways that their country had wronged them and was continuing to wrong them with reckless abandon. As the movements took notice of this, they began to bring these musicians under their banner, thereby allowing the musicians to bring formal organizations into the space of jazz. Organizations for Civil Rights and Black Power went from organizing in churches to sponsoring musical tours across the country. Music was the entry for entertainers into the movement, but jazz also acted as the movement's entry to the night club. Both played off each other to create an overlay of spaces that promoted both groups. This promotion and propagation were not only through sponsorship and hosting events, but through the literal characteristics of the pieces being played. Their lyrics, instrumentation and the employment of those instruments weaved together to express the attitudes of the Civil Rights movement.

These movements were personified in sound, through the manner of tone in which the music was being played and the lyrics being sung. These works of protest were heard as such, with live performances hearing applause and in some cases laughter by the audience. The affirmation of sentiment by audience members cheering to Nina Simone's comments about no longer being non-violent embodies the dialogue taking place between musician and listener. Musicians brought violence into the club through screaming and wailing, abrupt percussive sounds, and naming the groups that wish to do harm against their community. They took the outside violence against the Black community and immortalized it in song within the club. Going beyond the average listener, musicians such as Armstrong and Ellington needed to formally

express their grievances to the public, providing a detailed commentary of their opinions on the country. These musicians used their power and notoriety on stage to translate their voice from being heard in song to being listened to in protest. They took to the stage not as a performer to appease white audience members, but to express their disdain for the way that the country has conducted themselves towards Black Americans.

The freedom to perform acts of protest through music and to use one's status as a musician to reach the listener at a deeper level only occurs through the safety that certain groups can provide. Despite how popular a musician may be, addressing injustice and directly insulting political officials and white elite could not be done in segregated clubs like the Cotton Club. Music has always been an avenue to express change, growth, and push through social barricades. Pianist Earl Hines claimed, "I think it was musicians and theatrical people who first began to change the strictly segregated way of life."[176] The community of the club and the merging of ideas and individuals through their craft created a space to form bridges between racial lines, and then progressed to push further as social movements developed over the course of the twentieth century.

These musicians acted within their own sphere of influence to create a space to discuss social and political issues without the consultation of organized movements outside their spheres. These musicians did not follow up the traditional movement in their struggles and write music on the aftereffects of them. Musicians are not waiting to document the actions of others in song, they are active participants in these movements and writing their own speeches on the state of the world. Jazz musicians are activists, acting independently through their own mode of conveying

[176] Stanley Dance and Earl Hines, *The World of Earl Hines*, The World of Swing ; v. 2 (New York: Scribner, 1977), 23, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/137712.

information. These musicians wrote commentaries on the world for their own space and to share their experiences with their listeners and peers. These performers used their art to bring music into the world of Civil Rights organizations and express the opinions of Black performers outside the confines of these organizations.

As stated previously, these musicians did not create music under the umbrella and protection of groups such as the NAACP or CORE. These musicians were not associated with the Freedom Songs of SNCC that were used to bring energy to the group on marches and provide a "linkage with the history of the African American struggle."[177] Nor were these musicians acting under the record label established by SNCC that produced "Freedom in the Air" and a documentary on Albany.[178] They created their music in the spaces that they cultivated through jazz culture in clubs and playing off the mentality of their peers. Once these protest pieces were already out for all to hear, these musicians were then brought into league with these groups to help the promotion of their shared interests and ideas. These groups allowed musicians to perform in different spaces than before, and in return, the musicians were able to allow these organizations formal entry to the world of jazz.

This alternate space that the social movements can occupy allowed them to evolve in different ways than they could have without it. The connection to jazz allowed for a greater spread of ideas across the country and the world, such as MLK being able to speak on the connections between the two at the 1964 Berlin Jazz Festival.[179] Jazz became an avenue for the

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[177] Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, ed., *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 110, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/3029441.
[178] Guy Carawan, Alan Lomax, and Ben Gay, *Freedom In The Air - A Documentary On Albany, Georgia 1961-1962*, 1962, https://www.discogs.com/release/11505009-Guy-Carawan-Alan-Lomax-Rev-Ben-Gay-Freedom-In-The-Air-A-Documentary-On-Albany-Georgia-1961-1962.
[179] Elizabeth Winterhalter, "Why MLK Believed Jazz Was the Perfect Soundtrack for Civil Rights," JSTOR Daily, October 16, 2019, https://daily.jstor.org/why-mlk-believed-jazz-was-the-perfect-soundtrack-for-civil-rights/.

movement to follow, rather than the musician trailing the movement and its developments. The musicians, however, did not lead the movement but acted alongside it. They worked in tandem with one another to the benefit of both. This interconnection led musicians to continue to make music in line with the movements, and further to commemorate those fighting and those who were lost.

The ability for musical space to bleed into other spheres of influence shows the versatility of music and of its performers. The interlaced history of jazz and the Civil Rights movement is multifaceted and does not have one mode of interpretation. To see the movement as distinctly preceding the musicians and their ability to write and perform such protest songs is too closed-minded and does not consider the agency of the musician and their ability to act independently to suit their needs. These needs being the need to perform music that speaks to their frustration with the way that the country has treated the Black community. Performing these songs are meaningful acts of protest and professing this protest through concert and through recordings, some of which brought them closer to the movement, and further, brought the movement closer towards its goals. The actions of these musicians as musical leaders and independent activists articulate the complex weaving of space between jazz and the Civil Rights movement, and the employment of that space in the struggle towards progress.

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