ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF BLACK PROTEST MUSIC

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MAN PROTESTS. It is human to protest. Deprived of the right to protest, man sublimates his anger. Instead of protesting outwardly, man withdraws, turns inward, seethes, and finds other ways to express himself.

All men protest. It is part of their humanity. Deprived of the right to protest with impunity, the American black man sublimated his anger in song and story. Every confrontation with adversity was accompanied by songs reflecting and depicting his struggle. Words of protest have infiltrated and permeated his music just as the inimical conditions in which he has been compelled to live have constricted his life and threatened his existence.

Slavery, Jim Crow, lynching, chain gangs, poverty—all of these have affected the black man in America. All of these and more have been themes in his protest music.

It is the purpose of this essay to show the interrelationships between the black man's music and the social conditions which affected him from the Civil War to the Black Revolution. This article will (1) Examine the song types of this period, and (2) provide a survey tracing the development of themes of protest.

SONG TYPES

Spirituals and Gospel songs:

During the period before the Civil war, the slave was unable to protest openly without reprisals. Consequently most of the spirituals referred to the conditions of slavery obliquely. (Some notable exceptions are: "No More Slavery Chains For Me," and "Momma, Is Massa Gonna to Sell Us Tomorrow?") The slaves, fearing repercussions, were restricted to singing about the plight of the Israelites in Egypt. The masters felt that the singing of spirituals reflected the slaves' inner sense of well being, and they placed comparatively few restrictions on their use. The slaves sang these songs for pleasure, for work, for simple amusement, and for worship. Because of the unrestricted use of the spirituals during slavery, they continued to be the largest body of songs sung by the Freedmen.

Most of the spirituals retained their character during the hundred years that followed. Words were changed and adapted to reflect the changing times, the music, however, remained with only the normal variants to be expected in the evolution of a folk song category.

A new religious song type appeared after slavery—the gospel song. These deeply religious songs contained few overt words of protest. Some of them, however, such as "I Been Buked and and I Been Scorned," seemed to epitomize the black man's struggle in America.

Secular Songs—Work Songs

Some of the secular songs of the slave did contain direct references to the conditions of slavery. The work songs in particular were vehicles for protest. The improvisatory nature of the music allowed the song leader to make allusions in deep dialect to past grievances and current events without seriously

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affecting the tranquil picture of the contented slave singing while he worked.

The work songs had their origins in music which accompanied similar activities in Africa. These songs were usually led by a song leader who possessed distinctive qualities that enabled him to succeed in his position. He was a psychologist, able to select the exact song for a particular situation; an efficiency expert, able to vary the tempo in order to effectively increase the workers' productivity; and finally and most important, a composer, able to improvise and change a song instantaneously to spread the news of the day, to protest, to insult, and to praise.

The work songs retained their popularity after slavery. New songs were composed to reflect the increasingly diverse occupations of the Freedmen. In addition to plantation work, Freedmen were employed on the levee, as roustabouts, as pile men on the railroads, as boat handlers on the Mississippi, as cowboys, and in many other occupations.

The nature of the work that they did influenced their songs in two ways: in the kind of response by the singers, and in the content of the words. Work demanding a great deal of bodily effort would restrict the response to a short exhortation or grunt to emphasize the rhythm. Less energetic work would enable the chorus to finish the leader's line, or to completely repeat the verse.

The content of the songs varied from occupation to occupation, reflecting the concerns of the workers and the current news. Some of the song leaders used their songs to insult their bosses. They realized that the bosses did not understand the broad dialect of the workers. Thus they could easily sing things that they could not say. These early song types were personal, sung by one man or woman, without the ubiquitous chorus. They were sung for identification, self-delectation, self-contemplation, and to pass the time of day. Because of their emphasis on "self," we note that they were not derived from the communal African tradition.

THE BLUES contained the personal emphasis: the man sang of his woman, his hopes and fears, his misery, and his pain. Though it is possible today to find "Blues" songs in other African-derived cultures, they are of recent origin and are probably derived from the black American prototype.

What are the blues? Where did they come from? There are many explanations and many definitions. W. C. Handy said: "The blues began with the [Negro], it involves our history, where we came from and what we experience. The blues came from nothingness, from want, from desire."

It can also be said that the blues were born after the Civil War. For the first time, the Freedmen were able to sing out loud about their misery in secular song, without religious disguises. For the first time, they had the hope of a better life—a hope quickly extinguished. The dicotomy between their hopes and desires and their actual experiences was enough to give birth to the blues.

Convict, Chain Gang Songs:

Another song form born after the Civil War was the convict or chain gang songs. These songs were a development of the work songs of slavery. The type of songs and the accompaniment varied according to the type of work being done. The leader was a convict who was respected for his ability to lighten the work with his humorous improvisations. Chain gangs would accompany their singing with their picks and exhortations or responses.

Standing on the road side waiting
for the ball and chain
Say, if I wasn't all shackled down
I'd catch that west bound train.

Standing on the rock pile with a
hammer in my hand
Lord standing on the rock pile got
to serve my captain down in no man's
land.

Many other song types evolved during the period after the Civil War. Some of these were short lived such as the Ragtime Songs. Others have retained their popularity such as the part time rhymes, the counting down rhymes, and the ballads. There are songs of protest in all of these categories. Some of these will be mentioned subsequently.

The song forms and categories previously discussed cannot be fully understood without an examination of their relationship to the social context. For this reason, it is necessary to trace briefly the history of the black man from after the Civil War to the present to ascertain the place of music in his life, and how he expressed himself by protesting against his fate.

HISTORICAL SURVEY

The Freedmen greeted the news of their emancipation with freedom songs. They sang these songs in exultation, praising God for their deliverance from the miseries of slavery. They sang these songs expressing their hopes for the future, for they had reached the promised land.

Slavery Chains, Slavery Chains
Thank God Almighty I'm free at last.
Free at last, free at last,
Thank God Almighty, I'm free at last.

Little did they know that a century later one of their descendants, Martin Luther King, would still be quoting the song, "Free at Last," as a confident prediction for the foreseeable future.

During the hundred years from the end of the Civil War to the height of the Black Revolution, the American black man suffered many setbacks—many obstacles on the road to that mythical "Freedom."

Du Bois called the Reconstruction period from 1867 to 1877 the "Mystic Years," focusing on the progress of the Freedmen in education, politics, and toward economic independence. Another name for at least the beginning of this period could be "The Years of Misery."

Many Freedmen found that freedom was not the panacea they confidently expected. Instead of heaven on earth, the Freedmen were confronted by so many obstacles that some of the former slave owners contrasted the mythical contented slave favorably with the miserable Freedmen. Starvation and deprivation, continued slavery, inimical contract laws, and harassment and intimidation by the Ku Klux Klan and related organizations were some of these obstructions.

At the end of the war some of the owners called the slaves together and said, "You're free." Then they drove them away from the only home they had known, without food or clothing.

Thousands died. It has been estimated that in some of the counties, one out of every four Freedmen died.

Other slave owners ignored the Emancipation Proclamation and forced the Freedmen to work for them. In order to ensure the supply of labor, the bosses revived the patrol system. Slave narratives reported:

> Lots of niggers was kilt after freedom cause the slaves in Harrison County turn loose right at freedom and them in Rusk county wasn't. But they hears about it and runs

away to freedom in Harrison county and they owners have 'em bushwacked, then shot down.

I couldn't git away 'cause they watched us with guns all the time. When the levee busted, that kinda freed me. Man, they was devils; they wouldn't 'low you to go nowhere—not even to church. You done good to git something to eat.

No wonder the ex-slaves continued to sing:

Run nigger run de patterroller get you,
slip over de fence
slick as a eel.
White man catch you by de heel.
Run, nigger, run.

Some of the former masters adapted to the new situation, helped their former slaves, and gave them land to work on shares: Others cheated the Freedmen. The moral, honest, honorable Christian Southerner found it easy to reconcile his conscience to the idea of cheating the Freedmen in somewhat the same way that he had justified enslaving the African.

Some of the Freedmen were tricked into signing contracts to work and thus exchanged chattel slavery for contract slavery.

After we got to dese places, dey put us to work all right on dem great big farms. We all light in and work like old horses, thinking now we making money and going to get some of it, but we never got a cent. . . . It was awful. All over was like dat.

No wonder they sang:

Ought's an ought
Figger's a figger
All for the white man
None for the nigger.

Nigger makes de cotton
De white man gets the money

EVEN THE lullaby was used for social comments; they spoke with ironic twists of the hopelessness of the newborn child's future.

In a cabin in a woodland dreary,
You've come your mammy's heart to cheer,
In this ole slave's cabin.
Your hands my heart strings grabbin'
See lay your hand upon my bres'
An' snuggle close and res' and res'
my little colored chile.
Your daddy plows old master's corn
And mammy does the cooking,
She'll give dinner to her hungry chile,
When nobody is a lookin'
Don't be ashamed my chile, I beg,
Because you was born from a buzzard's egg,
My little colored chile.

Some of the ex-slaves were becoming solvent. Others had settled into some form of employment. Some were politically active. In order to deprive the Freedmen of their new found rights and to keep them economically dependent, the Ku Klux Klan and related organizations were formed.

After us colored folks was 'sidered free and turned loose, the Ku Klux Klan broke out. Some colored people started to farming. . . . If they got so they made good money . . .the Ku Klux Klan would come and murder them. The government builded schoolhouses, and the Ku Klux Klan went to work and burned 'em down.

The period of Reconstruction described above was not a period of extensive musical changes. The ex-slaves were too busy trying to survive. The song types of slavery persisted and the songs were given different words to reflect the new situation. Some of the freedom songs could now be sung openly, such as:

No more slavery chains for me
No more, no more,
No more slavery chains for me
Many thousands ago.

In still other songs the Freedmen were able to express their feelings about the transition from slavery to freedom.

Old massa run away
And us darkies stay at home

It must be now dat kingdom's comin'
The year of Jubilee

Now dat overseer want to give trouble
And trot us 'round a spell
But we lock him up in de smokehouse cellar
With de key done throwed in de well.

The period of Reconstruction ended with the Hayes-Tilden compromise. It found some of the Freedmen successful in their endeavors and others adjusting to the situation. The Freedmen were becoming a viable group, but the Hayes-Tilden compromise destroyed their new-found confidence and placed them back into the hands of their former masters. This set the scene for the calculated denigration of the Negro through legal and illegal means. This was an effort sanctioned, if not fostered, by the law of the land—an effort that penetrated to the highest court and left the Negro defenseless against inimical laws and at the bottom of the economic ladder.

For approximately seventy-five years Jim Crow, sharecropping, doubled-standard laws, the convict-lease system, poverty, and lynching contributed to making the Negro a second class citizen.

IN ORDER TO effectively control the Negro's movement, the Southern States enacted a series of black codes. This culminated in the Supreme Court decision of 1896 upholding "separate but equal" facilities. Overnight, there were segregated washrooms, segregated restaurants, segregated factories, segregated railroad cars, and the Negro became the segregated man.

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

Jim Crow has had inumerable effects on black music generally and protest music in particular. It reduced the Negro musicians' opportunities for employment. In New Orleans, it drove the Creole musicians into the arms of their black brethern. In the Blues it provided a new theme.

Now if you're white, you're all right.
And if you're brown, stick around
But if you're black, Oh brother,
Get back, get back, get back.
(Big Bill Bonzy)

In 1940 when Leadbelly visited Washington, D.C., he immortalized his resentment of Jim Crow in the "Bourgeoise Blues."

I an' Mis Monica and Mr. Allan Lomax,
An' his wife and my wife was riding
Around Washington, D.C.
Please talk to me
I can tell you about it there.
We all rode around in the rain
Colored people don't let me come in
Cause I'm with a white man

Now that's a Bourgeoise place
Cause they scared to let you in with white people.
(Leadbelly)

Court-sanctioned segregation continued until the middle of the Twentieth Century.

Sharecropping started during Reconstruction and continued for almost a century. The sharecropper was given a small amount of land by the land owner to farm on shares. In principle this system enabled the impoverished Negro to work for a type of wages. However, the practice was almost as bad as slavery. Sometimes the weather prevented the Negro from reaping a good crop, he would have little to divide. At other times, the crop was excellent; then, excuses were made to run the Negro from the land or to scare him away. When the farmers were able to get out of debt, other means were used to keep them from progressing. Since most of the Negroes could not read or write, they had to depend on the white man to keep the accounts. The resulting dishonest bookkeeping was the subject of many songs.

Ain't it hard to be a Nigger
Ain't it hard to be a Nigger
Ain't it hard to be a Nigger, Nigger, Nigger.
Ain't it hard to be a Nigger
Ain't it hard to be a Nigger
For you can't get your money when it's due.

Well it make no difference
How you make out yo' time
White man bring a Nigger out behin'

A "double-standard" law contributed to keeping the Negro insecure and afraid. Many innocent people were arrested. Just being a strange man in a strange town was enough to cause the Negro to be arrested, fined, jailed, and then leased to a plantation owner to work out his fine.

I stand on the corner and almost bust ma head
I stand on the corner and almost bust ma head
I couldn't earn enough to buy me a loaf of bread

Standing on de corner, didn't mean no harm
Policeman grab me by my arm
Was looking for the railroad bill.

A convict-lease system was devised to utilize the labor force created by the enforcement of this "double-standard" law and order. In order to ensure an adequate supply of labor, the Negroes were arrested without provocation and thrown in jail.

The convicts were treated worse than slaves since they were to some extent expendable. Any minor infraction of the law would cause the sentence to be lengthened. The food was bad, the work was hard, and the punishment was severe. Even though the system was outlawed in the early part of the Twentieth Century, most of the abuses were retained by the prison farms that followed.

The prison farms were situated on land formerly occupied by the slave and lease labor plantations. The convicts were required to work out their sentences, working from "can't to can't" (dawn to dusk). For this reason, they hated to see the sun which they referred to as "Old Hannah" rise in the morning.

Go down old hannah well, well, well
Donch rise no mo'
If you rise in the morning
Bring judgment day

You come out on the brazos well, well, well.
Nineteen and four
You could find a dead man
On every row.

Summer days were the longest of all. During those days, they worked through the night until dawn came.

Long summer day
Makes a white man lazy
Long summer day

Long summer day
Makes a nigger run away sir
Long summer day

Some of the convicts sang humorous songs, and told tall tales about how they had managed to fool the white man.

I steal dat corn from de white man's barn
Den I slips aroun', tells a yarn
An' sells it back again.

I steal de melons from his patch,
It takes a smarter man dan him fer ter ketch
An' I sells 'em back again.

Even though most of the Negroes remained poor without the security provided by just laws, life might still have been tolerable if it were not for the fear of physical violence and for the fear of being lynched without cause. It has been estimated that approximately two and half people were lynched per week during the first half of the Twentieth Century. Most of them were black, most of them were

men, and most of them were accused of no other crime than their race. Contrary to popular belief, only a small percentage of those lynched were accused of rape. Others were lynched for seeking to change jobs, or for just giving the appearance of prosperity.

THIS TYPE of "nigger" baiting was considered a legitimate pastime in some states. Lynchings were advertised in advance in the newspapers. The crowds gathered bringing lunch and children to watch the spectacle somewhat in the same manner that the Romans had watched the games in the Colosseum.

The tortures advanced from mere hanging, or burning, to slow roasting over coals, stuffing the mouths of the victims with their genitals, and any other ingenious form of mutilation which could be devised by man in his inhumanity to man. The sight of a young man's body inspired the following:

Southern trees bearing strange fruit
Blood on the leaves and blood at the roots
Black bodies swaying in the Southern breeze
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

Passing the rural scene of the gallant south
Busted nose and the twisted mouth
Scent of Magnolia sweet and fresh
And the sickening smell of the burning flesh.

Here is the food for the crows to pluck
For the rains to gather, for the earth to suck
For the sun to rot, for the tree to drop
Here is a strange, bitter crop.

Some towns became known as lynching towns, and as such were places to be avoided as in the following song:

I never have, and I never will
Pick no more cotton in Robinsonville.
Tell me how long will I have to wait
Can I get you now or must I hesitate

Some of the proposed victims resisted. A Florida man refused to surrender his son "for chastisement," which could take the form of a severe beating or even death. He and his son managed to escape, but for weeks, white mobs raged around killing hapless Negroes who were caught in their path, and burning homes.

The one hundred years of constant lynching finally came to an end, though there are still sporadic reports of violence.

Throughout these years of adversity, the Southern Negro has been forced to make a choice between three evils: (1) to remain in the South and to submit to the indignities, (2) to fight the injustices knowing that he might be killed, or (3) to emigrate in search of a better life.

Many of them chose to emigrate; their migrations were reflected in their songs, especially in the blues.

When a woman gets the blues,
She hangs her head and cries.
But when a man get the blues
He flags a freight train and rides.

I had so much trouble
Swear my nerves is breakin' down
I would swing in a freight train
But I'm afraid to leave the ground

There were conventions in New Orleans and in Nashville urging Negroes to go out West, to go to other parts of the country where they could enjoy some of the rights granted by the Constitution.

When some communities found that the Negroes were migrating into their lands, however, they constructed barriers, chased them out of town, and "bushwacked" some of them. Still the Negroes attempted to leave the South.

The Southerners were elated when they found the Negroes were emigrating but they finally realized that if this continued they would not have a cheap labor force. Consequently, they tried to persuade the Negroes to remain. When this did not work, they resurrected the patrol system. The members of the patrols brutalized and maimed anyone

found trying to leave, yet the exodus continued.

Michigan water it taste like cherry wine
Michigan water it taste like cherry wine
But this Nashville water it drinks like turpentine.
(Traditional)

I'm going to Chicago where I long to be
There's a big red headline in Chicago Defender news
Saying my gals down South got them up the country blues.

Even the children's songs poked fun at the unfortunate homesick traveler to the North.

I'm going up north (satisfied)
And I would tell you, (satisfied)
Lord I am (satisfied)
Some peoples up there (satisfied)
Goin' bring you back (satisfied)
Mamma cooked a chicken (satisfied)
Have to get all the girls (satisfied)
Their bellies full (satisfied)
(Traditional)

Then came the Depression.

NEGROES WERE the first to feel the effects of the Depression; they lost even the despised jobs at the bottom of the economic ladder. Hard times became a favorite theme in the blues.

Ain't got no money
Can't buy no grub
Backbone and navel
Doin' the belly rub

Now after my hard trouble
Things about comin' my way
The pot was empty
I said man momma
What's goin' on here?

The years of oppression damaged the Negro's self image. During slavery, he was considered three fifths of a man. After the Civil War, he was considered unworthy to mingle with the other Americans. This constant bombardment of propaganda caused severe damage to the Negro's psyche.

The Negro reacted by adapting the white man's standards. He tried to be white. He straightened his hair. He bleached his skin. He suppressed his desire for so-called Negro foods such as watermelon and fried chicken, and he accepted the white man's standard of beauty and culture. His sense of aesthetics reflected the dominant society. Those nearest white were considered beautiful. Gradations of color were given specific names: high yellow, mariny red, teasing brown, etc., with the coal black Negro considered the ugliest of all.

Because of the emphasis on desirable skin color, the color heirarchy is mentioned many times in the blues. This self hatred reflected the white man's attitude toward the Negro. White meant power, wealth, and freedom; black meant subjugation, poverty, and hopelessness. Some Negroes tried to escape by crossing the line and passing for white.

The burly corn you know
He packed his clothes to go
Well he come back las' night
He said, honey I'm tired o' corn
I'm going to pass for white

When he made a jet black nigger
He made them some hell
I'm bound to change my name
I have to paint my face
So I won't be kin
To that Ethiopian race

Those who could not pass tried to attain some status by acquiring a spouse of a lighter hue than they were, and this attitude was also reflected in song.

I don't want no black woman
Putting sugar in ma tea,
For they black and evil
I'm scared she might pizen me.

I marry a black gal
For she was black you know

For when I went to see her
She looked like a crow-w-w
She looked like a crow.

This acceptance of the white man's standards even applied to the length of the hair and to its texture.

I wouldn't marry a black gal
I tell you de reason why
When she goes to comb dat head
De napps 'goin' to fly.

THE YEARS of racial injustice, of patiently waiting for time to alleviate the sufferings of the black man, ended with the beginning of the Black Revolution. The beginning of the Black Revolution served notice that blacks could not wait any longer.

The aims of the first part of this revolution were integration and equality. The sit-ins, the freedom riders, and the protest marchers were determined to end segregation.

I'm so glad segregation got to go
I'm so glad segregation got to go
I'm so glad segregation got to go
Singing glory haleluia,
I'm so glad

I'm so glad integration on its way
I'm so glad integration on its way
I'm so glad integration on its way
Singing glory haleluia,
I'm so glad. (Traditional)

The people who participated actively in the struggle for integration used protest music to depict injustice and to dramatize their determination. Songs accompanied the freedom riders when they integrated the bus station facilities. Songs also accompanied the children when the police dogs attacked them.

Ain't gonna let Bull Connor turn me 'round
Turn me 'round, turn me 'round.
Ain't gonna let Bull Connor turn me 'round
I'm gonna keep a walking, gonna keep a walking
Walking out to freedom land.
(Traditional)

The protesters utilized the songs of the past to express contemporary situations.

Tell Major Smitherman, we shall not be moved.
Tell Major Smitherman, we shall not be moved
Just like a tree that's planted by the water
Oh, we shall not be moved.

All the state troopers, we shall not be moved
All the state troopers, we shall not be moved
Just like a tree that's planted by the water
Oh, we shall not be moved.
(Freedom Songs)

Once the black man had sung about Jesus and expressed his sorrow in symbols; now he sang of freedom as in the following:

I'm gonna walk, talk, sing, shout,
Clap my hands and keep my mind on freedom
I'm gonna walk, talk, sing, shout,
Clap my hands and keep my mind on freedom
Walk, talk, sing, shout, clap my hands
(Traditional)

For a time it seemed as though the concerted demand for integration and equality was succeeding. More schools were becoming integrated (though the black teachers were losing their jobs). Legally segregated facilities had been abolished on the railroads and in interstate transportation. Gains could be seen in integrated housing. But tokenism still remained the order of the day.

Some of the youth began to question the value of integration. They began to question the premise on which this demand had been built. They scorned the "Melting Pot Theory," realizing that the black man had never been truly assimilated into American society. They began to question the necessity for this

assimilation. They decided that the future security of black did not necessarily lie in integration but rather than in control of their destinies.

Thus began the second part of the Black Revolution.

In the 1960's the emphasis of the Black Revolution shifted from integration to a holistic approach towards the future. Though some organizations still emphasized integrating facilities, other organizations emphasized the importance for black people to control their own destinies. They wished and intended to control their own lives: economically, politically, and culturally.

The youth also began to attack the premise that black people were inferior to white people. The black youth consciously rejected the white man's aesthetics. They renounced the straightening comb, flaunted the "Afro," and wore African-derived clothing. They attempted to repair the damaged psyche of the black man. This new self pride became the subject of songs. And the song, "Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud" became a rallying cry for the young.

Other songs were written emphasizing the desirability of blackness. A concerted effort was made to counteract the negative connotations of the word "black," and to introduce the children to the concept, "Black is Beautiful."

Black is the velvet of the midnight sky
Black is so beautiful it makes you cry.
Black is oil, Black is coal
Black is soil, Black is soul
Black is you and me
Black is beautiful, don't you see.

The aims of the second part of the Black Revolution were also expressed in the arts. Painters depicted ghetto scenes, musicians extolled black life, and poets deplored black tragedies. Black artists, musicians, and writers began to use their art to aid the revolution. They began to consciously try to inculcate a sense of urgency in the masses, to urge them towards self analysis for survival.

THE LAST POETS focused on this aspect of the revolution. They exhorted the man in the street to act black. Some of their exhortations were explicit and reflected the language of the ghetto.

I heard someone say
Things-were-changing (change, change, change)
From browns to black
Time is running out on bullshit changes
Running out like a bushfire in a dry forest
Like a murderer from the scene of a crime
Like a little roach from DDT
Running out like big niggers run on a football field
Run nigger screwin' your woman
Run nigger whippin' your ass
Run nigger stealin' your culture
Run nigger takin' your life
Run nigger killin' your children
Run nigger run like you run when the liquor store's closing and
It's Saturday night run nigger cause time is running/run like times
Never yielding or forgiving
Moving forward in direct pattern
Of progressive movement
Never warning or relinquishing
Time is running, running, running
Runningrunningrunningrunning.

The Last Poets presented their verses accompanied by music and drama. As well as emphasizing action, many of their verses were calls to black unity and cooperation:

ALL MASSES WILL BE HELD
TOMORROW MORNING FOR THE
LATE GREAT BLACK MAN (AMEN)

Do you niggers understand?
Up against the wall, black Maryland-farmers
Or I'll blow you away
And you'll never live to see the light of day
And the nightstick, the nightstick
It glides gracefully up 'side your head
That's right brothers and sisters
You the living dead.

But the cock crows
And the night goes
And it saves your ass/in the nick of time
As you wake up and start to find
Yourself laying up in bed
Scratching your ass and your head
Trying to remember from where
When you recall this familiar nightmare
That always leaves you feeling blue
But you still can't place
The man's face/as hard as you try to
HEY WAKE UP, NIGGERS OR WE ALL THROUGH.

The second part of the Black Revolution changed with the death of Dr. Martin Luther King. With his death the non-violent movement lost its position of eminence. Some blacks began to believe that it was necessary to resist oppression by any necessary means.

This belief has caused an adverse reaction from "Middle America" which reacted to this defensive measure as a black threat to white security. Some have reacted by discontinuing programs designed to alleviate the ills of all poverty-stricken peoples. Others have resorted to legal and illegal means to resubjugate the black man. Sometimes it was only necessary to wear an "Afro" to an interview to be denied a job. At times the sight of African-derived clothing caused the police to search the wearer for an imagined crime. This backlash has also been the subject of black songs:

Mister Backlash, Mister Backlash,
Just who do you think I am?

You raise my taxes, freeze my wages,
And send my son to Viet Nam.

You give me second-class houses
And second-class schools.

Do you think that all colored folks
Are just second-class fools?

Mister Backlash, I'm goin' to leave
You with the backlash blues.

The oppressive "backlash" accomplished more than the exhortations of the black militants. More songs were written about the revolution and more people were talking about it.

And now we get a revolution
'Cause I see the face of things to come
Yeah, your Constitution
Well, my friend, it's gonna have to bend
I'm here to tell you about Destruction
Of all the evil that will have to end.

Blacks have been protesting for over 340 years. 340 years of protest in words and songs, and the conditions expressed by this protest have changed in degree but not in kind. The protest continues. The black man has sublimated his grief in song for over 340 years and to many, the time for singing is past. The time for waiting is past.

It is impossible at this moment to predict the end of protest music. As long as inimical conditions persist, accompanied by bad race relations, the black man will protest in his song and his story. If blacks, browns, and whites are to co-exist in America, there must be racial harmony. Then there will be no need for protest music.

I wish I know how it would feel to be free
I wish I could break all the chains holding me
I wish I could say all the things that I should say
Say 'em loud, say 'em clear, for the whole round world to hear.