

SELMA FREEDOM SONGS

A Documentary Recording by Carl Benkert FH 5594

INTRODUCTION

Those who made the journey to Selma at the time of the march to Montgomery and shared the frustrations and fears of the Black Belt Negro, even if only for a few hours, were privileged to see life in a vital totality never otherwise experienced. Values and purposes became clear and concise as they took their place beside their oppressed brother in the non-violent battle against man's barbarous mistreatment of his fellow man. (Through all the events of those days music was an essential element; music in song expressing hope and sorrow; music to pacify or excite; music with the power to engage the intelligence and even touch the spirit. In these circumstances of tension many freedom songs were adapted or created to suit contemporary situations, ideas or personalities. Names like Al Lingo and Jim Clark came to sound as established in Americana as Casey Jones. One song which is repeated several times is a product of the Selma struggle. A young Negro entering a downtown hardware store was asked by the clerk, "Which side are you on, Boy?" For his reply, "I'm on the side of freedom", the clerk produced an axe handle and beat him.

Monday, March 15th. In the morning, a half block from Brown A. M. E. Chapel on Sylvan Street, marchers turned back in the week before were still maintaining their vigil of prayer and song. Here a new march attempt was halted bringing several hundred demonstrators against a hundred or more troopers and troopers and police. The tension that followed was broken by Hosea Williams of Dr. Martin Luther King's SCLC staff who led the marchers in traditional spirituals. (Side One, Bands 1, 2) A barricade, tabbed the Berlin Wall, previously set up by the police to define the line of restriction, was now reerected as the singing continued into the day. (Side One, Bands 3, 4, 5) Inside, Brown Chapel was crowded with people from all parts of the country singing before the speeches and prayers marking the death of Rev. James Reeb. (Side One, Bands 6, 7, 8) Afterward Dr. King led them in a march to the Dallas County courthouse placing a wreath at the door.

Tuesday, March 16th. During the day, James Orange, an SCLC worker, directed the group gathered in Brown Chapel in song (Side One, Band 9) later sending them out in pairs to visit homes in the Negro neighborhoods of Selma. It was profoundly impressive to see the visiting clerics, nuns and laymen moving out in all directions, hand in hand with their guides, mostly children, to be personally introduced to people and conditions. Several march attempts in the afternoon were turned back by Sheriff Jim Clark and another in the early evening was stopped and confined just outside Brown Chapel by Commissioner of Public Safety Wilson Baker. Finally, sitting on the church steps and sidewalk, the demonstrators sang forth for hours often with words devised in that moment to speak to the officers and troopers present. (Side One, Bands 10, 11, 12)

Wednesday, March 17th. Two little girls, about five years old, who were frequently in the forefront of the group singing in Brown Chapel, sang alone for this recording. (Side Two, Band 3) Outside in the backyards I had just passed other youngsters engaged in their game "State Trooper" in which half the number lined up, locked arms, and proceeded to march singing "We Shall Overcome", then were set upon and beat down by the others wielding sticks and branches. In situations like these, one must observe the tragedy: that the misdeeds of our immature society are imprinted in the minds of innocent children.

Thursday, March 18th. In the Zion Methodist Church of Marion, where Jimmie Lee Jackson was killed, an evening mass meeting was attended to overflowing by residents and visitors who had spent the day working in the counties north of Selma. (Side Two, Bands 4, 5) Participating in "We Shall Overcome" is always a moving occasion for the spirit, but this was for the few outsiders present the most powerful and electrifying yet experienced. The meeting was reluctantly dismissed by Al Turner but the enthusiastic young folks stayed on to sing with big James Orange. (Side Two, Bands 6, 7)

Freedom Songs: Selma, Alabama

A Documentary Recording
by Carl Benkert

ALL PHOTOS BY TOSHI SEEGER



"OH WALLACE"

SIDE ONE:

"Let's sing a song we truly understand and believe in...."

Band 1.

(a) GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU

God will take care of you
Through every day all the way
He will take care of you
God will take care of you.
Repeat

(b) CLIMBING JACOB'S LADDER

We are climbing Jacob's ladder (3x)
Soldiers of the cross

Every rung goes higher, higher (3x)
Soldiers of the cross

Do you think I'll make a soldier (3x)
Soldiers of the cross.

Band 2.

(a) STEAL AWAY

Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus
Steal away, steal away home
I ain't got long to stay here (REFRAIN)

My Lord, He calls me
He calls me by the thunder
The trumpet sounds within my soul
I ain't got long to stay here.
Refrain

"Here's another one that we used to sing on the farm back down in the red hills of Georgia that I learned to love at an early age... the song of a sharecropper. And it was this one...."

(b) NOBODY KNOWS THE TROUBLE I'VE SEEN

Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
Nobody knows but Jesus
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
Glory hallelujah.

Band 3.

COME BY HERE

Come by here, my Lordy, come by here (3x)
Oh, Lord, come by here.
Refrain

Wallace needs you, won't you come by here (3x)
Refrain

We need you, Lordy, won't you come by here (3x)
Oh, Lord, come by here.

Band 4.

BERLIN WALL

(We're gonna break this Berlin Wall, Berlin Wall,
Berlin Wall
We're gonna break this Berlin Wall in Selma,
Alabama.)

We're gonna stay here 'til it fall, 'til it fall, 'til
it fall
We're gonna stay here 'til it fall in Selma,
Alabama.

Hate is the thing that built that wall, built that
wall, built that wall,
Hate is the thing that built that wall in Selma,
Alabama.

Love is the thing that'll make it fall, make it fall,
make it fall,
Love is the thing that'll make it fall, in Selma,
Alabama.

We're gonna stand here 'til it fall, 'til it fall,
'til it fall,
We're gonna stand here 'til it fall in Selma,
Alabama.

Band 5.

WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED

Tell Mayor Smitherman, we shall not be moved (2x)

Just like a tree that's planted by the water
Oh, we shall not be moved. (REFRAIN)

All the state troopers, we shall not be moved
Refrain (2x)

Tell Governor Wallace, we shall not be moved
Refrain (2x)

We love everybody, we shall not be moved
Refrain (2x)

Tell Jim Clark, Lord, we shall not be moved
Refrain (2x)

We shall not, we shall not be moved
Refrain (2x)

On our way to the courthouse.....

Band 6.

OH, FREEDOM!

Oh, freedom, oh, freedom, oh, freedom over me,
over me,
And before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my
grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.

No more Jim Crow, no more Jim Crow, no more
Jim Crow over me, over me,
And before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my
grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.

Band 7.

IF YOU MISS ME FROM THE BACK OF THE BUS

(If you miss me from the back of the bus)
You can't find me nowhere
Come on up to the front of the bus
I'll be riding up there. (3x)

Come on up to the front of the bus
I'll be riding up there.

If you miss me from the Berlin Wall
You can't find me nowhere
Come on over to the courthouse
I'll be standing right there (3x)

Come on over to the courthouse
I'll be standing right there.



ROUTE 80

Band 8.
WOKE UP THIS MORNING WITH MY MIND
STAYED ON FREEDOM

Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on
freedom (3x)

Hallelu, hallelu, hallelu, hallelujah.

Walkin' and talkin' with my mind stayed on
freedom (3x)
Hallelu, hallelu, hallelu, hallelujah.

Band 9.
(a) WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON, BOY

Which side are you on, boy, which side are you
on, everybody
Which side are you on, boy, which side are you
on?

(REFRAIN)

Don't 'tom' to Mr. Charlie, don't listen to his
lies
Us black folks, we ain't got a chance unless we
organize. Oh,
Refrain

My daddy was a freedom fighter, and I'm his
freedom son
I'll stick to this freedom fight, until every battle's
won. Oh,
Refrain

(b) KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE PRIZE

Paul and Silas was bound in jail
Had no money for to go their bail
Keep your eye on the prize, hold on, why don't
you hold on
Hold on, hold on,
Keep your eye on the prize, hold on, why don't
you hold on.

Paul and Silas began to shout
Cell doors open and they walked out
Keep your eye on the prize, hold on, why don't
you hold on
Hold on, hold on,
Keep your eye on the prize, hold on, why don't
you hold on.



Band 10.
EVERYBODY WANTS FREEDOM

(Freedom)
Everybody wants freedom,
Everybody wants freedom, freedom, freedom

LBJ wants freedom
LBJ wants freedom
LBJ wants freedom, freedom, freedom

Band 11.
Freedom! Now! (Chanting)

Band 12.
(a) GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

Go tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and everywhere
Go tell it on the mountain
To let my people go.

(REFRAIN)

I would not be Mr. Baker, I'll tell you the reason
why
I wouldn't be pleasing my maker, and I couldn't
get ready to die.
Refrain

I would not be Al Lingo, I'll tell you the reason
why
When my Lord calls to go up to heaven, it might
be Bingo
Refrain

I would not be a posse man, I'll tell you the reason
why
I'm afraid my Lord might call for me
And I couldn't get ready to die.
Refrain

I would not be an Uncle Tom, I'll tell you the
reason why
Because an Uncle Tom just ain't nowhere
in these new Freedom songs.
Refrain

I would not be Sheriff Clark, I'll tell you the
reason why
I'd be ashamed to walk in the non-violent army
Even after it got dark.
Refrain

(b) WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON, BOY

All you freedom lovers, good news to you I tell,
Of how the freedom fighters came into your town
to dwell.

Oh, which side are you on, boy, which side are
you on,
Which side are you on, boy, which side are you
on?

(REFRAIN)

Oh, listen, Mr. Baker, you're standing in the way
Oh, we'll sit here all night long until the break of
day.
Refrain

Oh, listen, State Trooper, go get your night stick
Because we've got enough heads to hit, and we'll
take every lick.
Refrain

Just go and get your horses, bring your cans of
gas
We'll be here and die like men, until the very last.
Refrain



SIDE TWO:

IN LINE FOR MEALS

Band 1.

OH, WALLACE

(Well, I read in the paper, just the other day)
That the freedom fighters were on their way
They're coming by bus, and airplane, too
They'll even walk if you ask them to.

Oh, Wallace, you never can jail us all
Oh, Wallace, segregation's bound to fall.
(REFRAIN)

Now I'm no preacher, but I can tell
You've got to straighten up or you're bound for
hell
You can tell Wilson Baker and Al Lingo (head of
State Troopers)
That the people in Selma won't take no mo'.
Refrain

Well I've never been to heaven, but I think I'm
right
That the people in heaven are both black and
white
You can tell Jim Clark and Al Lingo
That the people in Selma won't take no mo'.
Refrain

Well, this is the message I wanna you to hear
You know I want our freedom and I want it this
year
So you can tell Jim Clark and all those state guys,
too
I'm gonna have my freedom, they can rope if they
wanna.
Refrain

Got to have those troopers
His name is Joe (Smitherman, Mayor of Selma)
But you tell Joe, we're gonna beg no mo'
We're tired of his mess, we're tired of his jive
We want our freedom in '65.
Refrain

Band 2.

GET ON BOARD

It'll be carrying, carrying, carrying freedom
fighters, fighters, fighters (3x)
Get on board, get on board.

It'll be killing, killing, killing, segregation,
-gation, -gation. (3x)
Get on board, get on board.

It'll be carrying, carrying, carrying all God's
ministers, ministers, ministers (3x)
Get on board, get on board.

Band 3.

AIN'T GONNA LET NOBODY TURN ME ROUND

Ain't gonna let nobody turn me round, Oh, Lord,
turn me round, turn me round
Ain't gonna let nobody turn me round

I'm gonna keep on a-walkin', keep on a-talkin',
marching up to freedom land.
(REFRAIN)

Ain't gonna let no tear gas turn me round, Oh,
Lord, turn me round, turn me round
Ain't gonna let no tear gas turn me round
Refrain

Ain't gonna let no horses turn me round, Oh
Lord, turn me round, turn me round
Ain't gonna let no horses turn me round
Refrain

Ain't gonna let George Wallace turn me round,
Oh, Lord, turn me round, turn me round
Ain't gonna let George Wallace turn me round
Refrain

Band 4.

(a) THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine
(3x)
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

God gave it to me, I'm gonna let it shine (3x)
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

(b) WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON, BOY

Which side are you on, boy, which side are you
on,
Which side are you on, boy, which side are you
on?
(REFRAIN)

Come all you freedom lovers, good news to you
I tell,
Oh how the freedom fighters came into your
town to dwell.
Refrain

Come all you faithful children, lift you your
voices and sing,
Will you follow the Citizen's Council or
Martin Luther King?
Refrain

My daddy was a freedom fighter, and I'm his
freedom son
I'll stick to this freedom fight, until every battle's
won.
Refrain

(c) Freedom! Now! (Chanting and handclapping)

(d) COME BY HERE

Come by here, my Lordy, come by here (3x)
Oh, Lord, come by here.

(REFRAIN)

People are begging, my Lord, come by here (3x)
Refrain

People are suffering, Lord, come by here (3x)
Refrain

People are dying, my Lord, come by here (3x)
Refrain

Band 5.

WE SHALL OVERCOME

We shall overcome, my Lord, we shall overcome,
my Lord,
We shall overcome some day

Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe
We shall overcome some day.

(REFRAIN)

We shall live in peace, we shall live in peace,
We shall live in peace some day
Refrain

God is on our side, God is on our side,
God is on our side today
Refrain

(Hum one stanza during Benediction prayer)
Refrain

We are not afraid, we are not afraid,
We are not afraid today
Refrain

We shall overcome, we shall overcome,
We shall overcome some day
Refrain

Band 6.

(a) AIN'T GONNA LET NOBODY TURN ME AROUND

Ain't gonna let no tear gas turn me round, turn
me round, turn me round
Ain't gonna let no tear gas turn me round

I'm gonna keep on a-walkin', keep on a-talkin',
marching up to freedom land.
(REFRAIN)

Ain't gonna let nobody turn me round, turn me
round, turn me round
Ain't gonna let nobody turn me round

Ain't gonna let George Wallace turn me round,
turn me round, turn me round,
Ain't gonna let George Wallace turn me round
Refrain

(b) Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!

(c) OH, WALLACE

People in Selma are going to heaven
Listen Sheriff Clark, you can hear this plea
You can lock us in the house, you can throw away
the key

Oh, Wallace, you never can jail us all
Oh, Wallace, segregation's bound to fall.
(REFRAIN)

You can push me around, you can throw me
away
But I still want freedom and I want it every day
The people in Marion are here to stay
And you can tell those people, we will
demonstrate.
Refrain

Band 7.

WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON, BOY

All you freedomlovers, you know what I think
Will you follow the non-violent army of
Martin Luther King?

Which side are you on, boy, which side are you
on,
Which side are you on, boy, which side are you
on?

(REFRAIN)

Oh, brother, how do you stand it, Oh, tell me
how you can
Will you be an Uncle Tom or will you be a man?
Refrain

Don't 'tom' to Mr. Charlie, don't listen to his
lies,
Us black folks we haven't got a chance, unless we
organize.
Refrain

They say old George Wallace, he is a mighty mean
man,
Once we get together, boys, we'll take it out of his
hands.



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AFRICA

FD5441 FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF ALGERIA: Songs of the F.L.N. sung in Arabic by soloists with Soldiers Chorus and Native Orchestra; Hymn of the Underground, Story of Today, Oh! De Gaulle, There Is No God But God, Algeria Rebelled, Our Algeria, General De Gaulle, Musical Signature of "Voice of Algerian Republic" (FLN). With notes and song texts. 1-12" 33-1/3 rpm longplay record \$5.95

FD5443 THE FREEDOM SONGS OF THE SOMALI REPUBLIC with Abdullah Kershi and Ahmed Sherif, collected by Chet Williams with Hassan Hussein (wireless) and by Mussa Gallal, accompanied with voices and lute, drums and tambourine. Dulkayaga (For Our Own Land), Madafan (The Most Important), Lumumba, Ma Mahad Aleh (Thank God), Ogaada (Take Care), Walalaha (Brothers), Raqast, Aloh (Oh, My God), Awee (Where?), Alankaa (Blue; Blue Flag). 1-12" 33-1/3 rpm longplay record \$5.95

FC7103 FOLK TALES FROM WEST AFRICA. Authentic stories told in English by Harold Courlander, from the Harold Courlander-George Herzog Book "The Cow-Tail Switch," published by Henry Holt & Co. The Cow-Tail Switch: Younde Goes to Town, Talk; Throw Mountains; Don't Shake Hands with Everybody. 1-10" 33-1/3 rpm longplay \$4.25

FC7110 ASHANTI FOLK TALES FROM GHANA. From The Hat-Shaking Dace and Other Tales from the Gold Coast, by Harold Courlander, Harcourt, Brace & Co. Narrated by Harold Courlander. All Stories are Anansi's, How Anansi Got Them, Anansi, The Oldest of Animals, How Anansi Got Them, Anansi, The Oldest of Animals, How Anansi Proved It, Nyame's Well, Why The Frog Has No Tail, Two Feasts For Anansi, Why Anansi Is Very Thin in the Middle, Anansi Plays Dead, Why Anansi Hides in Dark Corners, The Porcupine's Hoe, And Why There Are Many Holes in Ashanti. 1-10" 33-1/3 rpm longplay record \$4.25