Music and Politics:

An Analysis of the Correlations Between Political Events,

Social Movements, and Music from 1960-2017 in The United States

Haleigh Jayde Doetschman

UMUC

Abstract

This paper explores the political events and social movements affecting U.S. citizens between 1960 and now. It also examines popular music in the United States during this time period, and demonstrates the ways in which political environment and music affect one another. It also addresses ways that increased digitization and the use of social media influence people’s perception of music.

*Keywords: politics, social movements, music, United States, 20th century, 21st century, digitization, social media, political anthems*

**Introduction**

Music has a long and rich history of acting as a medium of protest. The use of lyrical poetry to express political dissatisfaction dates back to antiquity, and even works of classical musicians such as Beethoven were influenced by politics (Thomann, 2017). In the 1960’s, widespread unrest acted as a catalyst for the proliferation of politically influenced music in the United States. This trend of sociopolitical music in popular culture has continued to this day, with different themes that reflect the social environment of each era.

**The Swingin’ 60s: War, Second Wave Feminism, and Civil Rights**

The civil rights movement was in full swing by the start of the 1960’s. The election of President John F. Kennedy was viewed as a big win for African Americans, due to his previous assistance in getting Martin Luther King Jr. released from prison (Laws.com, n.d.). He continued this legacy by appointing blacks and Hispanics to positions within his administration. He also made an announcement disavowing illegal segregation on interstate buses following the persecution of the Freedom Riders in 1961 (Prince, 2013).

Kennedy inherited a country that was already involved in the Vietnam War (Dreier, 2015). He reiterated the U.S. Government’s commitment to stemming the growth of communism following the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion, an attempt to overthrow Fidel Castro’s communist regime in Cuba (John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, n.d.). Consequently, he deployed 16,000 military personnel to Vietnam by the time of his assassination in 1963, with the goals of assisting France in the anti-communist movement there, as well as maintaining U.S. credibility abroad.

Another crucial political event of this decade was the 1963 publishing of Betty Friedan’s book “*The Feminine Mystique”,* which many scholars have credited as being the driving force behind second-wave feminism (Collins, 2013). The book, which described the widespread unhappiness of women living as housewives and mothers, became the bestselling nonfiction book in 1964.

The sixties engendered numerous sociopolitical anthems, the majority of which discussed the rights of women or people of color. Two songs which were particularly influential to the separate (but equally important) movements of the decade were Sam Cooke’s *“A Change is Gonna Come”* and Leslie Gore’s *“You Don’t Own Me”*.

Sam Cooke wrote the protest song *“A Change is Gonna Come”* in response to his 1963 arrest in Shreveport, LA for ‘disturbing the peace’ when a Holiday Inn refused service to him and his band on the premise of skin color (NPR Staff, 2014). It was also strongly influenced by Bob Dylan’s *“Blowin’ in the Wind”,* another political song of the time. He makes a reference to the segregation of the time with the line *‘I go to the movie and I go downtown / Somebody keep tellin’ me don’t hang around’* (Cooke, 1964, B-Side). In the next verse, he pleads for help, but “the establishment” knocks him back down: *‘I say brother help me please / But he winds up knockin' me / Back down on my knees, oh’*. The overall tone of the song is a message of hope: despite his current difficulties, Cooke is sure that things will get better. The song resounded with many, landing it the number two spot on the pop charts (Cantwell, 2015).

Coincidentally, *“You Don’t Own Me”,* sung by Leslie Gore, was released the same year *“The Feminine Mystique”* began stimulating interest in women’s rights anew (Marcotte, 2015). This led to its widespread use as an anthem for the second wave feminist movement, and it paved the way for future, more aggressive songs about women’s rights. The lyrics ‘*You don't own me / I'm not just one of your many toys’* and ‘*don't tell me what to do / Don't tell me what to say / And please, when I go out with you / Don't put me on display’* echo the sentiments of *“The Feminine Mystique”*: unhappiness with the objectification of women and with the pressure to conform to a housewife lifestyle (White & Madara, 1963). This song was equally influential to many people, as evidenced by its peak at number two on the Billboard Top 100 (Billboard, n.d.).

**The Disco Era: Women’s Rights, Environmentalism, and Government Distrust in the 70s**

By the early 1970s, many Americans were frustrated with the lack of progress on the war front (History.com Staff, 2010). Tensions reached an all-time high when National Guard troops shot into a crowd of antiwar protesters at Kent State in May 1970. A year later, the Pentagon Papers were released, revealing information about government conduct during the war, and fueling citizens’ distrust in the establishment. Nixon buckled under the growing pressure, and ended U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia in 1973.

This decade also an increase in environmental awareness, and a host of laws were established to ensure health, safety, and environmental protection (Dreier, 2015). Among these were the Clean Air Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Toxic Substances Control Act. Nixon also established the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with the help of Congress.

Several laws were introduced or amended in response to the ongoing social movements of the 1960s (Dreier, 2015). Racial discrimination was outlawed in education and lending, and *Roe vs. Wade* gave women the right to legal abortions. The Gay Liberation movement also made slight progress with the American Psychological Association’s 1973 removal of homosexuality from its list of mental disorders.

While the 1970s was host to many more songs about racial and gender equality, the song most relevant to the political atmosphere of the time was Joni Mitchell’s 1970 hit *“Big Yellow Taxi”*. Mitchell wrote the song upon noticing a large parking lot destroying the landscape which was visible from her hotel room in Hawaii (Hilburn, 1996). While her 1970 recording only topped the U.S. charts at number sixty-seven, her later live recording peaked at twenty-four in 1975 (Billboard, n.d.). Her lyrics mourn the destruction of the environment. *‘They paved paradise and put up a parking lot’* and *‘Don’t it always seem to go / That you don’t know what you’ve got till it’s gone’* embody the conservationist attitude of this decade (Mitchell, 1970). Her song has even had direct political effects: the lyric *‘Hey farmer farmer / Put away that D.D.T. now / Give me spots on my apples / But leave me the birds and the bees / please’* was a probable factor in the 1972 ban on DDT use in the United States (Dreier, 2015). She also reports that her song influenced some cities to turn their unused parking lots into public parks (Hilburn).

**The Decade of Decadence: Racial Divide and Police Brutality in the 80s**

The early to mid-1980s were a time of relative political and social stability in the United States. A handful of laws promoting equality were enacted, such as Wisconsin outlawing discrimination based on sexual orientation, and the Supreme Court’s ruling outlawing sexual harassment in the workplace (Dreier, 2015). While war raged on in other parts of the world, the majority of U.S. citizens lived in relative comfort and satisfaction.

Still struggling, however, were the U.S.’ African American citizens. Many still lived in poverty, and with the rise of crack cocaine’s popularity through the 1980s (peaking at the end of the decade), many turned to distributing the drug as an easy way to make money (Fryer, Heaton, Levitt, & Murphy, 2006). This increase in crack distribution correlated with many negative effects in the black community: the youth homicide rate more than doubled, low birth-weight and fetal death rates increased 10-25%, and there was a 25% increase in weapons arrests.

In 1982, Bronx artists Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five released the hip-hip single *“The Message”*, which peaked at #4 on the R&B chart and #62 on the pop chart (Khan, 2017). This song set a new precedent for hip-hop, shaping it into a genre marked by strong social commentary about the struggles of people of color and people in poor urban neighborhoods, and drawing attention to the issue of institutionalized racism. Its lyrics paint an image of life in the ghetto; in the 1980s the Bronx was a victim of government neglect, with resources and funds going to more affluent neighborhoods. The song sought to educate people on the condition of their neighborhood and of similar ghettos nationwide.

The opening lyric *‘It’s like a jungle sometimes / It makes me wonder how I keep from goin’ under’* sets the stage for numerous descriptions about ghetto living conditions (Fletcher, Mel, Robinson, & Chase, 1982). First, he describes the substandard housing with the lines *‘Rats in the front room, roaches in the back’*, and *‘Broken glass everywhere / People pissin’ on the stairs’*. Next, he devotes two verses to descriptions of poverty. Some particularly poignant lines include *‘I tried to get away, but I couldn’t get far / ‘Cause a man with a tow truck repossessed my car’*, *‘She had to get a pimp, she couldn’t make it on her own’*, and *‘The bill collectors, they ring my phone / And scare my wife when I’m not home / Got a bum education, double-digit inflation / Can’t take the train to the job, there’s a strike at the station’*. To close out the song, he describes ghetto life’s influence on youth, and how it causes their involvement in lives of crime: *‘You’ll admire all the number-book takers / Thugs, pimps and pushers and the big moneymakers / Drivin’ big cars, spendin’ twenties and tens / And you’ll wanna grow up to be just like them’*. Furthermore, he discusses how children who are thusly influenced often end up dropping out of school, which leads to the inability to find employment, and how they eventually end up in prison, bluntly portraying the cycle of poverty. In a decade where so many individuals were living comfortable lives, *“The Message”*  brought the biggest issue of this period into the spotlight.

**The Naughty 90s: Institutional Racism and Technological Advances**

The public debut of the world wide web in 1991 started a wave of technological advancements (Forrest, 2015). Amazon and eBay were both launched in 1995, and e-commerce grew rapidly as a result. PDAs, DVDs, mp3 players, and 2g cell phones which included text messaging were all released during this decade, drastically and permanently changing how Americans live in and interact with the world.

While most of this decade was relatively tranquil, life in the ghetto had yet to improve. On March 3, 1991, KTLA (a Los Angeles local news station) released footage of police officers beating Rodney King, an African American man, who appears to be unarmed, as he rolls on the ground in pain (Los Angeles Times Staff, 2017). A year later, on April 29, 1992, the officers involved were acquitted in a trial by jury, and within hours, riots started breaking out throughout the city. The LA riots lasted for 5 days, killing more than 60 people and destroying many businesses, as the National Guard and the LAPD fought to contain the situation. The riots sparked nationwide conversations about police brutality, racial injustice, and the need for diversity in jury panels and in police departments (Stewart, 2012).

The growing discussion about police brutality sparked a number of anthems from artists of diverse genres and backgrounds. While LA rap-rock group Rage Against the Machine’s 1992 debut *‘Killing in the Name of’* was a violent and highly relevant criticism of police brutality, it failed to make the charts in the United States, perhaps due to its rough, unedited sound (Grow, 2012). Conversely, many U.S. citizens related to KRS-One’s hip-hop anthem *‘Sound of da Police’.* It was a resounding hit, reaching number seventeen on the Billboard top 100 in 1994 (Billboard, n.d.). Lyrics such as *‘The officer has the right to arrest / And if you fight back they put a hole in your chest’* voiced the fear of police brutality that was prevalent in much of the nation following the Rodney King case, particularly among people of color (Burdon, Chandler, Lemay, Lomax, & Parker, 1993). The lyrics also draw comparisons between police officers and plantation overseers, alluding to a view that black individuals did not yet consider themselves free during this time period. The song also touches on issues of racial profiling and of hypocrisy present among black members of the police force.

**The Decade From Hell: Terrorism, War, and Recession in the 2000s**

At the end of 2009, Time Magazine controversially named 2000-2009 “The Decade from Hell” (TIME, 2009). They cited numerous factors which had contributed to the breakdown of the idyllic image of the United States, both domestically and abroad. The factors cited included the contested results of the 2000 election, the 9/11/2001 terrorist attacks on the twin towers, the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, Hurricane Katrina, the financial crisis, Detroit’s collapse, and revelations about human rights violations at the military base in Guantanamo Bay.

It wasn’t all negative, however. Technology continued to advance rapidly, with smartphones gaining popularity and social media becoming prevalent in the mid-2000s (Dreier, 2015). In 2008, the U.S. made a huge step forward for civil rights, with Barack Obama becoming the first African-American president (and the first president with Muslim roots). Closing out the decade, “The Miracle on The Hudson” brought a lot of people new hope when a pilot managed to save every passenger on US Airways Flight 1549, which seemed doomed following a double engine failure.

The political atmosphere in the early 2000’s was significantly different than that of the Obama years, and thus it is impossible to choose a song that accurately represents the entire decade. The Bush era was marked by a notable anti-war sentiment, which is voiced in Eminem’s 2004 single *“Mosh”* (Plumer, 2013). Notably, the song was “leaked” online, not officially released, but the song spread around the internet like wildfire (Popkin, 2004). It strongly resonated with a public that was increasingly opposed to the war in the Middle East, landing it the number five spot in digital song sales (Billboard, n.d.). Mathers, whose rap alias is Eminem, said of the song, “The goal was to make a video that inspired young people to vote because they too often disregard it as a powerless exercise” (Creekmur, 2004). Some have criticized him for not officially releasing the song until a week before the presidential election, when it was too late for people to register to vote.

*“Mosh”* is a direct and brutal assault on the policies of the Bush administration. Strong anti-war sentiments are found in lyrics such as *‘Stomp, push, shove, mush, fuck Bush, until they bring our troops home’*, and *‘Strap him with an AK-47, let him go fight his own war / … / No more blood for oil, we got our own battles to fight on our own soil”* (Mathers, Young, Elizondo, Batson, & Pope, 2004). At the end of the song’s music video, Mathers includes a message encouraging people to vote (Popkin, 2004).

The anti-war atmosphere died down upon the election of President Obama, perhaps due to partisanship, as most of the movement’s members were Democrats (Plumer, 2013). The anti-immigrant sentiment instilled after the 9/11 terrorist attacks had also died down among parts of the population, which fueled intense debates between those who still feared or disliked immigrants, and those who felt they were important to the future of the United States (Kim, 2011). In 2008, M.I.A.’s song *“Paper Planes”*, which parodied fear of immigrants in the U.S., peaked at number twelve on the Billboard alternative chart (Billboard, n.d.). M.I.A. wrote the song while she was having difficulty renewing her visa (Wagner, 2007). She felt frustration with the slow progress, which she felt was tied to a fear that immigrants are potential terrorists. She parodied the U.S. sentiment that immigrants don’t contribute to society or culture with lyrics such as *‘All I wanna do is (gunshot noises) / And-a (cash register noise) / And take your money’* (Arulpragasam, Pentz, Headon, Jones, Simonon, & Strummer, 2008).

**The Modern Era: Empowerment, Progression, and Regression from 2010 to Present**

Since 2010, there has been a resurgence of social justice movements. In 2012, unarmed black teen Trayvon Martin was shot and killed while heading home from a 7/11 (Day, 2015). Upon hearing the “not guilty” verdict of his assailant, African American women Garza and Cullors started the online hashtag #blacklivesmatter to speak out against racial injustices faced by the black community. In 2014, Micheal Brown, another unarmed black teen, was shot by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, causing protests in the city, and the Black Lives Matter Movement took hold, sparking over a thousand protests nationwide.

Third wave feminism also took a firm hold this decade, with an emphasis on inclusiveness, which was missing from prior movements (Rand, 2017). Key goals of third wave feminism include the closure of the pay gap, ending the objectification of women, and supporting women’s health and reproductive choices. The January 17, 2017 the “Women’s March on Washington” was held, which promoted these goals while simultaneously criticizing the misogynistic speech of Donald Trump, the newly appointed President of the United States (Chenoweth & Pressman, 2017). It was likely the largest single-day demonstration in the recorded history of the U.S., with approximately 1.3% of the U.S. population attending a Women’s March nationwide. Also of note is the #metoo movement, inspired by an increase in prosecution of powerful men accused of sexual misconduct of various forms (Gilbert, 2017). The hashtag, which was designed to show the prevalence of sexual assault in the United States, was retweeted over half a million times on Twitter alone. #Metoo inspired increased discourse on rape culture in the U.S., bringing it to the forefront of today’s politics.

The third movement to gain significant traction since 2010 is the LGBT rights movement, which addresses the right of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals to live without discrimination (CNN Library, 2017). In 2011, “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” was repealed, allowing the inclusion of openly gay and bisexual individuals in the military, and in 2012, housing discrimination against LGBT individuals was ruled illegal. In 2015, The Supreme Court legalized gay marriage nationwide, and in 2017 the court asserted that The Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination of LGBT employees in the workplace. Some of the movement’s other current trends include the fight for rights of transgender individuals and for rights of individuals who do not identify as male or female. Notably, some trans rights laws that have passed are only applicable to individuals who have undergone sex reassignment surgery.

One song that represents the overarching themes of the 2010s thus far is Lady Gaga’s 2011 hit *“Born This Way”*. In addition to being the first number one song ever to include the word “transgendered”, she also preaches love and empowerment for many different minority groups (Sheffield, 2011). The lyric *‘I’m beautiful in my way / ‘Cause God Makes no mistakes / I’m on the right track, baby’* implores even those with religious biases to embrace acceptance, drawing on Gaga’s own religious background (Germanotti & Laursen, 2011). She also devotes the entire bridge to a call for self-love among disadvantaged groups: *‘Don’t be a drag, just be a queen / Whether you’re broke or evergreen / You’re black, white, beige, Chola descent / You’re Lebanese, you’re Orient / Whether life’s disabilities / Left you outcast, bullied, or teased / … / No matter gay, straight, or bi / Lesbian, transgendered life / I’m on the right track baby / I was born to survive’*. The inclusion of people of LGBT status, racial minorities, the poor, and the differently abled echoed the new civil rights movement. The U.S. wants equality for all, and they want it now.

**Summary**

Political movements have changed and developed over time. Many have survived the decades, and are just as alive now as they were fifty years ago. The rights of women and people of color sparked movements dating back to the 1960s and earlier, and both are back in the spotlight today. Environmental activism became an important issue in the 1970s, and is still a concern today, although to a lesser extent. Although the 1969 Stonewall Riots invoked a national Gay Rights discussion, and Pride Parades appeared nationwide shortly thereafter, LGBT individuals had few legal rights or protections before the increased activism of this decade (Dreier, 2015). Peace movements are also found in many different time periods, reflecting an ever-present anti-war sentiment that enters the spotlight when our country becomes engaged in a foreign conflict.

Due to the extended nature of political movements, political songs tend to have relevance extending far beyond their release date. While Sam Cooke’s anti-segregation rhetoric is outdated, the references to institutional racism are not, and the hope that changes will be made, bringing an end to racial disparity, is perennial. Leslie Gore’s *“You Don’t Own Me”* could just as easily be an anthem for women today as it was in 1963. The issues of police brutality and the inner-city cycle of poverty are just as relevant today as they were when *“The Message”* and *“Sound of da Police”* were written. *“Big Yellow Taxi”* has such a timeless message that there have been 63 different versions made by various artists spanning from the date of its release to as recently as 2 months ago (Denis, n.d.) The well-known 2003 Counting Crows cover spent 20 weeks on the U.S. charts, which is a testament to its persistent relevance. Political movements do not die easily, and neither do the songs which accompany them.

Technology has played a crucial role in helping political songs reach listeners’ ears. Political anthems have had a tendency to not reach the public until the majority of people are ready to hear them. Until the popularity of the internet in the mid-1990s, radio was the driving force which determined whether music reached people. This is evident from the above-mentioned failure of *“Killing in the Name of”* in the U.S. market. While the songs that were easily accessible to the public may have been cherry-picked by radio producers, many songs did push the agenda, such as the ones mentioned above. The songs listed from 1960-2000 were not subject to much controversy, although other songs released during this time period, such as Loretta Lynn’s 1975 *“The Pill”*, Madonna’s 1986 *“Papa Don’t Preach”*, and N.W.A’s 1988 *“Fuck tha Police”* were intensely critiqued in newspapers and on television (Lentini, 2016).

The popularity of social media has had a profound effect on the distribution and discourse of popular music, with routine interpretation (and misinterpretation) of songs and their corresponding music videos. *‘Mosh’* arguably would have never influenced popular culture if it hadn’t been leaked online and subsequently shared around social networking sites. *‘Paper Planes’* was misinterpreted by several sources, such as the *New York Times*, who interpreted the song as “comparing international drug dealing with selling records” (Fuller, 2009). *Times* also referenced the online discourse of Sri Lankans, who perceived her music video as supporting the terrorist group ‘Tamil Tigers’. Even the loving message of *‘Born This Way’* sparked debate, with some LGBT individuals stating that it was disingenuous and an attempt to pander to the movement (Bernstein, 2011).

Modern musicians need to be aware of social media feedback: negative criticisms or interpretations of their content can lead to a backlash, damaging their career. Currently, South African hip hop duo Die Antwoord is rapidly losing supporters due to the increased discourse about their history of cultural appropriation, use of ‘blackface’, and the use of the ‘n-word’ (Mvandaba, 2017). Breakout pop star Melanie Martinez is also facing her share of controversy, with many fans announcing that they will no longer support her in the aftermath of rape allegations, made on Twitter, which spread through social media like wildfire (France, 2017). The power of social media is only growing, and artists need to be very careful with the messages they convey, so as not to damage their reputations or careers.

**Conclusion**

Music has been socially and politically influenced since antiquity, and the trend doesn’t appear to be going away any time soon. Many songs can be definitively linked to the political movements of their time, and many continue to be relevant as those movements grow and change over a span of decades. The growing digitization of the world has led to increased dialogue about the interpretations and significance of artists and their music, videos, lyrics, words, and actions. As a result, artists have a responsibility to be increasingly aware of the messages they convey, the actions they take, and how these may be interpreted. With proper direction, music will continue to play a significant role in political events and social movements well into the future.

**Appendix: Song Lyrics (In Order of Mention)**

Sam Cooke – “A Change Is Gonna Come”

I was born by the river in a little tent  
Oh and just like the river I've been running ev'r since  
It's been a long time, a long time coming  
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will

It's been too hard living, but I'm afraid to die  
'Cause I don't know what's up there, beyond the sky  
It's been a long, a long time coming  
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will

I go to the movie and I go downtown  
Somebody keep tellin' me don't hang around  
It's been a long, a long time coming  
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will

Then I go to my brother  
And I say brother help me please  
But he winds up knockin' me  
Back down on my knees, oh

There have been times that I thought I couldn't last for long  
But now I think I'm able to carry on  
It's been a long, a long time coming  
But I know a change is gonna come, oh yes it will

Leslie Gore- “You Don’t Own Me”

You don't own me  
I'm not just one of your many toys  
You don't own me  
Don't say I can't go with other boys

And don't tell me what to do  
Don't tell me what to say  
And please, when I go out with you  
Don't put me on display 'cause

You don't own me  
Don't try to change me in any way  
You don't own me  
Don't tie me down 'cause I'd never stay

I don't tell you what to say  
I don't tell you what to do  
So just let me be myself  
That's all I ask of you

I'm young and I love to be young  
I'm free and I love to be free  
To live my life the way I want  
To say and do whatever I please

And don't tell me what to do  
Oh, don't tell me what to say  
And please, when I go out with you  
Don't put me on display

I don't tell you what to say  
Oh, don't tell you what to do  
So just let me be myself  
That's all I ask of you

I'm young and I love to be young  
I'm free and I love to be free  
To live

Joni Mitchell- “Big Yellow Taxi”

They paved paradise  
And put up a parking lot  
With a pink hotel, a boutique  
And a swinging hot spot  
Don't it always seem to go   
That you don't know what you've got  
'Till it's gone  
They paved paradise  
And put up a parking lot

They took all the trees  
And put them in a tree museum  
And they charged all the people  
A dollar and a half to see 'em  
Don't it always seem to go  
That you don't know what you've got  
'Till it's gone  
They paved paradise  
And they put up a parking lot

Hey farmer farmer  
Put away that D.D.T. now  
Give me spots on my apples  
But leave me the birds and the bees  
Please  
Don't it always seem to go  
That you don't know what you've got  
'Till it's gone  
They paved paradise  
And put up a parking lot

Late last night  
I heard the screen door slam  
And a big yellow taxi  
Took away my old man  
Don't it always seem to go  
That you don't know what you've got  
'Till it's gone  
They paved paradise  
And put up a parking lot

Don't it always seem to go  
That you don't know what you've got  
'Till it's gone  
They paved paradise  
Put up a parking lot

They paved paradise  
Put up a parking lot

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five- “The Message”

It's like a jungle sometimes  
It makes me wonder how I keep from goin' under

Broken glass everywhere  
People pissin' on the stairs, you know they just don't care  
I can't take the smell, can't take the noise  
Got no money to move out, I guess I got no choice  
Rats in the front room, roaches in the back  
Junkies in the alley with a baseball bat  
I tried to get away but I couldn't get far  
'Cause a man with a tow truck repossessed my car

Don't push me 'cause I'm close to the edge  
I'm trying not to lose my head  
It's like a jungle sometimes  
It makes me wonder how I keep from goin' under

Standin' on the front stoop hangin' out the window  
Watchin' all the cars go by, roarin' as the breezes blow  
Crazy lady, livin' in a bag  
Eatin' outta garbage pails, used to be a fag hag  
Said she'll dance the tango, skip the light fandango  
A Zircon princess seemed to lost her senses  
Down at the peep show watchin' all the creeps  
So she can tell her stories to the girls back home  
She went to the city and got so so seditty  
She had to get a pimp, she couldn't make it on her own

Don't push me cause I'm close to the edge  
I'm trying not to lose my head  
It's like a jungle sometimes  
It makes me wonder how I keep from goin' under

It's like a jungle sometimes  
It makes me wonder how I keep from goin' under

My brother's doin' bad, stole my mother's TV  
Says she watches too much, it's just not healthy  
All My Children in the daytime, Dallas at night  
Can't even see the game or the Sugar Ray fight  
The bill collectors, they ring my phone  
And scare my wife when I'm not home  
Got a bum education, double-digit inflation  
Can't take the train to the job, there's a strike at the station  
Neon King Kong standin' on my back  
Can't stop to turn around, broke my sacroiliac  
A mid-range migraine, cancered membrane  
Sometimes I think I'm goin' insane  
I swear I might hijack a plane!

Don't push me 'cause I'm close to the edge  
I'm trying not to lose my head  
It's like a jungle sometimes  
It makes me wonder how I keep from goin' under

It's like a jungle sometimes  
It makes me wonder how I keep from goin' under

A child is born with no state of mind  
Blind to the ways of mankind  
God is smilin' on you but he's frownin' too  
Because only God knows what you'll go through  
You'll grow in the ghetto livin' second-rate  
And your eyes will sing a song called deep hate  
The places you play and where you stay  
Looks like one great big alleyway  
You'll admire all the number-book takers  
Thugs, pimps and pushers and the big money-makers  
Drivin' big cars, spendin' twenties and tens  
And you'll wanna grow up to be just like them, huh  
Smugglers, scramblers, burglars, gamblers  
Pickpocket peddlers, even panhandlers  
You say I'm cool, huh, I'm no fool  
But then you wind up droppin' outta high school  
Now you're unemployed, all non-void  
Walkin' round like you're Pretty Boy Floyd  
Turned stick-up kid, but look what you done did  
Got sent up for a eight-year bid  
Now your manhood is took and you're a Maytag  
Spend the next two years as a undercover fag  
Bein' used and abused to serve like hell  
Til one day, you was found hung dead in the cell  
It was plain to see that your life was lost  
You was cold and your body swung back and forth  
But now your eyes sing the sad, sad song  
Of how you lived so fast and died so young so

Don't push me 'cause I'm close to the edge  
I'm trying not to lose my head  
It's like a jungle sometimes  
It makes me wonder how I keep from goin' under

It's like a jungle sometimes  
It makes me wonder how I keep from goin' under

KRS-One- “Sound of Da Police”

Woop-woop! That's the sound of da police! That's the sound of the beast!

Stand clear! Don man a-talk  
You can't stand where I stand, you can't walk where I walk  
Watch out! We run New York  
Police man come, we bust him out the park  
I know this for a fact, you don't like how I act  
You claim I'm sellin' crack  
But you be doin' that  
I'd rather say "see ya"  
Cause I would never be ya  
Be a officer? You wicked overseer!  
Ya hotshot, want to get props and be a savior  
First show a little respect, change your behavior  
Change your attitude, change your plan  
There could never really be justice on stolen land  
Are you really for peace and equality?  
Or when my car is hooked up, you know you want to follow me  
Your laws are minimal  
Cause you won't even think about lookin' at the real criminal  
This has got to cease  
Cause we be getting hyped to the sound of da police!

Woop-woop! That's the sound of da police! That's the sound of the beast!

Now here's a little truth  
Open up your eye  
While you're checking out the boom-bap, check the exercise  
Take the word "overseer, " like a sample  
Repeat it very quickly in a crew for example  
Overseer  
Overseer  
Overseer  
Overseer  
Officer, Officer, Officer, Officer!  
Yeah, officer from overseer  
You need a little clarity?  
Check the similarity!  
The overseer rode around the plantation  
The officer is off patrolling all the nation  
The overseer could stop you what you're doing  
The officer will pull you over just when he's pursuing  
The overseer had the right to get ill  
And if you fought back, the overseer had the right to kill  
The officer has the right to arrest  
And if you fight back they put a hole in your chest!  
(Woop!) They both ride horses  
After 400 years, I've got no choices!  
The police them have a little gun  
So when I'm on the streets, I walk around with a bigger one  
(Woop-woop!) I hear it all day  
Just so they can run the light and be upon their way

Woop-woop! That's the sound of da police! That's the sound of the beast!

Check out the message in a rough stylee  
The real criminals are the see-O-P  
You check for undercover and the one PD  
But just a mere Black man, them want check me  
Them check out me car for it shine like the sun  
But them jealous or them vexed cause them can't afford one  
Black people still slaves up til today  
But the Black police officer nah see it that way  
Him want a salary  
Him want it  
So he put on a badge and kill people for it  
My grandfather had to deal with the cops  
My great-grandfather dealt with the cops  
My great grandfather had to deal with the cops  
And then my great, great, great, great, when it's gonna stop?!

Woop-woop! That's the sound of da police! That's the sound of the beast!

Eminem- “Mosh”

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America  
And to the Republic for which it stands  
One nation under God  
Indivisible?  
It feels so good to be back

I scrutinize every word, memorize every line  
I spit it once, refuel re-energize and rewind  
I give sight to the blind, my insight through the mind  
I exercise my right to express when I feel it's time  
It's just all in your mind, what you interpret it as  
I say to fight, you take it as I'm a whip someone's a\*\*  
If you don't understand, don't even bother to ask  
A father who has grown up with a fatherless past  
Who has blown up now to rap phenomenon that has  
Or at least shows no difficulty multi-task  
And in juggling both perhaps mastered his craft  
Slash entrepreneur who has held onto few more rap acts  
Who's had a few obstacles thrown his way through the last half  
Of his career typical manure moving past that  
Mr. kisses a\*\* crack, he's a class act  
Rubber band man, yea he just snaps back

Come along follow me as I lead through the darkness  
As I provide just enough spark that we need to proceed  
Carry on, give me hope, give me strength  
Come with me and I won't steer you wrong  
Put your faith and your trust as I guide us through the fog  
To the light at the end of the tunnel  
We gonna fight, we gonna charge, we gonna stomp, we gonna march  
Through the swamp, we gonna mosh through the marsh  
Take us right through the doors (c'mon)

All the people up top on the side and the middle  
Come together lets all form and swamp just a little  
Just let it gradually build from the front to the back  
All you can see is a sea of people some white and some black  
Don't matter what color, all that matters we gathered together  
To celebrate for the same cause don't matter the weather  
If it rains let it rain, yea the wetter the better  
They ain't gonna stop us they can't, we stronger now more than ever  
They tell us no we say yea, they tell us stop we say go  
Rebel with a rebel yell, raise hell we gonna let em know  
Stomp, push, shove, mush, f\*\*\* Bush, until they bring our troops home (c'mon)

Come along follow me as I lead through the darkness  
As I provide just enough spark that we need to proceed  
Carry on, give me hope, give me strength  
Come with me and I won't steer you wrong  
Put your faith and your trust as I guide us through the fog  
To the light at the end of the tunnel  
We gonna fight, we gonna charge, we gonna stomp, we gonna march  
Through the swamp, we gonna mosh through the marsh  
Take us right through the doors (c'mon)

Imagine it pouring, it's raining down on us  
Mosh pits outside the oval office  
Someone's tryna tell us something,  
Maybe this is god just sayin' we're responsible  
For this monster, this coward,  
That we have empowered  
This is bin Laden, look at his head noddin'  
How could we allow something like this without pumping our fists  
Now this is our final hour  
Let me be the voice in your strength and your choice  
Let me simplify the rhyme just to amplify the noise  
Try to amplify the times it, and multiply by six

Teen million people, Are equal at this high pitch  
Maybe we can reach Al-Queda through my speech  
Let the president answer a higher anarchy  
Strap him with an Ak-forty seven, let him go, fight his own war  
Let him impress daddy that way  
No more blood for oil, we got our own battles to fight on our own soil  
No more psychological warfare, to trick us to thinking that we ain't loyal  
If we don't serve our own country, we're patronizing a hero  
Look in his eyes its all lies  
The stars and stripes, they've been swiped, washed out and wiped  
And replaced with his own face, Mosh now or die  
If I get sniped tonight you know why,  
'Cause I told you to fight.

Come along follow me as I lead through the darkness  
As I provide just enough spark that we need to proceed  
Carry on, give me hope, give me strength  
Come with me and I won't steer you wrong  
Put your faith and your trust as I guide us through the fog  
To the light at the end of the tunnel  
We gonna fight, we gonna charge, we gonna stomp, we gonna march  
Through the swamp, we gonna mosh through the marsh  
Take us right through the doors (c'mon)

And as we proceed,  
To Mosh through this desert storm,  
In these closing statements, if they should argue  
Let us beg to differ  
As we set aside our differences  
And assemble our own army  
To disarm this weapon of mass destruction  
That we call our President, for the present  
And Mosh for the future of our next generation  
To speak and be heard  
Mr. President, Mr. Senator?  
Do you guys hear us? hear us? (Hailie)

M.I.A.- “Paper Planes”

I fly like paper, get high like planes  
If you catch me at the border I got visas in my name  
If you come around here, I make 'em all day  
I get one down in a second if you wait [x2]

Sometimes I think sitting on trains  
Every stop I get to I'm clocking that game  
Everyone's a winner, we're making our fame  
Bona fide hustler making my name [x2]

All I wanna do is (gunshot, gunshot, gunshot, gunshot)  
And a (click, ka-ching)  
And take your money [x4]

Pirate skulls and bones  
Sticks and stones and weed and bongs  
Running when we hit 'em  
Lethal poison for the system [x2]

No one on the corner has swagger like us  
Hit me on my Burner prepaid wireless  
We pack and deliver like UPS trucks  
Already going hell just pumping that gas [x2]

All I wanna do is (gunshot, gunshot, gunshot, gunshot)  
And a (click, ka-ching)  
And take your money [x4]

M.I.A.  
Third world democracy  
Yeah, I got more records than the K.G.B.  
So, uh, no funny business  
Are you ready all?

Some some some I some I murder  
Some I some I let go  
Some some some I some I murder  
Some I some I let go

All I wanna do is (gunshot, gunshot, gunshot, gunshot)  
And a (click, ka-ching)  
And take your money [x4]

Lady Gaga- “Born This Way”

It doesn't matter if you love him, or capital H-I-M  
Just put your paws up 'cause you were born this way, baby  
  
My mama told me when I was young  
We are all born superstars  
She rolled my hair and put my lipstick on  
In the glass of her boudoir  
  
"There's nothing wrong with loving who you are"  
She said, "'Cause he made you perfect, babe"  
"So hold your head up girl and you'll go far,  
Listen to me when I say"  
  
I'm beautiful in my way  
'Cause God makes no mistakes  
I'm on the right track, baby I was born this way  
Don't hide yourself in regret  
Just love yourself and you're set  
I'm on the right track, baby  
I was born this way (Born this way)

Oh there ain't no other way  
Baby I was born this way  
Baby I was born this way  
Oh there ain't no other way  
Baby I was born this way  
Right track baby I was born this way  
  
Don't be a drag, just be a queen  
Don't be a drag, just be a queen  
Don't be a drag, just be a queen  
Don't be don't be don't be  
  
Give yourself prudence  
And love your friends  
So we can rejoice your truth  
In the religion of the insecure  
I must be myself, respect my youth  
  
A different lover is not a sin  
Believe capital H-I-M (hey hey hey)  
I love my life I love this record and  
Mi amore vole fe, yah  
  
I'm beautiful in my way  
'Cause God makes no mistakes  
I'm on the right track, baby  
I was born this way  
  
Don't hide yourself in regret  
Just love yourself and you're set  
I'm on the right track, baby  
I was born this way  
  
Oh there ain't no other way  
Baby I was born this way  
Baby I was born this way  
Oh there ain't no other way  
Baby I was born this way  
Right track, baby I was born this way  
  
Don't be a drag, just be a queen  
Whether you're broke or evergreen  
You're black, white, beige, chola descent  
You're Lebanese, you're Orient  
Whether life's disabilities  
Left you outcast, bullied, or teased  
Rejoice and love yourself today  
'Cause baby you were born this way  
  
No matter gay, straight, or bi  
Lesbian, transgendered life  
I'm on the right track baby  
I was born to survive  
No matter black, white or beige  
Chola or orient made  
I'm on the right track baby  
I was born to be brave  
  
I'm beautiful in my way  
'Cause God makes no mistakes  
I'm on the right track, baby I was born this way  
  
Don't hide yourself in regret  
Just love yourself and you're set  
I'm on the right track, baby  
I was born this way yeah

Oh there ain't no other way  
Baby I was born this way  
Baby I was born this way (Born this way)  
Oh there ain't no other way  
Baby I was born this way  
Right track, baby I was born this way  
  
I was born this way hey  
I was born this way hey  
I'm on the right track baby  
I was born this way hey  
  
I was born this way hey  
I was born this way hey  
I'm on the right track baby  
I was born this way hey  
  
Same D.N.A. but born this way  
Same D.N.A. but born this way

References

Arulpragasam, M., Pentz, W., Headon, T., Jones, M., Simonon, P., & Strummer, J. (2008). Paper Planes [Recorded by M.I.A.]. On *Paper Planes* [CD]. XL & Interscope.

Bernstein, J. (2011, February 14). Lady Gaga’s New Single, Born This Way, Makes Gays Turn On Her. *The Daily Beast.* Retrieved December 10, 2017, from https://www.thedailybeast.com/lady-gagas-new-single-born-this-way-makes-gays-turn-on-her

Billboard (n.d.). Eminem Mosh Chart History. *Billboard.* Retrieved December 10, 2017, from https://www.billboard.com/music/eminem/chart-history/digital-song-sales/song/545161

Billboard (n.d.). Joni Mitchell Chart History. *Billboard.* Retrieved December 09, 2017, from https://www.billboard.com/music/lesley-gore/chart-history/hot-100/song/577622

Billboard (n.d.). KRS-One Sound Of Da Police Chart History. *Billboard.* Retrieved December 09, 2017, from https://www.billboard.com/music/krs-one/chart-history/rap-song/song/24138

Billboard (n.d.). Lesley Gore You Don’t Own Me Chart History. *Billboard.* Retrieved December 09, 2017, from https://www.billboard.com/music/joni-mitchell/chart-history

Billboard (n.d.). M.I.A. Paper Planes Chart History. *Billboard.* Retrieved December 10, 2017, from https://www.billboard.com/music/mia-1/chart-history/alternative-songs/song/536193

Burdon, E., Chandler, C., Lemay, R., Lomax, A., & Parker, L. (1993) Sound of da Police [Recorded by KRS-One]. On *Sound of Da Police* [CD]. Jive.

Cantwell, D. (2015, March 17). The Unlikely Story of “A Change Is Gonna Come”. *The New Yorker.* Retrieved December 09, 2017, from https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-unlikely-story-of-a-change-is-gonna-come

Chenoweth, E., & Pressman, J., (2017, February 07). This is what we learned by counting the women’s marches. *The Washington Post.* Retrieved December 10, 2017, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/02/07/this-is-what-we-learned-by-counting-the-womens-marches/?utm\_term=.b87450adfcc8

CNN Library (2017, November 09). LGBT Rights Milestones Fast Facts. *CNN.* Retrieved December 10, 2017, from http://www.cnn.com/2015/06/19/us/lgbt-rights-milestones-fast-facts/index.html

Collins, G. (2013, January 23). The Feminine Mystique at 50. *New York Times.* Retrieved December 09, 2017, from www.nytimes.com/2013/01/27/magazine/the-feminine-mystique-at-50.html

Cooke, S. (1964). A Change Is Gonna Come. On *Shake* [Record]. Hollywood: RCA Victor.

Creekmur, C. (2004, October 27). Eminem’s ‘Mosh’ video disses Bush. *BET.com.* Retrieved December 10, 2017, from www.nbcnews.com/id/6347737/ns/us\_news-life/t/eminems-mosh-video-disses-bush/#.Wiy\_ckxFysM

Day, E. (2015, July 19). #BlackLivesMatter: the birth of a new civil rights movement. *The Guardian.* Retrieved December 10, 2017, from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/19/blacklivesmatter-birth-civil-rights-movement

Denis (n.d.). Cover Versions of Big Yellow Taxi by Joni Mitchell. *Seconhand Songs.* Retrieved December 10, 2017, from https://secondhandsongs.com/performance/20

Dreier, P. (2015, June 04). Who and What Changed America? A 20th Century Timeline. *Huffington Post.* Retrieved December 09, 2017, from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-dreier/150-moments-that-changed-\_b\_7513366.html

Felter, C., & Renwick, D. (2017, September 06). The U.S. Immigration Debate. *CFR.* Retrieved December 10, 2017 from https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-immigration-debate-0

Fryer, R., Heaton, P., Levitt, S., & Murphy, K. (2006, April). Measuring Crack Cocaine and Its Impact. *Harvard.* Retrieved December 09, 2017, from http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/fryer/files/fhlm\_crack\_cocaine\_0.pdf

Fletcher, E., Mel, M., Robinson, S., & Chase, C. (1982) [Recorded by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five]. The Message. On *The Message* [Record]. New York: Sugar Hill.

Forrest, C. (2015, May 8). Tech nostalgia: The top 15 innovations of the 1990s. *TechRepulic.* Retrieved December 09, 2017 from https://www.techrepublic.com/pictures/tech-nostalgia-the-top-15-innovations-of-the-1990s/15/

France, L. (2017, December 6). Melanie Martinez, former ‘Voice’ contestant, responds to rape allegation. *CNN Entertainment.* Retrieved December 10, 2017 from http://www.cnn.com/2017/12/06/entertainment/melanie-martinez-timothy-heller-rape/index.html

Fuller, T. (2009). The Dissonant Undertones of M.I.A. *The New York Times.* Retrieved December 10, 2017 from www.nytimes.com/2009/02/11/world/asia/11mia.html

Germanotti, S. & Laursen, J. (2011). Born this Way [Recorded by Lady Gaga]. On *Born this Way* [CD]. Streamline, Kon Live, & Interscope.

Gilbert, S. (2017, October 16). The Movement of #MeToo. *The Atlantic.* Retrieved December 10, 2017, from https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/10/the-movement-of-metoo/542979/

Grow, K. (2012, November 19). Rage Against the Machine Look Back on 20 Years of ‘Killing in the Name’. *Spin.* Retrieved December 09, 2017, from https://www.spin.com/2012/11/rage-against-the-machine-killing-in-the-name-anniversary-interview/

Hilburn, R. (1996, December 08). Both Sides, Later. *LA Times.* Retrieved December 09, 2017 from http://articles.latimes.com/1996-12-08/entertainment/ca-6804\_1\_early-songs

History.com Staff. (2010). Vietnam War Protests. *History.* Retrieved December 09, 2017 from www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnam-war-protests

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. (n.d.). Vietnam. *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.* Retrieved December 09, 2017, from https://www.jfklibrary.org/JFK/JFK-in-History/Vietnam.aspx

Khan, Y. (2017, June 30). “The Message” Turns 35 and Remains Hip-Hop’s Premier Social Commentary. *The Shadow League.* Retrieved December 09, 2017, from https://www.theshadowleague.com/story/celebrating-35-years-of-the-message-the-original-hip-hop-social-commentary

Kim, M. (2011, September 8). After 9/11, Immigration Became About Homeland Security. *U.S. News & World Report.* Retrieved December 10, 2017, from https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2011/09/08/after-911-immigration-became-about-homeland-security-attacks-shifted-the-conversation-heavily-toward-terrorism-and-enforcement

Laws.com. (n.d.). Civil Rights Timeline. Retrieved December 09, 2017, from https://kids.laws.com/civil-rights-timeline

Lentini, L. (2016, May 17). The 15 Most Controversial Songs of All-Time. *Spin.* Retrieved December 10, 2017, from

Los Angeles Times Staff (2017, April 26). The L.A. Riots: 25 Years Later. *Los Angeles Times.* Retrieved December 09, 2017 from timelines.latimes.com/los-angeles-riots/

Marcotte, A. (2015, February 17). Leslie Gore, Feminist Icon. *Slate.* Retrieved December 09, 2017, from www.slate.com/blogs/xx\_factor/2015/02/17/lesley\_gore\_feminist\_icon\_she\_broke\_the\_mold\_with\_you\_don\_t\_own\_me.html

Mathers, M., Young, A., Elizondo, M., Batson, M., & Pope, C. (2004). Mosh. On *Mosh* [CD]. Aftermath, Shady, Interscope, & Goliath.

Mitchell, J. (1970). Big Yellow Taxi. On *Big Yellow Taxi* [Record]. Reprise.

Mvandaba, Z. (2017) Die Antwoord Continues To Offend And Outrage South Africans Through Their Controversial Antics. *Huffington Post.* Retrieved December 10, 2017, from www.huffingtonpost.co.za/zimkhitha-mvandaba/die-antwoord-continues-to-offend-and-outrage-through-their-contr\_a\_23005690/

NPR Staff. (2014, February 01). Sam Cooke And The Song That 'Almost Scared Him'. *NPR.* Retrieved December 09, 2017, from https://www.npr.org/2014/02/01/268995033/sam-cooke-and-the-song-that-almost-scared-him

Plumer, B. (2013, August 29). How Obama demobilized the antiwar movement. *The Washington Post.* Retrieved December 10, 2017, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/08/29/where-did-the-antiwar-movement-go/?utm\_term=.dba2cf241675

Popkin, H. (2004, October 29). Nothing shady about Eminem’s new message. *Today.* Retrieved December 10, 2017, from https://www.today.com/popculture/nothing-shady-about-eminems-new-message-wbna6362052

Prince, R. (2013, November 19). Why Blacks Loved John F. Kennedy. *The Root.* Retrieved December 09, 2017, from https://journalisms.theroot.com/why-blacks-loved-john-f-kennedy-1790885111

Rand, J. (2017, January 04). The Third Wave Of Feminism Is Now, And It Is Intersectional. *Huffington Post.* Retrieved December 10, 2017, from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/the-third-wave-of-feminism-is-now-and-it-is-intersectional\_us\_586ac501e4b04d7df167d6a8

Sheffield, R. (2011, February 11). Lady Gaga’s ‘Born This Way’: Much Better Than ‘Express Yourself’. *Rolling Stone.* Retrieved December 10, 2017, from http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/lady-gagas-born-this-way-much-better-than-express-yourself-20110211

Stewart, A. (2012, June 18). 5 ways the Rodney King beating and LA riots changed America. *CNN.* Retrieved December 09, 2017 from http://inamerica.blogs.cnn.com/2012/06/18/5-ways-the-rodney-king-beating-and-la-riots-changed-america/

The Gentleman’s Journal. (2015, September 04). 25 iconic moments that define the 21st century thus far. *The Gentleman’s Journal.* Retrieved December 09, 2017, from https://www.thegentlemansjournal.com/25-iconic-moments-that-define-the-21st-century-thus-far/

Thomann, M. (2017, February 05). How Pop Stars Use Music As A Form Of Protest. Retrieved December 09, 2017, from http://www.newnownext.com/lady-gaga-super-bowl-protest-music/02/2017/

TIME (2009). The 10 Worst Things About the Worst Decade Ever – Photo Essays. *Time.* Retrieved December 09, 2017, from http://content.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1942749,00.html

Wagner, A. (2007, August 07). Video+Interview: MIA, “Jimmy”. *The Fader.* Retrieved December 10, 2017, from www.thefader.com/2007/08/07/video-interview-mia-jimmy

White, D & Madara, J. (1963). You Don’t Own Me [Recorded by Leslie Gore]. On *You Don’t Own Me* [Record]. Mercury.