

[SOUL SONGS: ORIGINS AND AGENCY IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN SPIRITUALS]



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The voice of the American slave is shrouded in mystery. Often illiterate and prohibited from public communication, most slaves could not share their histories and experiences. Yet one primary source points to many others, which not only served as evidence to the slave experience, but also depicted the desperate struggle to maintain one's identity and humanity in a system that denied both. To

Frederick Douglass, the spiritual:

was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains...If any one wishes to be impressed with a sense of the soul-killing power of slavery, let him go to Col. Lloyd's plantation, and, on allowance day, place himself in the deep, pine woods, and there let him, in silence thoughtfully analyze the sounds that shall pass through the chambers of his soul, and if he is not thus impressed, it will only be because "there is no flesh in his obdurate heart."¹

The culture of any ethnic group proclaims itself in varied expressions; art, literature, language, and dress all fall under the loose heading of culture. In the case of African-Americans, however, one of the most prevalent presentations of a unique culture and experience has been the creation and development of specific musical forms. These unique sounds are not only definitive of the culture that created them, but also speak loudly of the traditions of past tribal societies, and the milieu of slavery in the American South. Thus, there are many layers in the study of African-American music, few of which have been studied free of the racial prejudices which infected the perceptions of many scholars. These individuals have debated the origins, structure, intention, and effect of these songs; the only wide consensus is that African-American music is striking, evocative, and carries a unique and soulful energy.

African-American music stems from spirituals. These traditional songs, forged in the heart of the slave experience, have been the common ancestors of the blues, jazz, hip-hop, rap, even rock and roll.

Yet, though all American music that has defined itself as "black" carries some distinct qualities from the

¹ Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (London: H. G. Collins, 22 Paternoster Row, 1845), 20.

spirituals, these musical forms are themselves a tradition that amalgamates African roots with the America slave experience. How did such beautiful compositions survive the soul-crushing suffering that was American chattel slavery? How were these songs created, who performed them, and what role did they play in slaves' lives? What can they tell us about the cultural identity and survival of African-American slaves? In short, though primary historical writings of tribal life in Africa and the experience of American slaves might be scarce, and though the institution of slavery did its utmost to dehumanize its victims, the spirituals tell a story of survival and adaptation.

First, we must define the concept and form of the spiritual, as opposed to gospels or hymns. While all three share a basic premise of Christian religious function, spirituals were traditional African-American folks songs born out of the experience of North American slavery. Though we will examine in detail the specific distinguishing form of spirituals, their provenance sets them apart from gospels, which are largely compositions of the twentieth-century black American church influenced by spirituals and the blues, each with a distinct composer. Hymn music derives from the European Christian experience, and so while some similarities may exist, it is a very different form of music altogether.² This is important to note, as, "A common misconception of the nature of the evolution of the spirituals is that enslaved Africans, once acculturated in the new land, abandoned their own traditions...and became "civilized" via the adoption of the Christian religion of their masters."³ This common error not only undermines the reality of African slaves' experiences in the New World, but also perpetuates concepts of African-American cultural evolution based on myths of white supremacy. While slaves certainly did not

² Handel's *Messiah* bears such similarities in the triumphant chords and call-and-response structure.

³ Arthur C. Jones, *Wade in the Water: The Wisdom of the Spirituals* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 6-7.

compose spirituals in a social vacuum, they instead indicate a unique cultural form that integrates African musical custom with the impact of bondage.

The question of the provenance and origins of the spirituals has been a central focus point on ethnographic analysis done to date. Some of the earliest scholars made the argument that it was extraordinary that Africans, “half-barbarous people” stripped by slavery of any small intrinsic creativity or intelligence, were able to produce valuable music at all.⁴ Others went further and decreed that spirituals were simple attempts at mimicry of great European compositions.⁵ These arguments were not based on musical analysis or anthropological study to truly compare and contrast spirituals to African or European roots. Rather, these scholarly efforts derived from a mindset of integrated racism. Arguments about the meaning of the literalism of the spirituals’ Biblical lyrics, the theological premise of Afro-Christianity, and the unmistakable originality and magnificence of the music itself all interwove in a dialogue that centered on the question: how could such music come out of untrained and oppressed people outside of white direction and control?

If those same scholars had ever undertaken an examination of African oral traditions, they would have realized the rich history of music in African tribal culture. Like African art, music served a function as a primary tool in the communication of history, social organization, entertainment, and religion. Music, specifically singing, was a dominant feature of African life:

If we think of African music as regards its intent, we must see that it differed from Western music in that it was a purely *functional* music... [There are] some basic types of songs common to West African cultures: songs used by young men to influence young women (courtship, challenge, scorn); songs used by workers to make their tasks easier; songs used by older men to

⁴ William Francis Allen, Charles P. Ware, Lucy McKim Garrison, *Slave Songs of the United States* (New York: A. Simpson and Co., 1867), i-ii.

⁵ Richard Wallaschek, *Primitive Music: An Inquiry Into the Origin and Development of Music, Songs, Instruments, Dances, and Pantomimes of Savage Races* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1893), 60.

prepare the adolescent boys for manhood, and so on. "Serious" Western music, except for early religious music, has been strictly an "art" music. One would not think of any particular *use* for Hayden's symphonies, except perhaps "the cultivation of the soul." ...It was, and is, inconceivable in the African culture to make a separation between music, dancing, song, the artifact, and a man's life or his worship of the gods.⁶

In terms of religious use, we must first understand the basic principles of African spirituality. The emphasis in African religion is on the here and now: gods, spirits, and ancestors are all immediately present in day-to-day life.⁷ Without any separation of the spiritual and secular world, African tribal religions were thus an intimate part of each individual's life, and the primary form of spiritual communication, song, was correspondingly familiar.

Song also connected individuals within African tribal communities, strengthening the bonds of history, shared ancestors, and communal life. The role of family extends from the importance of past and future relations in African religion: without a prescribed afterlife, an individual's spirit existed only as long as people remembered them.⁸ The importance of "remembering" resonated throughout African culture. Without a written language, Africans communicated history by oral traditions. Griots, those individuals professionally responsible for relaying history, genealogy, and traditional wisdom, served the critical function of maintaining a social memory and consciousness.⁹ Music was an essential process for communicating identity and sharing social mores, traditional customs, and ethnic history.

⁶ LeRoi Jones (now Amiri Baraka), *Blues People* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1963), 28-29.

⁷ Ken Wilburn, personal commentary, 2/27/13.

⁸ Ken Wilburn, personal commentary, 2/27/13.

⁹ Thomas A. Hale, *Griots and Griottes: Masters of Words and Music* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 18.

Finally, African music, as differentiated from European music, was not the domain of specialized performers. This music had no audience, no pedagogy, no stages or concert halls. The absorption of a musical performance was not a passive act, but rather one in which everyone participated. There were no written scores to recite back perfectly; instead, extemporaneous improvisation, memories and knowledge of which songs were appropriate for the occasion, and comfort in the medium organized the music. Though vocal music dominated, some instruments, and most especially drums, played a major role. Rhythms were an integral element of African music making, supporting, and enhancing the sung performance.

Thus, music was a major component of African culture, one that captured slaves carried across the Atlantic into the New World. Though slavers had robbed them of their goods, their family members, their home environment, their health, even acknowledgement of their humanity, still many of these people were able to hold fast to their identity through their innate musical heritage. In fact, despite the inherently destructive environment of slavery, “constructive processes were operative all along in their history in North America...Their artistic creativity demonstrates so many references to West African culture that those cultural elements must possess impressively enduring qualities.”¹⁰

Spirituals have an innate emotional subject matter, their very name derived from the concept of being full of spirit. Other key musical elements indicate the spiritual. The prominence of a call-and-response structure both evolved from African traditions, and assisted in the spread of a specific piece of music. With simple musical forms and words, one leader could begin a piece, and quickly engage comrades. A primary source describes, “I’ll tell you, it’s dis way. My master call me and order me a short

¹⁰ Ferdinand Jones and Arthur C. Jones, editors, *Triumph of the Soul: Cultural and Psychological Aspects of African American Music* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), xvi.

peck of corn and a hundred lash. My friends see it, and is sorry for me. When dey come to the praise-meeting dat night, dey sing about it. Some's very good singers and know how, and dey work it in—work it in, you know, till they get it right, and dat's de way.”¹¹ Another observer watched the creation of a similar composition in the midst of the Civil War:

The night we learned that we were to lead the charge the news filled them too full for ordinary utterance...At last a heavy voice began to sing, “We-e look li-ke me-en marchin’ on, we looks li-ike men-er-war.” Over and over again he sang it, making slight changes. The rest watched him intently; no sign of approval or disapproval escaped their lips or appeared on their faces. All at once, when his refrain had struck the right response in their ears, his group took it up, and shortly half a thousand voices were upraised...”¹²

In addition to the call-and-response form, as seen above, improvisation also played a major role in the creation of spirituals. The freedom of emotional expression presented itself in harmonies, the use of changing minor and major keys, and the use of slides, flattened microtones, and sharpened fourths. The musicality of each song was at the discretion of the individual performer, based on the emotion he or she was trying to convey.

While many of these musical features derived from African traditions, it would be a mistake to suggest that spirituals evolved free of the stain of slavery and relationships with white oppressors. Instead, though the African roots set the stage for the creation of the art form, what emerged showed not only a functional use, but also rebellion and survival in the face of slavery. With this in mind, the first question asked must be why did spirituals emerge within the Afro-Christian experience, rather than pure African influences?

¹¹ Sterling Allen Brown, Arthur Paul Davis, and Ulysses Grant Lee, editors, *The Negro Caravan: Writings by American Negroes* (New York: Dryden Press, 1941), 413.

¹²Dena J. Polacheck Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 293-94.

While African religions provided a major cultural structure in tribal life, proselytizing was not a function of the religion, and thus theologically, there was no concept of restriction from adopting new deities.¹³ Quite outside of the fact that Christianity was the religion of their oppressors, slaves did not adopt the Christian religion as defined by Europeans. Rather, they formed a blend of African religion with Christianity, specifically focused on a personal relationship with Jesus as a sympathetic friend, present companion, and champion of the enslaved and oppressed. This was a very different Christianity from the more intellectualized and remote religion practiced by Europeans.

Following in African tribal traditions, spirituals emerged that clearly indicate their relationship to their faith:

O a little talk with Jesus makes it right, all right,
 Little talk with Jesus makes it right, all right,
 Troubles of ev'ry kind,
 Thank God I'll always find
 That a little talk with Jesus makes it right.¹⁴

To the American slave, Jesus was an immediate companion, who intimately understood suffering, physical and emotional agony. Jesus promised slaves freedom and protection, even if they could not have it immediately.

Oh, dey whupped him up de hill, up de hill, up de hill,
 Oh, dey whupped him up de hill, an' he never said a mumbalin' word,
 Oh, dey whupped him up de hill, an' he never said a mumbalin' word,
 He jes' hung down his head an' he cried.

Oh, dey crowned him wid a thorny crown, thorny crown, crown o' thorns,

¹³ Melville Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1941), 71-72.

¹⁴ John W. Work, "A Little Talk With Jesus," in *American Negro Songs and Spirituals: A Comprehensive Collection of 230 Folk Songs, Religious and Secular* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1940), 78.

Oh, dey crowned him wid a thorny crown, an' he never said a mumbalin' word,
 Oh, dey crowned him wid a thorny crown, an' he never said a mumbalin' word,
 He jes' hung down his head an' he cried.

Well, dey nailed him to de cross, to de cross, to de cross,
 Well, dey nailed him to de cross, an' he never said a mumbalin word,
 Well, dey nailed him to de cross, an' he never said a mumbalin word,
 He jes' hung down his head an' he cried.

Well, dey pierced him in de side, in de side, in de side,
 Well, dey pierced him in di side, an' he never said a mumbalin' word,
 Well, dey pierced him in di side, an' he never said a mumbalin' word,

Well, de blood came twinklin' down, twinklin' down, twinklin' down,
 Well, de blood came twinklin' down, an' he never said a mumbalin' word,
 Well, de blood came twinklin' down, an' he never said a mumbalin' word,
 Den he hung down his head, an' he died.¹⁵

The lyrics of this song vividly, painfully indicate that this slave could imagine exactly how it felt to be cruelly tortured and killed—all without the ability to speak a word in their own defense. There was an empathy with the trials of Jesus that directly related to the slave experience, resonating throughout each spiritual's lyrics, rhythms, and soul.

Likewise, the spirituals also pull much material from the experiences of the oppressed Jews in the Old Testament. Figures who survived and triumphed over their persecutors were especially celebrated; Daniel, Moses, and Elijah were all the subject of powerful songs. These were not abstract symbols, but immediate and present figures who had survived and been aided when they needed it most.

¹⁵ James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1972), 48.

The concept of heaven was also a frequent song topic. Like most of the material within the spirituals, it had many interpretations. At times, the discussion of heaven was the light at the end of the tunnel: the bright future of freedom, families reunified, and a better existence. At other moments, heaven was described with apocalyptic fervor, sweet self-righteous rage against oppressors clear when the question was asked:

Ain't you glad, ain't you glad you got good religion...
 O sinner, sinner in the mire,
 Take my feet out the miry clay.
 O this ol' earth goin' reel an' rock...
 O on you heaven will rain fire,
 Take my feet out the miry clay.¹⁶

This spiritual promises a day of reckoning, a moment where persecutors will receive not everlasting life, but the fire of heaven. This concept epitomizes the difference between white and black versions of Christianity at this time: for some slaves, the idea of heaven was not a state of blessed peace, but an experience of retribution and revenge against persecutors. Finally, there were many moments where heaven was not a religious concept at all. The realities of slave life demanded the discussion of the perceived heaven on earth: the state of freedom. As described by Frederick Douglass, “A keen observer might have detected in our repeated singing of “O Canaan, sweet Canaan, I am bound for the land of Canaan,” something more than a hope of reaching heaven. We meant to reach the *North*, and *North* was our Canaan.”¹⁷ Other versions of the same song use Canaan and Canada interchangeably, the free borders of Canada representative of heaven on earth.

¹⁶ Work, *American Negro Songs*, 66.

¹⁷ Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Hartford, CT: Park Publishing, 1882), 196-197.

With this statement, it is clear that spirituals were not merely figurative religious art. They also represented rebellion: against the white Christianity practiced by slave masters, as expressions of the evils and injustice of the slave condition, and even literal rebellion in calls to run away or fight.

As slaves worked to survive in the American South, they quickly developed forms of resistance, both subtle and outright. Slaves existed in a strange no man's land. Legally, slaves had some recognized humanity. A slave had nominal legal protection; the District of Columbia slave code verbiage even recognized slaves as human beings.¹⁸ Even so, the very structure of slavery demanded that slaves were merchandise with economic value, chattel that must be kept uneducated, illiterate, and submissive.¹⁹

In that light, music was often the medium through which slaves expressed their discontent, the statement in itself a protest and dissent. Frederick Douglass's memoir recalls how listening to spirituals first illuminated the true nature of the slave system he had been born into, as "To those songs I trace my first glimmering conceptions of the dehumanizing character of slavery."²⁰

Southern politicians and slave-owners often used the argument that slavery was a force for slaves' benefit, justifying both the institution and value of slavery, as well as the conditions of slaves.²¹ However, the spirituals offer us an insight into the realities of their experience:

O Lord I'm hungry I want to be fed,
O Lord I'm hungry I want to be fed,

¹⁸ "Slaves and the Courts, 1740–1860, Slave code for the District of Columbia, 1860," The Library of Congress, accessed 3/24/2013, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsc&fileName=002//llsc002.db&recNum=0>.

¹⁹ "Illegal to Teach Slaves to Read and Write," *Harper's Weekly*, June 21, 1862, accessed 3/24/13, <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war/1862/june/slaves-read-write.htm>.

²⁰ Douglass, *Narrative*, 57-58.

²¹ John C. Calhoun, "Speech on Slavery," U.S. Senate, Congressional Globe, 24th Congress, 2nd Sess. (Feb. 6, 1837), 157-159.

O feed me Jesus feed me,
Feed me all my days.²²

O bye and bye, bye and bye
I'm goin' to lay down my heavy load.
Hell is deep and dark despair.
I'm goin' to lay down my heavy load
Stop po' sinner and don't go there
I'm goin' to lay down my heavy load.²³

These expressions were a statement of the misery of the slave condition, a dissenting voice that resisted slave-owners attempts to tamp it down. Slaves also rebelled against white culture, acknowledging the difference between their own religion and white Christianity by singing, "everyone talkin' 'bout Heaven ain't goin' there."²⁴ This condemnation of white religion also states the slaves' desire and belief in eventual justice.

Slaves could not openly state all references to resistance, however. They were constantly at risk of brutal retribution for expressing any discontent, much less defiance. Drawing from the long-standing African tradition of utilizing irony and metaphor in fables, songs, and stories, slaves were able to mask their true intentions. "Spirituals, by their very nature as folksongs, emerged in such a way that their primary meanings would be understood only to those in the folk community of origin, Africans in

²² Work, *American Negro Songs*, 154.

²³ Work, *American Negro Songs*, 63.

²⁴ "I Got Shoes," The Spirituals Project, The University of Denver, accessed 3/24/13, <http://ctl.du.edu/spirituals/freedom/protest.cfm>.

slavery... [this] produced a body of music that could readily be utilized when needed as a basis for secret communication.”²⁵

The song “Follow the Drinking Gourd” was seemingly innocuous to white listeners, but offered navigation by starlight: to head north, following the direction of the Big Dipper. Similarly, “Wade in the Water,” sometimes attributed to Harriet Tubman, was openly used as a baptism song. It was also, however, instruction for fugitive slaves attempting an escape north to freedom. By wading in the water, troubling the water, slaves discussed the best way to throw off the bloodhounds of pursuers. In the 1869 publication of Tubman’s authorized biography, she is also described communicating her initial escape from her plantation with song:

When dat ar ole chariot comes,
I’m gwine to lebe you;
I’m boun’ for de promised land,
I’m gwine to lebe you.

I’m sorry I’m gwine to lebe you,
Farewell, oh farewell;
But I’ll meet you in the mornin’,
Farewell, oh farewell.

I’ll meet you in the mornin’,
I’m boun’ for de promised land,
On the oder side of Jordan,
Boun’ for de promised land.²⁶

²⁵ Jones, *Wade in the Water*, 49.

²⁶ Sarah Hopkins Bradford, *Scenes From the Life of Harriet Tubman* (Auburn: W. J. Moses, Printer, 1869), 17-19.

Individuals like Harriet Tubman or Nat Turner stood out to the African slave communities as not only rescuers, but also warriors fighting against the institution that enslaved them. For many, running north was not an acceptable solution. Rather, they wanted to end slavery for all, and used spirituals as a call to arms. The descriptions of heaven in spirituals went beyond a longing for a better world; for some, the image of land free of enslavement and suffering were a call to action. Quaker students observing an African-American camp meeting in 1818 described watching a ring shout, where deprived of their sacred drums, slaves would use their bodies and voices to create a rhythm. As it increased in tempo and intensity, one Quaker youth realized that the people singing around him were, “Joshua’s chosen men marching around the walls of Jericho, blowing the rams’ horns and shouting until the walls fell.”²⁷

Anyone familiar with the spiritual “Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho” cannot miss the agitation and the drive for movement and for change.

Change soon came to African-American slaves, of course, and battle too. With the end of the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation, the long-desired “heaven” had at last come for American slaves. It was soon apparent, however, that there were disconnects between legal freedoms and the freedoms of social equality and standing. Immediately following the Civil War, terrorist groups formed to threaten newly freed black Americans, and southern legislators quickly passed laws to limit freed black labor, movement, and civil rights.²⁸

²⁷ Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 37-38.

²⁸ Constitutional Convention (1865), Constitution of 1865, S 131071, State Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

As black Americans once again struggled for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, they no longer turned to singing spirituals. The music that had been a source of identity and an expression of emotion became a badge of remembered suffering. As noted by W.E.B. DuBois, “Negro folksong... has been neglected, it has been, and is, half-despised, and above all it has been persistently mistaken and misunderstood; but notwithstanding, it still remains as the singular spiritual heritage of the nation and the greatest gift of the Negro people.”²⁹

Although an important source of identity and indicator of African survival and agency, the spirituals also carried the stigma of association with slavery, suggestive of the humiliations suffered by blacks, and the guilt now prescribed to whites. Many of the important messages inherent in the spiritual canon were lost or forgotten, as black music shifted to gospels for religious use, and blues or jazz for secular expressions.

In the midst of the social changes of the American South during Reconstruction, one group did work to maintain the messages of the spiritual. Immediately following the end of the Civil War, the American Missionary Association established Fisk University to offer higher education “regardless of race.”³⁰ One of Fisk’s claims to fame, and arguably responsible for its early financial survival, was the creation of the Fisk Jubilee Singers. In 1870, music professor George L. White proposed a musical tour of a small university vocal ensemble to raise money. Though their initial success was limited, the introduction of spirituals into the group’s repertoire was met with eager reception. The fame and demand for the Fisk Jubilee Singers grew, as did the popularity of their musical pieces.

²⁹ W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Rockville, MD: ArcManor, 2008), 163.

³⁰ “About Fisk,” Fisk University, accessed 3/24/13, <http://www.fisk.edu/AboutFisk/HistoryOfFisk.aspx>.

The Jubilee Singers' spirituals were markedly different from those originally created by American slaves. These polished performances were practiced, replicable, and organized for written documentation, a disparate musical process from the original improvisation and creative outflow of music based on the moment's mood and situation. Yet the Jubilee Singers immortalized both the music of the spirituals and its message. Of the original nine members, eight were ex-slaves, a fact that did not escape the press. As the group expanded its tour to Europe, they performed for Queen Victoria lauded as "the best entertainment of the kind that has ever been brought out in London."³¹ The Earl of Shaftesbury echoed the acclaim in his statement:

Now, these excellent young people have almost all passed through the ordeal of slavery. Most of them have been sold not once or twice, but thrice, and even oftener. Some of them, too, have been in the dismal swamp, pursued by their masters and by the savage bloodhound, but by God's mercy they escaped, and they come here to show to you what the negro race are capable of if you will give them those benefits and opportunities which you have yourselves enjoyed.³²

The Jubilee Singers' public performances transitioned the spiritual from expression to activism, sharing a message of triumph over oppression.

Thanks to the Fisk Jubilee Singers and the many great performers who subsequently kept the spiritual alive, modern musicians, anthropologists, and historians have a unique insight into the life of American slaves.³³ This music indicates the survival of African tribal practices, religions, and structures.

³¹ "The Jubilee Singers," *The Standard*, May 7, 1873, in John Lovell, *Black Song: The Forge and the Flame: The Story of How the Afro-American Spiritual Was Hammered Out* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 405.

³² Shaftesbury, Earl of: speech reported in article entitled "The Jubilee Singers at Castle Wemyss," *Glasgow Herald*, Aug 18. 1873, in Lovell, *Black Song*, 406.

³³ The Fisk Jubilee Singers inspired many other similar vocal ensembles around the world. At the University of Montana, for example, I was proud to be accepted into the Jubileers, an 8-person vocal ensemble, in which spirituals make up a significant element of the performance material. The UM Jubileers performed for over 40 years.

It reveals the emotions that accompanied the attempted dehumanization of slaves, the rage, bereavement, and sorrow inherent in the African-American holocaust. Spirituals are evidence and legacy of African-American agency, the will to subvert the demands of their masters, escape, fight, plot, triumph, and regain their freedom. The spirituals evolved in African-American culture to many other unique musical forms. Underlying that music is the spirituals' continued message of survival and endurance:

I'm a-goin' to do all I can for my Lord,
For my Lord, I'm a-goin' to pray all I can for my Lord,
For my Lord, I'm a-goin' to bear all I can
'til I can't sing no more...³⁴

³⁴ Work, *American Negro Songs*, 200.

Bibliography

Allen, William Francis, Charles P. Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison. *Slave Songs of the United States*. New York: A. Simpson and Co., 1867.

One of the earliest analyses and collections of African spirituals by white observers, this collection reflects the biases of its era, but was a substantial effort to begin dialogue and study of this art form.

Bradford, Sarah Hopkins. *Scenes from the Life of Harriet Tubman*. Auburn: W. J. Moses, Printer, 1869.

This primary source on the life of one of American slavery's greatest opponents, describes the relationship between African-American slaves and their musical traditions.

Brown, Sterling Allen, Arthur Paul Davis, and Ulysses Grant Lee, editors. *The Negro Caravan: Writings by American Negroes*. New York: Dryden Press, 1941.

This work is an early anthology of primary sources, eyewitness descriptions of slavery, particularly helpful for its inclusion of described ring shouts.

Calhoun, John C. "Speech on Slavery." U.S. Senate, Congressional Globe, 24th Congress, 2nd Sess. Feb. 6, 1837.

This speech justified slavery by stating the existence of mutual benefits for both slave and owner.

Cone, James H. *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1972.

This work was very helpful in presenting an analysis and interpretation of the theology and motivation behind the structures of African spirituals and blues music by an Africanist scholar.

Douglass, Frederick. *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. Hartford, CT: Park Publishing, 1882.

_____. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*. London: London: H. G. Collins, 22 Paternoster Row, 1845.

This famous primary document is one of the best-known sources for first-hand description of slavery. It was particularly helpful for this project, as music was a self-professed prominent element in Douglass' life.

DuBois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Rockville, MD: ArcManor, 2008.

DuBois' celebrated scholarship examines the importance of music in the identity and historiography of African-Americans.

Epstein, Dena J. Polacheck. *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1977.

This work identified very helpful primary sources, and assisted in determining theology and evolution of spiritual forms.

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<http://www.fisk.edu/AboutFisk/HistoryOfFisk.aspx>.

Fisk University's historical page offered concise and insightful comments on the university's inception and purpose.

Hale, Thomas A. *Griots and Griottes: Masters of Words and Music*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998.

This anthropological review of the history and societal role of "praise singers" in African culture assisted in connecting the dots between African oral tradition and slave music.

Harper's Weekly, June 21, 1862. "Illegal to Teach Slaves to Read and Write." Accessed 3/24/13. <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war/1862/june/slaves-read-write.htm>.

This scanned newspaper article reveals public opinion on the anti-literacy laws inflicted on American slaves.

Herskovits, Melville. *The Myth of the Negro Past*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1941.

Herskovits' work, though dated, offers a thorough examination of slave culture, including the development of slave musical, dance, and religious structures.

Jones, Arthur C. *Wade in the Water: The Wisdom of the Spirituals*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993.

Arthur Jones, one of the modern authorities on spiritual music, presents a discussion of the role of music as it impacts and is developed from African-American culture.

Jones, Ferdinand, and Arthur C. Jones, editors. *Triumph of the Soul: Cultural and Psychological Aspects of African American Music*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001.

This collection of essays discusses many forms of black music, but for this project, Arthur Jones' chapter on spirituals proved the most relevant.

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Jones' book reviews the external forces that have shaped the study of African-American spirituals, including the disparate histories that have shaped this study.

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