

THERE IS A MESSAGE IN THE MUSIC: AN EXAMINATION OF SOUL MUSIC AS  
PROTEST DISCOURSE

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## ABSTRACT

This research examines the synergistic relationship between popular music and culture. More specifically the research posits soul music produced by various artists during the late 1960s through the early 1970s conveyed lyrics that were viewed as social statements as well as calls for social justice. As soul music began to take form and flood the airwaves during the Black Power Era, a small but committed group of musicians and singers felt obligated to create music that was transformative as well as entertaining.

Within a five-year period, roughly from 1967-1972, soul music became a purposeful vehicle for social protest discourse. Within this examination of soul music, the lyrics of five songs were also critically evaluated as well as the voices of the artists who created them. With its dynamic, funky, and multilayered sound, soul music stressed the importance of pursuing political, social, and economic autonomy in American society.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THERE IS A MESSAGE IN THE MUSIC: AN EXAMINATION OF SOUL MUSIC AS SOCIAL PROTEST DISCOURSE

As long as I can remember, black music has always been part of my life. Whether I was just casually listening to my favorite band or singer or enjoying various songs with friends and family, this cultural production has been a mainstay of my life experience. Although I never learned how to play an instrument or sing, which I woefully regret, I always felt this ancestral music originating from Africa had been and still is extremely purposeful in our daily lives. As a youth, I recall my parents, specifically my father, listening to music every evening, either on the radio or on the record player after returning home from a tedious day at work. James Brown, Sam Cooke, Marvin Gaye, and Curtis Mayfield were just a few of my Dad's favorites who were in constant rotation in our home. As he listened to the lyrics from the genres of rhythm and blues, soul, and jazz from 1970s, I observed that such rhythms, melodies, and beats could foster a sense of musical appreciation as well as cultural admiration. After an arduous day of work, these sounds had restored my dad's tranquility as well as his sanity. Much later, I would begin to appreciate the same genres as my father, but with a critical prism.

My interest and curiosity about the vibrancy and potency of music and its relationship and its potential to address socio-political issues began to take a series of turns in 1993. I began to view music as vehicle for protest and social transformation as

well as critique. I was enrolled in a Black History course at Citrus College, and I was assigned to watch a few segments of “Keep Your Eyes On The Prize,” which was an award-winning documentary written and produced by Henry Hampton. The fourteen- hour documentary chronicled the Civil Rights Movement between the years of 1954-1965 and subsequently the years of 1965-1985. Although I found the archival footage about the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and the Selma to Montgomery marches of 1964, the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X and many other occurrences relating to Black History informative and engaging, my interests began to truly pique as I noticed the ever-present musical accompaniments for many of the historical occurrences featured throughout the documentary.

Prominent artists such as James Brown, Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin, Gil Scott Heron, and Curtis Mayfield, Nina Simone and countless others created musical masterpieces throughout the mid-1960s through the early 1970s during the Civil Rights and Black Power eras. Such audacious and galvanizing sounds compelled participants in both mass movements the will to go forward with the objective of obtaining social justice. Musical pieces by the aforementioned artists and other progressive musicians would ultimately serve as an important soundtrack for social critique, political mobilization, and cultural consciousness. The purpose of this study is to examine the function and relevance of Black popular music, specifically soul as a viable vehicle for social protest discourse in the late 1960s through the early 1970s. I maintain that soul music with its dynamic sound and polytonal rhythms would merge with black culture to form a synergistic socio-political

cultural production piece, which conveyed multilayered themes of self-determination, cultural and political freedoms as well as communal critique.

Black musicians and singers began to create protest music, which conveyed themes that fostered Black Nationalism. It was a departure from gospel based freedom songs from the 1950s through the early 1960s that reflected brotherhood, forgiveness, and better days ahead. Author and professor Tammy Kernolde observes that beginning in the mid-1960s through the early 1970s, freedom songs reflected the rhetorical and eventual philosophical transition of the Civil Rights movement from the nonviolent, interracial, church-based activism of Martin Luther King Jr. to the Black nationalist, Black power rhetoric of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Black Panthers, and similar organizations (Kernodle 296).

The political and social upheaval occurring during the period provided musicians and singers with an abundance of musical inspiration for creativity. The political discourse in the guise of art created by the musicians and singers would not only appeal to the masses, but also provide the former or popular artists a duty to galvanize people into revolutionary thinking and action. Daily News writer Eitan Gavish argues this point “Political music is meant to appeal not only to the oppressed but to those compassionate to the cause as well, and popular acts realize the power they have to inspire people to action” (Gavish).

Soul music would serve more than the function of just pure entertainment. In the forward section of Pat Thomas’s text *Listen, Whitey: The Sights and Sounds of Black Power 1965-1975*, author and award-filmmaker Stanley Nelson suggests a lot of great music

created during those years was quite revolutionary. This was music with a purpose; a magnificent purpose that went far beyond getting people on the dance floor, and certainly beyond selling records. This music was the product of a time when the idea of revolutionary change was legitimate, and the revolution itself, to young people, seemed to be around the corner (Quoted in Thomas, ix).

Professor Keisha Hicks of Bowling Green University provides a definition for the term “soul” as well recognizing it as a cultural aesthetic in her dissertation *“Sumptuous Soul: The Music of Donny Hathaway Everything is Everything.”* Hicks notes the phenomenon “soul” touches on every form of cultural expression for African Americans. Soul is found in the way African Americans walk, use language, dress, eat, and most importantly Soul is in the music African Americans listen to that reflects Black life (Hicks 19). This genre of music articulates a style that is defiant and self-constructed. Professor Hicks argues that soul is an oppositional identity construction. It is about the expression of deep love for self and others gained through survival found most often in African American culture (Hicks 19). Such observation prompts further investigation of the synergistic relationship between the music and the culture. During the Black Power era, an alternative black aesthetic was often communicated throughout the black community.

As I began to examine the relationship between art, culture, and politics, I have often asked myself the following questions: What were the overarching messages in black popular music during the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s? What were some of the occurrences that inspired and compelled select artists to produce music that was at times viewed controversial or nationalistic? Why were the musical productions of James Brown,

Gil Scott Heron, Curtis Mayfield, and Marvin Gaye, and other progressive black artists so culturally, and politically relevant during the period?

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

During the late 1960s through the early 1970s, one of the most innovative and dynamic forms of black popular music would emerge as an effective vehicle for social protest discourse and the genre was soul. This new form of music coined soul would establish contemporary trends and direction for the tradition of urban black popular music. It was born out of the perfect combination of gospel, and rhythm and blues. Throughout the Black Power Era, roughly 1965-1975, soul music served as protest discourse, but it would also become the musical soundtrack for Black America.

Author and music journalist Craig Werner explores the soul revolution in his text *Higher Ground: Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, Curtis Mayfield and the Rise and Fall of American Soul* (2004). Werner illustrates soul music as one of America's greatest cultural achievements primarily through the artistry of Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, and Curtis Mayfield. Not only does Werner establish the connection between the music and the times, but he also argues that the marriage of soul music and the struggle for freedom represented a real threat (Werner 1). Werner's text provides detailed background information about the artists' backgrounds and their desire to produce musical pieces that conveyed messages that resonated within the black community, but also to be shared with mainstream listeners as well. Although Werner does not analyze the musical pieces performed

by Franklin, Mayfield, or Wonder, he meticulously illustrates the musical legacies of Franklin, Mayfield, and Wonder and their connections to the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements.

Journalist and Bay Area musician Pat Thomas's text *Listen Whitey: The Sights and Sounds of Black Power 1965-1975*, like Werner's text, establishes the connection of music, cultural politics, and the Black Power movement between 1965-1975.

Thomas's work primarily illustrates Black Power's strong influence over Black musicians during the time. Also, there were many artists deeply influenced by the politics of the Black Panther Party to create music that was deemed revolutionary. Thomas, along with Werner insinuates soul music produced during the decade was purposeful because of its connection to societal transformation. It was a magnificent purpose that went beyond getting people "up on the dance floor, and certainly beyond selling records" (Thomas vii). Thomas's text is a solid primer on the personalities of the Black Power Movement. Although music is the central focus of the book, however, there is an abundance of commentary regarding rare recordings, interviews, and discussions of speeches. Thomas's work serves perfect backdrop for the period and movement that birthed what we now know as soul music.

Musicians were often viewed as revolutionaries who would encourage and often demand societal transformation through their work. Soul music was an innovative, and yet funky sound to advocate social and political change. Professor of Ethnomusicology Portia K. Maultsby provides an in depth and compelling argument

about the importance of soul as protest music in her article “Soul Music: Its Sociological and Political Significance in American Popular Culture.”

Like Thomas and Werner, Maultsby also sees the connection between soul music and the Black Power era, but she adds that the genre elevated the consciousness of African heritage among black Americans, thus providing a cultural link to Africa (Maultsby 51). This practice was not clear in other forms of black popular music. Soul music was an expression of the collective African American experience. Performers of soul music communicated the black pride or racial awareness, which were dominant themes within the black community during the late 1960s. Musicians assumed the roles of spokespersons and the problems solvers of the community. Their music often revealed discernible impatience courage and assurance (Maultsby 54).

Maultsby examines soul music from three essential perspectives: 1) its use as an agent for advocating social and political change; 2) the path it paved for the acceptance of black music in and unadulterated form and 3) its impact on American popular culture. Maultsby’s poignant article “Soul Music: Its Sociological and Political Significance In American Popular Culture” provides the overarching analysis through which soul music is examined.

Maultsby posits that soul music produced during the 1960s and the 1970s documented narratives that were not of sorrow but of resistance, black pride, and social transformation. She furthers her thesis by stating that songs performed by soul musicians captured the new spirit, attitudes, values, and convictions of Black

people that later altered the social, political, and economic structures of American society (Maultsby 51). The genre of music coined “soul” would give new meaning and direction for the tradition of urban black music. Born out of the Black Power Movement, between 1965-1975, performers of soul music communicated black pride or cultural awareness. Maultsby notes that through their texts, soul singers not only discussed the depressing social and economic conditions of black communities, but they also offered solutions for improvement and change (Maultsby 51).

Music journalist and professor of music at the University of Connecticut, James W. Stephens traces the development and transformation of soul music in his article “Soul: A Historical Reconstruction of Continuity and Change in Black Popular Music.” Like Maultsby, Stephens claims the philosophies and concepts of soul music reflected the collective responsibilities of the Black community (Stephens 21). Musicians and singers would become the griots or communal instructors of African cultural traditions through their music. They addressed adverse social, political, and economic conditions affecting the community (Stephens 22). Singers such as James Brown, Aretha Franklin, and Nina Simone produced songs that were intense and emotionally charged.

Music journalist Stephens, like Maultsby, expresses the relevance and importance of soul musicians addressing socio-political concerns and providing solutions for societal ills during the era in his article “Soul: A Historical Reconstruction of Continuity and Change in Black Popular Music.” As soul music

began to change, Stephens claims that in a broad sense the philosophies and concepts of soul reflect the collective sensibilities of the Black community. He observed musical artists presented the qualities of a revitalized Black consciousness in their music (21). Soul music became overtly nationalistic in its scope. There were important in- group symbols that were conveyed in the lyrics of the music.

Rhythm and blues historian William Van DeBurg further validates the relevance and function of soul music by suggesting the following: “Soul music served as a repository of racial consciousness that transcended the medium of entertainment and provided a ritual in song with which African-Americans could identify, and through which important in group symbols and racial awareness was addressed” (Quoted in Stewart 205). Functionality in music was the goal in many of the compositions produced beginning in the mid-1960s and surging through the mid-1970s. Indirectly, artists provided the necessary messages, in group symbols, and societal critiques to organically foster public discourse. Much of the soul music that conveyed elements of protest discourse varied widely and this was due to the styles and personalities of the musicians and singers. So, it is safe to say the messages were just as diverse as the musicians themselves.

Author and music historian James B. Stewart provides various typologies/categories to efficiently classify the political commentaries of soul music produced during the late 1960s through the 1970s in his article “Message In The Music: Political Commentary In Black Popular Music From Rhythm And Blues To Early Hip Hop.” James notes in his article that there has been a tendency to lump

very different types of messages together in ways that overlook important distinctions and nuances in the music (Stewart 201). Stewart's typologies not only provide a greater understanding of the diversity of soul music, but also a better understanding of the messages conveyed within the music. For example, James Brown and Nina Simone, who were at the forefront of creating songs such as "Say It Loud," and "To Be Young Black And Gifted," both of which expressed cultural pride and political resistance, were artistically different, but each musical piece became a black anthem. Brown's and Simone's singles expressed a heightened sense of black consciousness, and self-determination.

Stewart's use of typologies displays the complexity of soul music. The distinct types/categories of soul music provide the listener with an appreciation of the complexity of the political thoughts by various artists (202). Although the typologies aren't necessarily perfect because often there are intersections in the music, nevertheless, a conceptual framework is useful in the examination of soul music with a political bent. Some of the prominent typologies are the following: "Documentary," "Defiant Challenges," "Revolutionary Manifestos," "Awareness Raising Self-Criticism," and "Confrontational Declaration." In sum, documentaries chronicled and highlighted negative conditions that were prevalent in Black communities during the Black Power era.

"Defiant Challenges," "Revolutionary Manifestos," "Awareness Raising Self-Criticism," and "Confrontational Declaration" are broad typologies that are designed to educate listeners about the seriousness of a particular set of circumstances and to

document the need for corrective action (202). The Black Power Movement, which emphasized black pride and self-determination arising in the late 1960s and blossoming in the early 1970s, inspired “Defiant Challenge” commentaries such as James Brown’s “Say It Loud” (1969) and Billy Paul’s “Am I Black Enough for You” (1972). While Brown’s piece emphasized themes of pride, determination, and aesthetics, Paul’s piece conveyed the need for listeners to continue struggling for civil rights until goals have been achieved and to be steadfast in embracing their black identity (Stewart 209). Gaye’s timely masterpieces, “Inner City Blues” (1971) and “What’s Going On” (1971) also represented songs embedded with “Defiant Challenge” commentaries.

It is not a coincidence soul music would rise during the social and political upheavals of the mid 1960s through the early 1970s. Urban rebellions, the assassinations of civil rights icons such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, contentious relationships between the police force and many Black Nationalist organizations would further enhance the sound of soul music. Thomas’s and Werner’s work provide solid general overviews on the emergence and popularity of soul music, whereas Maultsby, Stevens, and Stewart’s research is invaluable in examining the relevance and the significance of a musical genre that would influence the actions and thoughts of the Black community and American popular culture.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

In recent years, researching and analyzing music's influence and impact on social movements and communities have become increasingly popular and less tedious due to the World Wide Web. Societal interests in music and its relationship to popular culture have increased. My examination of the interplay between popular culture and politics was culled from a variety of sources. Digital archives, public libraries, newspaper articles, multimedia, and books provided an abundance of insightful and important pieces of commentary that shed some light on the selected genres of music produced during the period.

For my research, I selected and examined the works of six prominent artists. Their music represented politically conscious examples of soul music recorded between 1967-1971. Although this study touches upon the music of other contemporary artists with similar styles and rhetoric, I directed the emphasis/study toward the following artists/musicians: James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye, Gil Scott Heron, Curtis Mayfield, and Nina Simone. These progressive artists were often viewed as Avant-garde, as well as controversial, and they consistently produced sounds between the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s that were filled with cultural consciousness and pride.

Essential to my research were JSTOR, Pro-Quest, and Google Scholar. Through these sources, I could find and examine a wide body of research and critical

commentaries provided by music journalists, cultural critics, historians, and other scholars and experts from the disciplines of history and music. Artists' interviews, concert performances, and rare recordings made available on YouTube proved to be invaluable, since some artists as well as their productions from the late 1960s through the early 1970s were very difficult to find. Historical texts, interviews, and scholarly articles culled from these sources provided me with a deeper insight and understanding of the music and the happenings occurring during the period.

It was crucial to utilize "popular" level texts written by Nelson George, Mark Anthony Neal, Rickey Vincent, and Pat Thomas. In many ways, these authors, music journalists, and culture critics possess an in-depth knowledge on a variety of Black musical genres due to their passion, experience, and lengthy backgrounds on chronicling the connection between art (music) and socio-political phenomenon. For the most part, these authorizes are scholars on Black popular music.

To grasp a better understanding of the distinct messages embedded in soul music of 1967-1971, it was important to analyze soul music through the cultural lenses of ethnomusicology professor Portia K. Maultsby of the University of Indiana at Bloomington, and James B. Stewart, professor of African-American Studies at Penn State University. Maultsby's article "Soul Music: Its Sociological and Political Significance in American Popular Culture" provides an invaluable guide in determining the importance and potency of soul music in popular culture during the era. James B. Stewart's argument "Message in The Music: Political Commentary in Black Popular Music from Rhythm and Blues to Early Hip-Hop" provides the

necessary typologies (categories) that decode the various messages/themes in the music.

Black Media outlets such as Soul Train, Ebony Magazine, and Jet Magazine were important and relevant to my research. As a child, I read both Ebony and Jet magazines, and I faithfully watched Soul Train on Saturdays for the latest trends on dance, fashion, music and black culture. These were some of the national media outlets for African-American expressive culture during the early 1970s. From 1971-2006, Soul Train provided the most consistent vehicle for Black musical acts to reach a national audience. It was the longest running Black television show in television history. Don Cornelius created a musical show for an African American audience that not only provided entertainment, but also the show would bring soul, funk, and popular black culture to mainstream America. Cornelius provided teachable moments with the "Soul Train Scramble Board." The scramble board always featured the name of a well-known figure in African American history or culture. Cornelius used this show as a tool to promote and disseminate black popular culture.

According to a News One article, "Five Ways Soul Train Changed America," Soul Train was innovative in the following ways: 1) Don Cornelius, the show's creator was the first Black owner of a nationally syndicated TV franchise, 2) It provided Afrocentricity for all to see, 3) The show became a music and cultural powerhouse, 4) Soul Train increased the hiring of Black professionals in the entertainment business, and, 5) Soul Train was one of the first brands other than

Motown to take its brand into other business areas, like the Soul Train award shows (News One). This show is too important to early 1970s Black cultural production to ignore.

For the selection of the artists, the following criteria were required: the unique sounds, controversial recordings, and consistent stances on raising Black consciousness. It was also important to answer some important questions: How were the entertainers/activists influenced by the happenings of the period? What messages were the musicians trying to convey to the community? How did the music impact the Black communities nationwide?

## CHAPTER FOUR

### BLACK MUSIC: A TOOL FOR LIBERATION AND RESISTANCE

As the soul music genre is further examined in this thesis for its functionality, relevance, and its potency to articulate the socio-political needs of a people during the late 1960s through the early 1970s, a dynamic era as whole, it would be difficult to deny the important relationship between music and a people. Historically, music has always been central to black life. Noted historian Barbara Omolade suggests the following, “Black people’s history is told in their music and their spoken words which become music when the story is being told. It’s not just entertainment, it is a statement” (Omolade 2).

Music’s presence in everyday Black life is especially true for most people of African descent, and it has served a variety of functions. It has been used to document the birth of a child, celebrate love, or to usher a newly deceased loved one into becoming an ancestor. Music in the African American community is and will continue to be a major and cultural apparatus to document Black life. In challenging epochs for African Americans, music has always been integral to the struggle for freedom. Whether it was eras of slavery, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, the music as well as the lyrics would constantly serve as a catalyst for resistance and liberation.

Writer, journalist, and jazz musician William McClendon notes that Black Music became one of the effective modes of communication for conveying messages of black abhorrence and resistance to the repressive living arrangements created for Black people by the American practices of slavery and segregation (McClendon 21). Such messages of resistance were evident in the coded spirituals during slavery. Originating in the 1600s through 1870s, spirituals were songs created by Africans who were captured and brought to the United States to be sold into slavery. They were multifunctional. They were therapeutic by allowing slaves to cope with the burdens of harsh labor, and other forms of inhumane degradation during bondage.

These sorrow songs expressed a yearning for a better life. Spirituals such as “Hush, Somebody’s Calling My Name,” “North to Freedom,” and “Wade In The Water” conveyed information to slaves that was utilized for escape (Stewart 26). Spirituals allowed for the sharing of the joys, pains, and hopes while the slaves worked in the fields. Visions of liberation were also fostered through spirituals. Omolade suggests that vision helped those who struggled for freedom move from what is to what must be, from slavery to freedom, from the world of the master to the world of the free (Omolade 2).

From 1955 through 1965, Black music in the forms of gospel and freedom songs would become integral tools of liberation during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. The songs emerged from the church and were sung in circles before demonstrations and after mass meetings as well as demonstrations. Songs like “This Little Light of Mine,” “Ain’t Gonna Let No Body Turn Me Around”, which were

prominent during the 1961 March in Albany, Georgia, were sung to keep people together and focused on desegregation of public spaces. Brian Ward, a scholar of music and a professor of American Studies at North Umbria University points out that freedom songs whether sung at mass meetings or marches, captured the moral urgency of the struggle for freedom. Whether performed on stage or record, or on route to some of Jim Crow South's most forbidding jails, freedom songs sustained the courage of the extraordinary people who were at the heart of it (Ward 1).

Beginning the in the mid -1960s through the late 1960s, the protest discourse embedded in Black music would transform as well as the genre of music itself. Soul music would unofficially become the soundtrack of the period, specifically during the Black Power era. Through soul music and its dynamic, and funkier sound, artists and musicians articulated their demands for socio-political justice, cultural freedom, and self-determination. Singers such as James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye, Gil Scott Heron, Curtis Mayfield, and Nina Simone would create groundbreaking pieces that not only redefined the importance of cultural consciousness and Black culture, but also address the topical concerns of the period.

### Gospel Music

In terms of Black popular music, it would be rather difficult to ignore gospel music's contribution to rhythm and blues, soul, and funk. In fact, James Brown, Curtis Mayfield, Aretha Franklin, and Nina Simone, four of the musical luminaries

whose revolutionary works are examined in my thesis, were highly influenced by gospel music before becoming superstars of soul music during the late 1960s through the 1970s. During the Civil Rights Era, specifically between 1955-1965, gospel music was an essential vehicle for protest discourse. The music conveyed messages of hope, resilience, and faith during a tumultuous era.

In the text, *Protest & Praise: Sacred Music of Black Religion* author Jon Michael Spenser defines the genre as a documentation of African-American oral history and religious traditions formed by the Black American experience (Spenser 199). Music historian Waldo E. Martin notes that gospel music functioned to constitute a unified community to forge a collective consciousness and it offered hope and possibility (qtd. in *Party Music* 7-8). Civil rights activist and renowned gospel music scholar Bernice Johnson Reagon echoed the same sentiment about the audacity of gospel music. As a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Johnson Reagon, as well as other activists, found inspiration as well other activists found inspiration in the songs. She acknowledges church elders would sing at mass meetings and community gatherings, and such songs would pull sections of the Black community together at times when other means of communication were ineffective (Smithsonian Folkways). Noted songs such “We Shall Overcome,” “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around,” “Keep Your Eyes On The Prize” were just a few of the creations that fostered collective consciousness and communal resistance. Such sounds would ultimately provide the foundation for a much more vibrant, revolutionary, and resistant genre, soul music.

## Rhythm and Blues

Before examining soul music and its protest discourse, it is equally important to provide some treatment illustrating the emergence of rhythm and blues, another forerunner to the soul genre that was popular music targeted to African-Americans beginning in the early 1940s through the early 1960s. Like soul, rhythm and blues can be traced back to gospel and blues traditions. In the *New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, rhythm and blues is described as primarily a vocal genre, often used for dancing, that featured lead singers such as Clyde McPhatter, Louis Jordan, Sam Cooke and many others who worked independently or as members of a vocal quartet or quintet. Group members harmonized using nonsense syllables (“ooo”, “doo wop”) and catchy phrases (“shake, rattle, and roll”). Singers along with a piano player, bassist, and a drummer created a vibrant sound to encourage people to dance (706).

Cultural critic and music journalist Nelson George describes rhythm and blues as a synthesis of Black music genres-gospel, big-band swing, and blues (George 23). Modern technologies such as the electric bass would produce an engaging spirited brand of popular music (George 23). Thus, the creation would yield a dynamic and eclectic sound, but it alluded or suggested a socioeconomic meaning as well. Mark Anthony Neal, professor of American Studies at Duke University, adds that rhythm and blues became the first form of Black popular music

to be exposed to the rampant mass consumerism that defined the post-World War II period (Neal 27).

The lyrics embedded in rhythm and blues were largely void of political discourse, thus rendering the genre for pure entertainment. According to music historian Earl Stewart, rhythm and blues reflected the backgrounds, lifestyles, and the street language of urban Blacks (Stewart 205). Music professor and historian Robert Stephens adds that like soul, rhythm and blues was primarily associated with two groups of performers: second generation Blacks in the North, especially those who recorded for the Motown label; and the southern Blacks, principally associated with the Memphis and Muscle Shoals (Alabama).

### Soul Music

Soul music is the amalgamation of the blues, gospel, jazz, and rhythm and blues. It is the fullest sonic artistic expression of blackness. The genre of soul music can have messages of social uplift, which borrow from the sanctified church like up-tempo message song "Move On Up" by Curtis Mayfield. Soul music can also demand gender equality as Aretha Franklin does in her megahit anthem "Respect." Soul music is rooted in the history of the African-American experience while addressing topical issues within the community

Through skillful combination of melodic formulas, harmonic progressions, ornamentation, and rhythmic patterns, performers created a style that reflected, defined, and directed the expectations and aspirations of Black Americans (Stephens

31). Public intellectual and Union Theological Seminary professor Cornel West writes, "Soul music is more than either secularized gospel or funkified jazz. Rather, it is a 'Africanization' of Afro-American music with intent to appeal to the Black masses, especially geared to the black ritual of attending parties and dances. Soul music is the populist application of be-bop's aim: racial self-consciousness among Black people in light of their rich musical heritage" (Neal 40). What was crucial to the soul music aesthetic-which was composed of gospel morality and rhythm and blues energy-was that the artists to some extent lived the music that they sang, which reinforced the integrity of the message (Vincent 127).

In a technical sense, soul is defined as a type of Black American popular music that emerged in the mid-1960s. Prominent in soul music was musical spontaneity coupled with pervasive musical and extra musical control. Artists such as Ray Charles, James Brown, Aretha Franklin, and many others employed these elements in their musical pieces. These performers and others brought to secular singing the impassioned improvisatory vocal devices of Black gospel music (sudden shouts, falsetto cries, moans, etc.) and a collection of church derived idiomatic formulas ("feel alright", "have mercy baby"). During the late 1960s some performers addressed social issues, but the principal topics of lyrics remains love life, ranging from raw adult sexuality to teen love (The New Harvard Dictionary of Music 772-3).

## Soul as A Culture

Beginning in 1965, the phrase “soul” indicated a new direction in Black music. Through soul music, singers and musicians would establish a cultural connection to Africa, thus elevating the consciousness of an African heritage among black Americans. Emerging out of the Black Power Era, “soul” would represent more than just a musical genre. It was also a platform that fostered cultural awareness and racial pride.

From 1965 through 1975, the term soul began to permeate every form of cultural expression for African Americans. Soul was found in the way African Americans walked, talked, dressed, and the foods they ate. Robin D. G. Kelley, a professor and historian, defined soul as a dynamic cultural and social construction that is historically rooted within the Black American experience. Kelley states:

As debates over the black aesthetic raged, the concept of soul was an assertion that there are black ways of doing things, even if those ways are contested and the boundaries around what is black are fluid. To have soul means you possess a specific cultural capital that is cultivated from a unique perspective and narrative and Black (Kelley 47).

Through the culture of soul, blacks navigated through the dominant culture with their own specific aesthetics, values, and cultural mores, which allowed them to exist in a cohesive manner within mainstream culture. Soul music extolled virtues that were important for group survival. As I maintained earlier, soul was more than just a musical production; there were communal values, reconnection to

the past, and an appreciation of African heritage. Robert W. Stephens, a historian and music journalist, poignantly posits that soul music extolled the following: 1) extended a continuity of structure and feeling found in all Black music, past and present, 2) allowed performers to serve as quasi-political representatives, 3) provide cathartic relief through the performer's recognition, understanding, and appreciation of the listener's problems, 4) advocated familial stability and parental responsibility, 5) emphasized communal working toward a common good, 6) posited blackness as a state of consciousness and a positive ideal (Stephens 36).

#### Black Power's Influence

The Black Power Era would serve as a lightning rod towards the creation of soul music; particularly soul music conveying protest discourse and other forms of messages directed to the black community. The early 1970s was a period of reassessing political consciousness. Musical pieces such as "Hot Buttered Soul" (Isaac Hayes), "Hot Fun in the Summertime" (Sly & the Family Stone) and other music popularized by African American young adults articulated their feelings about important social issues. The slogans of "Black Power" and "Right On" permeated many Black communities as signifiers of Black pride and defiance.

The Black Power movement provided a platform to reconnect, and reclaim African ideals, concepts, and values. Former Black Panther and Black Power icon, and former leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Kwame Ture, formerly known as Stokely Carmichael, captures the sentiment of the movement at the Greenwood, Mississippi stop of James Meredith's "March Against Fear." "This is the twenty-seventh time that I've been arrested. I ain't going to jail no more. The only way we gonna stop them from

whuppin' us is to take over. What are we gonna start sayin' now is 'Black Power!' (Joseph 2007). The roots of "Black Power" can be traced to the independent economic messages of Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association of the 1920s.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SOUNDS OF PROTEST

This chapter examines six distinct musical pieces created by some of the most revolutionary artists during the inception of the Black Power era. The messages woven in the music were just as diverse as the artists themselves. Concepts and ideals such as Black pride, perseverance during tough times, the promise of youth, social awareness, and rebellion were deeply embedded in the cultural production pieces. The fervor fostered from soul music would resonate in the African American community as well.

From 1968-1971, the creative productions of James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye, Gil Scott Heron, Curtis Mayfield, and the legendary Nina Simone would evoke a range of emotions within the Black community, and their works were relevant, needed, and purposeful. Although there were musicians creating protest music, the above aforementioned artists created revolutionary sounds that were often viewed as anthems for Black Nationalism, aesthetics, as well as culture.

Each artist had his or her own distinct approach and style, which were just as diverse the artists. Songs like “To Be Young Gifted and Black,” “Inner City Blues,” “Say It Loud,” “Inner City Blues,” “We’re A Winner,” and “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” would merge politics, cultural awareness as well as cultural pride into artistic perfection and relevance with the hopes of encouraging black people into

“participatory democracy.” Author and historian William H. McClendon suggests that Black music became one of the effective modes of communication for conveying messages of “black abhorrence” and resistance to repressive living arrangements created for black people by the American practice of segregation (McClendon 23). The protest music created in the late 1960s through the early 1970s was not only socially relevant, but the quality and breadth of the music was perhaps unmatched in any other historical moment. Cultural critic and music aficionado Mark Anthony Neal comments that underlying many of these vibrant expressions of political and cultural resistance were efforts to maintain the very communities of resistance that produced a Black discourse of protest (Neal 56). Many of the musical pieces provided a snapshot of the social conditions and defining moments within American society.

#### Curtis Mayfield

The Impressions, led by innovative and gifted songwriter Curtis Mayfield (1942-1999) would indirectly alter soul music as protest discourse with a funky bass laden and percussion driven single, “We’re A Winner.” Although the song was released in December of 1967, “We’re A Winner” would become number one on the soul and rhythm and blues charts and number fourteen of the pop charts in the spring of 1968

“We’re A Winner” proved to be a vastly different recording from Mayfield’s prior rhythm and blues hits and recordings. Due to its revolutionary fervor, the musical arrangement departed from earlier veiled messages embedded in “Keep On Pushing” and “People Get Ready”. Both songs were respectively

recorded in 1964 and 1965 during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. The singles were also created during the passage of two important pieces of Civil Rights Legislation: The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin, and The Voting Rights Act of 1965, which eliminated legal barriers at the state and local levels that prevented African Americans from exercising their right to vote under the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution of the United States (History.com).

“We’re A Winner” was banned in many radio stations in the north as well as the south. There were rumors the song was banned from numerous Black radio stations because of its explicitly socially conscious lyrics, yet the single became immensely popular (Werner 65). To declare that Black people were winners was an ambitious attempt by Mayfield and the Impressions to instill cultural pride and confidence over the airwaves as well as in live performances. This single would also become a Black anthem. Florida born activist and writer Gordon Sellers states the following about Mayfield’s piece: “It was warrior music. It was the music you listened to while you were going to battle. Curtis inspired us, but he also took us to task. He was writing at a time we were struggling, but he knew we were struggling for the correct things” (qtd. in Werner 66).

During a 1971 performance, Mayfield reflected on the relevancy of “We’re A Winner”: “A whole lot of stations didn’t want to play that particular recording. Can you imagine such a thing? Well, I would say what most of you would say, we don’t give a damn, we’re a winner anyway” (qtd. in Werner 67). Mayfield’s hit was the epitome of soul and defiance during that period:

We're A Winner

And never let anybody say

Boy, you can't make it

Cause a feeble mind is in your way

No more tears do we cry

Cause a feeble mind is in your way

No more tears do we cry (Mayfield 1967)

Like the African griots (village storytellers) using the oral tradition, Mayfield appears to be preaching in the first verse to a congregation who feels afraid, weary, and defeated. He urges his audience to stand strong and continue the journey towards cultural and political freedoms. Perseverance is a must. Black performers of soul, like the Black preachers, addressed themselves to the realities of the Black community. Both related to their congregations and audiences in the same manner and their emotional approach to the delivery of their messages encouraged responses and activism (Maultsby 55).

Mayfield's approach to protest discourse music was often subtle and he did not exude the anger and defiance stance such as Brown, Scott-Heron, and Simone. His lyrics were of a declarative nature, but not overtly confrontational. Dorian Lynskey, the author of *33 Revolutions Per Minute: A History of Protest Songs, From Billie Holiday to Green Day* says that throughout Mayfield's career, he would pass social comment with patience and generosity in which he never succumbed to anger; it was soul's music answer to Martin Luther King (Lynskey 81).

### Aretha Franklin

In 1967, Aretha Franklin, affectionately called the “Queen of Soul,” would release “Respect,” which would function as a demand for the respect of black life and particularly black femininity. Released on May of 1967, “Respect” would soar to number one on the R&B charts. Franklin’s hit resonated with the average man and woman in the street, the businessman, mother, and the fireman, basically anyone desiring respect. Franklin’s lyrics were a forewarning from a working partner to her mate demanding respect when she comes home. “Respect” would become one of the many battle cries of the Civil Rights and Black Power eras.

Franklin’s version of Otis Redding’s 1965 hit was more than a simple dance tune. Franklin’s version was exceptionally soulful. Author and music journalist Rickey Vincent adds: “Respect had power-visceral, tangible, physical power-in its sound and an ability to make people act on ideas in the music. That was Aretha’s pure gift-an ability to take that irresistible “oomph” that church goers get make it secular, righteous, and real” (Vincent 153). Indirectly, “Respect” addressed the sentiment of many blacks during the period, which was a deep longing for respect from a racist society that constantly viewed and treated them as second- class citizens. Werner adds that many blacks turned their backs on the civil rights movement’s nonviolent and interracial ideals in favor of the emerging Black Power movement (Werner 134). Aretha’s single provided a welcome addition to an ever-growing Black Power soundtrack.

The beauty of “Respect” was that it indirectly addressed a myriad of concerns of the period: racism, respect for humanity and the sexual divide. In an interview given in 1999, Aretha points out that so many people identified with and related to the song. It was the need of a nation, the need of the average man and woman in the street, the businessman, the mother, the fireman, and the teacher. It became the “Respect” women expected from men and men expected from women, the inherent right of all human beings (Vincent 154).

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Find out what it means to me

Take care, TCB

Oh (sock it to me, sock it to me, sock to me, sock it to me)

A little respect (sock it to me, sock it to me, sock it to me) (Franklin 1967)

Not only did “Respect” become the national anthem for black people, but it would also serve as the paeon for black womanhood (Thomas 11).

### James Brown

In 1968, James Brown would record arguably the most controversial single during the period, and in his stellar career. “Say It Loud- I’m Black And I’m Proud” immediately struck a chord in the black community. It was an immediate hit, and it also became the new Black national anthem for African Americans in 1968. Released on August 7, 1968-roughly three months after the assassination of Dr.

King- "Say It Loud" aired on the radio, and became the number one song on the rhythm and blues and soul charts for six weeks and number ten on the pop charts. Brown's lively performances, funky dance grooves, and not to mention a great band were able to garner a diverse audience who appreciated soul music. "Say It Loud" would also become unofficially the sound of a burgeoning Black Power Movement during the late 1960s.

Brown's hit was profound because it helped to usher in "black" as the favored political construct while pushing the antiquated label "negro" out the door (Thomas 15). Before performing "Say It Loud," Brown would tell the audience, "You know, one way of solving a lot of problems that we've got in this country is letting a person feel that they're somebody. And a man can't get himself together until he knows who he is and be proud of what and who he is and where he comes from" (Qtd. in Thomas 15). Rickey Vincent argues "Say It Loud" reflected the bitterness of Blacks toward the white man, and it was done with ferocious funk. The music was a scorching expression of the black man's soul, just when the entire world was listening in anticipation" (Vincent 74-78).

Not only did Brown create something that was culturally relevant, but aesthetically speaking, "Say It Loud" was not only soulful, but it was also funkier, which would emerge out of a desire for a more confrontational approach to protest music. This piece featured the essential elements of late 60s soul music: shouts and moans, call and response, syncopated beats, and a riveting baseline. Brown's masterpiece was unapologetically black. His use of call and response in the song

urged black people to recognize and appreciate their own unique beauty and struggle as well as their culture:

Say it loud  
 I'm black and I'm proud  
 Say It loud,  
 I'm black and I'm proud, one more time  
 I've worked on jobs with my feet and hands  
 But all the work I did was for the other man,  
 And now we demand a chance  
 To do things for ourselves (Brown 1968)

“Say It Loud” was not only a cry for protest, but it was a directive for an oppressed group of people to take pride in their culture, aesthetically and politically. Brown’s anthem and statement intersected various categories/typologies of political commentary. The commentary was openly defiant, revolutionary, as well confrontational. Surprisingly, Brown’s hit was a new direction for many southern music labels. James B. Stewart notes that “Say It Loud” became a counterexample to the general claim that southern labels did not produce songs laden with critical commentary (Stewart 289). Vincent adds that soul artists from the north and south did not extoll messages that urged their listeners, particularly African Americans, to be “Black and Proud” (Vincent 106). Vincent notes, “It was one thing to be accepting of one’s own worth, but to shout out to the world that as member of a once-derided

race, you were now black and proud was an entirely new and triumphant state” (Vincent 106).

Brown was at the vanguard of the musicians who addressed social and political issues in their music. It would be difficult to ignore Brown’s commitment and consistency to creating Black protest discourse during the decade. Robert Stephens asserts that from 1964-1975, seventeen of Brown’s recordings addressed black needs and problems. Brown’s musical productions of this period combined no nonsense, straight-talking delivery with a unique form of rhythmic contrast and tension that exuded confidence, strength, and pride (Vincent 91). Whether heard on radio, or performing live, the creative pride of James Brown was one that made public celebrations of blackness plausible, permissible, and overtly enjoyable.

#### Nina Simone

I did not discover Nina Simone until adulthood. Simone made the word “black” fashionable. I came to truly appreciate her renditions of “Strange Fruit”, “Mississippi Goddam”, and “The Four Women.” Simone’s narratives were powerful, haunting, as well as beautiful.

In 1969, Nina Simone would record a single that would serve as an inspiration to Black youth. “To Be Young, Gifted and Black” would later become a progressive black anthem during the Post- Civil Rights Movement and a burgeoning Black Power era. Simone, who was no stranger to writing and recording controversial masterpieces such as “Mississippi Goddam,” and “The Four Women,”

was fearless in her approach to creating music that was embedded in politics. Author and music journalist Michael A. Gonzales notes the following about Simone's contribution to music: "Simone had no filter. She spoke with candor about civil rights when many in her position didn't dare. She sang about uncomfortable subjects and made sure her audiences understood what those songs were about. Simone always told the goddam truth" (Gonzales 77).

Simone's "To Be Young, Gifted and Black" garnered mass acclaim and it would become a slogan akin to Brown's 1968 hit "Say It Loud." It was a song that was unapologetically black and filled with hope, pride, and cultural resistance. While performing the song at the New York Philharmonic Hall in 1970, Nina states the following: "Now it is not addressed primarily to white people, though it does not put you down in any way, it simply ignores you. For my people need all the inspiration and love that they can get. So, since this house is full and there are 22 million blacks in this country, I only want one million to buy this record, you understand (Thomas 25).

To be young, gifted and black

Oh, what a lovely precious dream

To be young, gifted and black

Open your heart to what I mean

In the whole world, you know

There are billion boys and girls

Who are young, gifted and black (Simone 1969)

Although blacks were still fighting for civil as well as human rights, the song clearly illustrates an intense passion and pride in Black culture. Simone acknowledges the “we” in this piece, showing a strong connection to her race, while celebrating the happiness of being black and gifted. The Congress of Racial Equality would declare the song the “National Anthem of Black America,” with a version by Aretha Franklin becoming the title song of her 1972 album (Thomas 25).

### Marvin Gaye

Perhaps one of the greatest soul albums to convey political commentary in the 1970s was Marvin Gaye’s classic narrative “What’s Going On.” Released in 1971- this album remains a favorite of mine-it is often regarded as the seminal black protest recording. Initially legendary Motown CEO Berry Gordy did not want Gaye to release this album because he felt that no one would listen to soul music with a political bent. After all, Motown, widely known as the “Hit Factory,” focused on producing popular hits for mass consumer consumption and void of political discourse. Gaye would not give in to Gordy’s wishes. In fact, “What’s Going On” was viewed as Gaye’s rebellion against Motown (Gray 3).

Mark Anthony Neal notes that with the assistance of modern recording technology and bevy of cowriters, Gaye crafted a musical tome, which synthesized the acute issues within the Black urban life, with the prophetic and existential vision of the African-American church (Neal 62). The album features political commentary

that is deeply woven chronicled narratives that neither offers advice nor solutions. The Black music tradition reached its zenith with “What’s Going On.”

In “Inner City Blues,” which was the last and viewed as the most poignant track on the album, Gaye touches on plethora of social conditions affecting Black communities, particularly in urban enclaves, without ever uttering the word “Black.” Gaye was at his absolute best with the use of polytonal layers in expressing political commentary in the piece.

Dah, dah, dah, dah

Rockets, moon shots

Spend it on the have nots

Money, we make it

Fore we see it you take it

Oh, make you wanna holler

The way they do my life

This ain’t livin, This ain’t livin (Gaye 1971)

In Gaye’s first verse, the allusions of governmental waste, tax inequities, and economic disparities are explicit. Neal posits “Inner City Blues” gives presence to the silent masses of Black working class and working poor who were displaced and dislocated from community, culture, and social stability (Neal 65). Marvin further illustrates the beauty of his multilayered piece as he touches on the complexity of excessive inflation during the early 1970s, frustration from income inequality, and

an increasing unpopular sentiment toward the war in Southeast Asia (Vietnam Conflict).

Inflation no chance

To increase finance

Bills pile up sky high

Send that boy off to die

Make me wanna holler (Gaye 1971)

Near the end of the song, Gaye incorporates the black church experience, specifically the congregation shouting out to God by “throwing up their hands.” This leads one to believe this act is a result of sheer frustration due to bleak circumstances that cannot be overcome without divine intervention. Although portions of “Inner City Blues” reflect defiant commentary challenges, Gaye was also documenting and critiquing the current happenings of the times. There was something very spiritual about “Inner City Blues”. Vincent notes that as Gaye depicted the harsh realities of a post-movement world, the music was transcendent. It was an exaltation of what precisely was possible in the human spirit to overcome these obstacles.

#### Gil Scott Heron

Although the Civil Rights movement this may not have been the same revolution poet and singer Gil Scott-Heron had envisioned in 1970 with his best-known composition, “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” nonetheless, it is social

critique, that is part vicious and satirical spoken over a fusion of jazz, funk, and soul rhythms. First released on “Small Talk” and then again in a second, more widely acclaimed version on Scott-Heron’s first studio album, “Pieces of Man” (1971), the social discourse protest and the creative approach was certainly subversive during the era. Influenced by the Last Poets’, “When The Revolution Comes”, Scott Heron employed the use of his rhetorical and poetic skills to bridge the gap between the black literary and musical traditions that grounded the social movements of the 1960s and the early 1970s. The Black Arts Movements of the 1960s heavily influenced Scott Heron.

Poet and publisher Haki Madhubuti, formerly known as Don Lee, describes Scott -Heron as the following:

A young, young griot is on the rise. His message was Black, political, historically accurate, urgent, uncompromising, and mature. Heron was in the tradition of Amiri Baraka, Sonia Sanchez, Larry Neal, and others who brought in the powerful decade of the sixties. He had listened to and digested the works of Malcolm X, Nina Simone, Jimmy Reed, and John Coltrane. (qtd. in Neal 107)

Scott Heron’s piece is exceptionally suitable for Stewart’s typology/category of “Revolutionary Manifesto.” This category is directed towards internal/external audiences and it calls for overturning existing political and economic institutions to advance liberation struggles (Stewart 204).

The revolution that is emphasized is more about developing a revolutionary mindset that takes aim at variety of issues-specifically during Nixon's administration-than that of picking up guns to engage in a bloody insurrection. For many, Scott-Heron's piece is an anthem that rails out against commercialism, and it captures the imagination of a rebellious generation. He effectively illustrates and critiques mass consumer culture, as it reflects to the Black political struggles of the late 1960s and early 1970s (Neal 108). Embedded with satire as well as anger, Scott Heron is relentless as he takes on the dominant white structure as well as the Black non-militant integrationist:

You will not be able to stay home, brother.

You will not be able to plug in, turn on and cop out.

You will not be able to lose yourself on skag and  
skip out for beer during commercials,

Because the revolution will not be televised (Scott Heron 1970)

In the article "The Revolution Will Be Analyzed: Breaking Down Gil Scott-Heron's 'The Revolution Will Not Be Televised' writer Mac McCann notes that the Scott-Heron fearlessly described and denounced the dominating culture. He also pitted the cultural awakening of the Civil Rights era against American consumerism in a poem that took the form of a list of things that he hated: banal icons of white culture and loathed political figures that dominated American television in the 1970s (McCann 3).

The revolution will not be televised.

The revolution will not be brought to you by Xerox

In four parts without commercial interruptions.

The revolution will not show you pictures of Nixon

blowing a bugle and leading the charge by John

Mitchell, General Abrams, and Mendel Rivers to eat

hog maws confiscated from a Harlem sanctuary (Scott- Heron 1970).

Scott-Heron was in tune with the social, cultural, and political imagination of the larger African-American community. In an interview with writer Rob Fitzpatrick, Heron reflects, “People would try to argue that it was this militant message, but just how militant can you really be when you’re saying “The revolution will not make you look five pounds thinner “(Lynskey 188). What made “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” so engaging was its use of a repetitive slogan, “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” which is an effective way to sell consumers products and services. Jack Hamilton describes Scott Heron’s use of sloganeering in his article “Pieces of a Man”:

“It’s a thrilling and dazzlingly clever composition, the sharpest and funniest musical critique of consumer-capitalism this side of (Mick Jagger’s “I Can’t Get No Satisfaction”) assaulting the politics of sloganeering by concocting a slogan to end all slogans.” (Lynskey 188)

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

Music has often served as an effective tool to disseminate cultural and political awareness. It has also had the power illustrate inherent social inequalities during any given era. Music became an effective vehicle for liberation and resistance during the institution of slavery. Using spirituals, enslaved Africans would disseminate coded messages throughout their communities that expressed the aims of resistance and freedom. “North to Freedom,” and Wade In The Water” were two examples of spirituals consistently used in secret meetings alluding to escape to the North.

During the Civil Rights Movements of the 1950s through the mid-1960s, freedom and gospel music served as platforms to rally the masses of disenfranchised Black people in the South to challenge discrimination and segregation laws. Later, soul music with its complex messages, polytonal rhythms, and unapologetic “blackness” would convey social statements that also expressed the aims of liberations as well as existence. Not only did the music stress resistance, but also performers of the genre communicated cultural pride and awareness. Soul music spoke to Black people in an unadulterated format. It was music by the people, and for the people, thus making it an effective method for protest discourse.

Establishing a connection between soul music and culture proved to be a labor of love. I always believed soul music was exceptionally purposeful and relevant during the latter part of the Civil Rights Era, and a burgeoning Black Power Movement. For me, soul music represented an important aspect of “Blackness” that was explicitly cultural but also a nonnegotiable element of popular culture to be enjoyed by everyone during the late 1960s through the early 1970s. It was the dynamic sound that would merge with black culture to foster communal critique and action, as well as self-determination and self-love. The overarching themes of cultural appreciation, political and social resistance, and Black pride were just some of the ideals deeply woven in the music.

Crucial to my research was selecting artists and musicians who were at the forefront of creating music that was commercially viable, complex, and revolutionary. Although there were many singers and musicians who created compositions that were complex, polytonal, and just plain funky, however, not all soul singers were creating the kinds of music socially relevant to galvanize masses of people into action. The creative and thought-provoking masterpieces of James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye, Gil Scott-Heron, Curtis Mayfield, and Nina Simone represented the epitome of cultural pride and a cultural awakening.

Their masterpieces contributed to a viable soundtrack that still stands the test of time. Musician and producer Barret Martin suggests that powerful songs have always been the engines behind the greatest social movements. It is the

marching soundtrack that unites the people and gives them focus and resolve (Martin).

These artists were in tune with the economic, social, and political circumstances that controlled the destiny of African Americans during the era. So, it was only natural for these artists along with their music to examine, critique, and possibly foster societal transformation. Crucial to my research was the examination of the various typologies of soul music because the songs were distinctive. James B. Stewart's categorical approach to highlighting the unique messages in the music was extremely useful. There is always a tendency to lump all songs together just because they fall under the category of soul music. The typologies provide a greater understanding about the diversity within the music. Typologies were also created to educate listeners about the seriousness of a set of circumstances and to document the need for corrective action (202).

Black media also contributed to the transmission of soul music and its culture. *Ebony* and *Jet* Magazines brought forth Black music and its culture to mainstream outlets. *Soul Train*, created by Chicago disk jockey Don Cornelius, brought soul music along with the culture to a national audience every Saturday. This show allowed America to experience soul, funk, and popular black culture in its unadulterated form. Black media with print and television documented a way of life that was largely unknown.

Black anthems such as "We're A Winner," "Say It Loud," "Inner City Blues," and "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" represented the vanguard of soul music

used as protest discourse. These songs were entertaining, melodic, and vibrant, but more importantly they were a cry of protest and a call to action.

In the final analysis, soul music, with its dynamic and innovative sound, would impact African American culture as well popular culture in many ways. Soul music fostered a pride within a disenfranchised group by establishing a cultural link to Africa. The music not only reflected the collective responsibilities of the Black community and communal concerns, but it also provided societal critiques to foster public discourse. Musical pieces by Nina Simone, Curtis Mayfield, and James Brown were often scrutinized for important in- group symbols, and messages embedded in their music during the Black Power era.

Soul music was for more than just for entertainment purposes and the artists who played this innovative genre readily understood its unlimited power and vibrancy. James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye, Gil Scott Heron, Curtis Mayfield, and Nina Simone understood soul music's vibrancy as well as its power to transform society. Scholar and feminist author, Barbara Omolade eloquently states the importance of Black music as protest discourse in a passionate quote:

*Black music is the essence of our people,*

*Designed to come from the people,*

*Speak to the people, guide the people along*

*Guide the people along the journey (Barbara Omolade, 2).*

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