

TIME

LIFE

Feature Stories



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Remembering The Past While Celebrating The Present

Let Freedom Sing: The Music of the Civil Rights Movement

January 26, 2009 – Fairfax, VA – It is one of the most inspiring stories in American history. Within a generation, Americans of African descent overturned several hundred years of slavery and brutally enforced segregation to win their Civil Rights. Civil Rights wasn't the first movement in American history to generate memorable songs, but it was the first in which music not only reflected the movement but *drove* it. The songs of the Civil Rights movement are the subject of a stunning new 3-CD set from Time Life Music that will be released during Black History Month 2009.

Let Freedom Sing—The Music of the Civil Rights Movement traces a seventy-year journey with songs that reflect the thoughts and feelings of those at the forefront affected by the movement as well as those simply trying to make sense of a troubled period in our history. Some of the songs are well-known (*Respect, Change Is Gonna Come, Blowin' in the Wind, We Shall Overcome, Say It Loud I'm Black and I'm Proud, People Get Ready, Get up—Stand up*, and many more) but the set also includes extremely rare recordings such as Brother Will Hairston's account of the Montgomery bus boycott, *The Alabama Bus*, and Nat King Cole's unreleased protest song from that era, *We Are Americans Too*.

The story begins with *Go Down Moses* ("let my people go"), one of many spirituals that led African Americans on their quest for Civil Rights. It continues with a bitter indictment of the lynchings that plagued the South after the Civil War (Billie Holiday's *Strange Fruit*) and an equally bitter indictment of the treatment of African Americans in the armed forces during World War II (Josh White's *Uncle Sam Says*). *No Restricted Signs* and *Black, Brown and White* protested the segregation that greeted returning servicemen. The call for change became more clamorous during the 1950s with the bus boycotts, the lynching of Emmett Till, the enforced integration of schools in Little Rock, Arkansas, and the lunch counter sit-ins. All were etched memorably in song.

The escalating bitterness of the 1960s is captured in songs like Nina Simone's *Mississippi Goddam*, Phil Ochs' *Too Many Martyrs*, and John Lee Hooker's *The Motor City Is Burning*. The riots following Dr. King's assassination are echoed in George Perkins' *Cryin' in the Streets*. And the Black

Power era is reflected in Sly & the Family Stone's *Stand*, Curtis Mayfield's *We the People Who Are Darker than Blue*, Lee Dorsey's *Yes We Can* (adapted as a campaign slogan by President-Elect Barack Obama), and Gil Scott Heron's 1971 classic *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* (cited by many as the first rap record). The story continues to the present day with artists such as Chuck D., who also wrote the introduction to the set.

"This project was conceived almost two years ago because we understood the importance of bringing the story to life and taking the time to get it right," states Michael Mitchell, Vice President of Marketing and Strategic Partnerships at Time Life Music. "For centuries, music vividly communicated injustices, especially for African-Americans in the South. This set encapsulates the struggles that eventually allowed African Americans, like me, to rise within our chosen professions, and allowed President-Elect Barack Obama to become the 44th President of the United States. Notably, in his acceptance speech, he adapted the words of Sam Cooke's "Change Is Gonna Come." The songs bring the movement alive with more immediacy than any other medium, and when we listen to *LET FREEDOM SING* from beginning to end, we realize what an incredible transformation has taken place during our lifetime."

Time Life's Vice President of Audio & Video Retail, Mike Jason, adds, "From the dark and ominous 'Strange Fruit' to the joyous message of 'Free At Last,' the set is filled with songs that reflect the painful, yet ultimately triumphant, Civil Rights struggle. Music nurtured the movement and the movement inspired the music. The nation's lowest point is undoubtedly its treatment of African Americans while the ability of African Americans to contribute so prodigiously to the culture in spite of that treatment is perhaps the finest example of what we can be as a nation. It's an honor for all of us at Time Life to share this music and a small part of the story."

Time Life will release *Let Freedom Sing: The Music of the Civil Rights Movement* on January 27, 2009 and will feature liner notes as well as historical events that are relevant to the song selections.

For media inquiries, please contact Holly Cooper at (917) 597-3048 or dlinc@aol.com.

About Time Life Inc.

Time Life and the Time Life logo are registered trademarks of Time Warner Inc. and affiliated companies, used under license by Direct Holdings Americas Inc., which is not affiliated with Time Warner Inc. or Time Inc. Headquartered in Fairfax, VA, Direct Holdings Americas Inc.'s history began in 1961 as Time Life a direct marketing division of Time Incorporated specializing in music and books. The business has been operated as a separate company since the mid-1970s when it relocated to Virginia, and has since grown to become one of the world's largest direct marketers of audio and video products throughout North America, Europe and Australia. The Company has set the standard in the direct response industry by pioneering direct marketing techniques and building one of the most trusted and recognized brands in commerce. The Company now also sells its products through major traditional and non-traditional retailers around the world as well as via the Internet. The Company was sold in 2003 to private investors.

culture

BLACK HISTORY MONTH SPECIAL
REMEMBER THE TIME

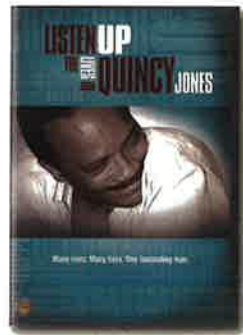
From the Civil Rights Movement to Black firsts in Hollywood, our culture's proudest achievements in song, film and TV are here for you to enjoy BY CANDICE FREDERICK, NAZENET HABTEZGHI AND CORI MURRAY



Dorothy Dandridge



CARMEN JONES (20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, \$9.98) Fifty-four years ago Dorothy Dandridge made her mark in this all-Black version of the classic opera *Carmen*—she was the first Black woman to receive an Academy Award nod for Best Actress.



LISTEN UP: THE LIVES OF QUINCY JONES (Warner Home Video, \$24.98) This documentary unveils the genius who helped shape the American sound throughout his five-decade-long career.



MOTOWN: THE COMPLETE NO. 1'S (Motown/UMe, \$169.98) The R&B label that Berry Gordy built gets reimagined in a ten-CD, 202-song set to celebrate Motown's fiftieth anniversary in 2009.

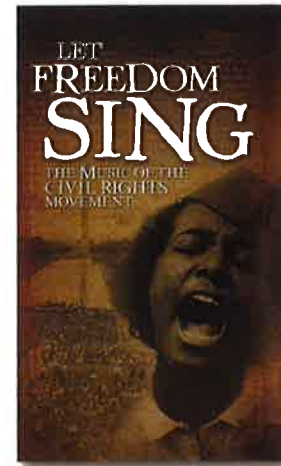
“The blues is very close to me”



>> TO BE FREE: THE KING SIMONE STORY (RCA/Legacy, \$49.98) Grammy-nominated for best historical album, this set includes rare personal photos and a DVD of special performances from one of our most powerful and outspoken female vocalists.

<< GIBLLAS RECORDS—MUSIC FROM THE MOTION PICTURE (Music World/Columbia Records, \$14.50, deluxe edition) Actor Jeffrey Wright sings Muddy Waters as if he were the blues legend himself.

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LET FREEDOM SING: THE MUSIC OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT (Time Life, \$44.98) From Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" to Mahalla Jackson's "We Shall Overcome," this exceptional three-disc set features 58 songs that capture 70 years of the joys and pain of Black struggle. Be sure not to miss the 90-minute companion documentary on TV One on February 15.

>> A HISTORY OF DETERMINATION DVD series (20th Century Fox/MGM, \$14.98 each) Unforgettable figures Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Jackie Robinson, Muhammad Ali and Shirley Chisholm (not shown) are celebrated in four individual dramas and documentaries.



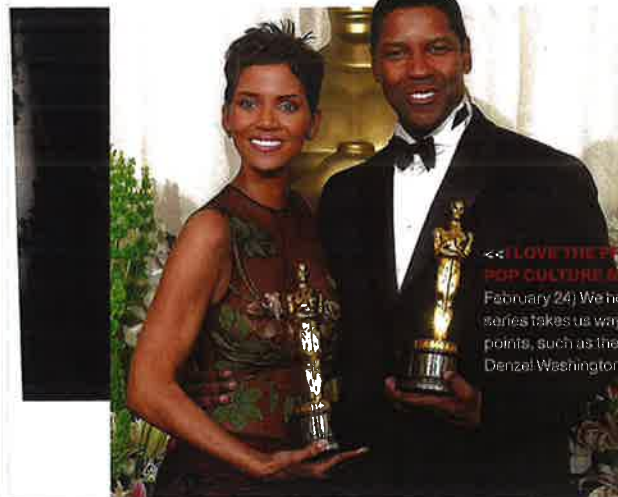
TO TELL THE TRUTH
 Tired of the same old Black History Month tales? Check out these five new titles that reveal untold stories of our past



Stephen Marc's **PASSAGE ON THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD** (University Press of Mississippi, \$55) delivers rarely seen images from this route to freedom.... In **SUGAR OF THE CROP** (The Lyons Press, \$24.95), we follow Sara Butler on her ten-year mission to find living children of freed slaves.... In **PASSING STRANGE** (The Penguin Press, \$27.95), Martha A. Sandweiss chronicles what drove nineteenth-century scientist Charles Kieckhefer to "pass" for white.... John F. Baker, Jr.'s **THE WASHINGTONS OF WESSINGTON PLANTATION** (Atria, \$25) exposes the author's ties to President George Washington.... Phillip Hoose tells the story of unsung civil rights heroine **CLAUDETTE COLVIN** (FSG, \$19.95).

because of the people and culture it represents.”

—Jeffrey Wright



<< I LOVE THE PRESENTS: THE BLACK POP CULTURE MOVEMENT (VH1 Soul, February 24) We hope this original four-part series takes us way back to our cultural high points, such as the night Halle Berry and Denzel Washington both won Oscars in 2002.



>> SOUL BY SEAL (Warner Bros. Records, \$10.99) Seal's raspy romantic voice invigorates these sixties and seventies classics for the Obama generation.

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USA TODAY

NO. 1 IN THE USA

Defender of 'Watchmen'

■ For 300 director Zack Snyder, movie is a chance to film the unfilmable, 1D



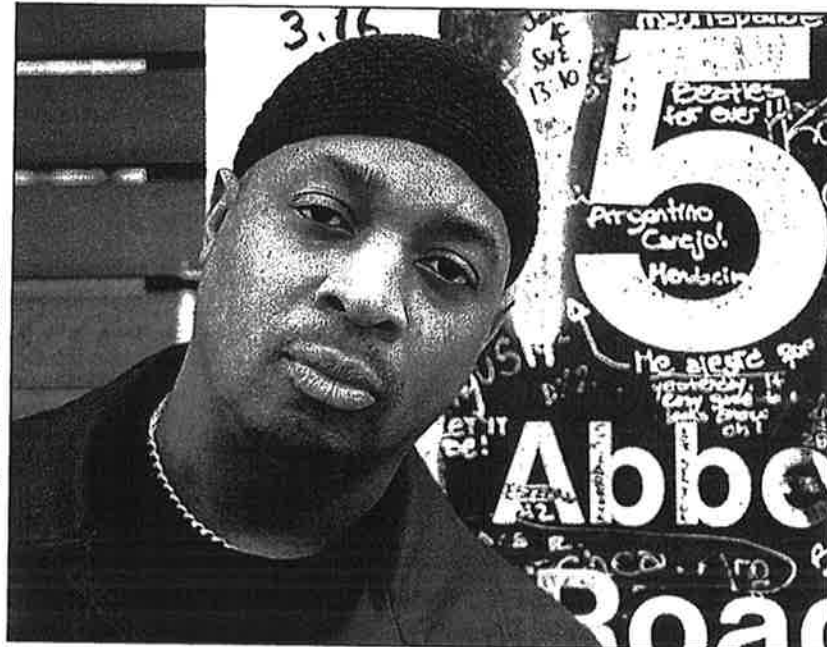
By Clay Enos, Warner Bros. Pictures

Malin Akerman: As Silk Spectre II, one of comic's grim antiheroes.

Wednesday, February 25, 2009

Music

"Heart, soul, sentiment, struggle": Chuck D served as a consultant and wrote the introduction for the Time Life box set of music titled *Let Freedom Sing: The Music of the Civil Rights Movement*. A song by his group, Public Enemy, is included in the collection.



By Sarah Edwards

To 'Sing' is to remember

'Freedom' voices are chorus for civil rights movement

By Steve Jones
USA TODAY

When Barack Obama became the nation's first black president in January, many said he stood on the shoulders of those who fought for and sacrificed for civil rights.

Some of the most important music from the past 70 years of the movement is collected in *Let Freedom Sing*, a new three-disc, 58-song Time Life collection that cuts across genres with voices both famous and obscure. The earliest recording in the set is Billie Holiday's 1939 anti-lynching tune *Strange Fruit*, though the Southern Sons' 1941 *Go Down Moses* harks back further to spirituals and slavery field songs. The most recent, *Free at Last* by the Blind Boys of Alabama, was recorded in 2008.

Some songs address incidents — The Ramones' *The Death of Emmett Till* —

Hooker's *The Motor City Is Burning* — while others protest prohibitions, such as the Golden Gate Quartet's *No Restricted Signs*.

"You get the heart, the soul, the sentiment and the struggle of a people," says Public Enemy's Chuck D, a consultant on the project, who also wrote the introduction for the liner notes.

Chuck D, whose own *The Pride* is on the set, says songs such as the Isley Brothers' *Fight the Power* (also included) inspired him when he was young. He would later sample it on Public Enemy's track of the same name, which was written for Spike Lee's film *Do the Right Thing*.

With a few exceptions, the music is arranged chronologically, and the annotated liner notes by music historian Colin Escott provide the stories behind the songs and the historic context surrounding their release. For example, Nat King Cole recorded *We Are Americans Too* in 1956 after he was beaten onstage in Alabama during the bus boycotts. Cole's label, Capitol, refused to release the

By the time the civil rights movement was in full bloom in the 1960s and '70s, major R&B stars such as James Brown, Aretha Franklin, The Temptations, Sly and the Family Stone, B.B. King and Marvin Gaye were making hit records reflective of the era. There also were songs by gospel, folk and blues artists that offered hope and called for action.



Protest music is still made today but doesn't receive the same kind of exposure, Chuck D says. Once the staple of independent black radio stations, such songs no longer get record industry push or commercial radio airplay.

He points to Syl Johnson's searing 1969 tune *Is It Because I'm Black*, remade this year by R&B singer Syleena Johnson, with her father's help. The new version is unlikely to make many urban radio playlists, which favor more pop-oriented fare.

"In the black community, we can't hear something that means something to us," Chuck D says. "We've been stripped of what

The best decision I have made regarding the hiring of a
“small PR agency was bringing Holly on the team. Her
diligence and results oriented attitude is awesome. She has
contributed towards tremendous growth in sales in 2007.”

-- Michael Mitchell, VP at Time Life, Inc.

Music Review: 'Let Freedom Sing' a must-listen

Associated Press

By NEKESA MUMBI MOODY, AP Music Writer
Mon Mar 2, 5:47 pm ET

Various Artists, "Let Freedom Sing! Music of the Civil Rights Movement" (Time Life Music)

In the wake of the historic election of President Barack Obama and all the buzz about America becoming a "post-racial" nation, it's easy to get wrapped up in good-natured glow of how far the United States has come in regard to its tangled, troubled relationship between whites and blacks.

The recently released three-CD "Let Freedom Sing! Music of the Civil Rights Movement" is a great reality check and excellent history lesson that demonstrates indeed how far America has come, but also how much further there is to go in the struggle for equality among the races: It is filled with songs that bring to life some of the most painful, and shameful moments of our nation. Stirring and sobering, this is a must-have, for history's sake, and for music's sake.

There are classic songs by some of music's greats — Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind," an Otis Redding version of "Change is Gonna Come" and James Brown's black pride anthem "Say it Loud — I'm Black and I'm Proud (Part I)," just to name a few of the more well-known tracks.

But some of the more moving songs are from artists who are most likely unknown to most music fans, like "Alabama Blues," by J.B. Lenoir, which begins with the stark line: "I never will go back to Alabama, that is not the place for me ... you know they killed my sister and my brother, and the whole world let those peoples go down there free."

It's also illuminating to hear cries of equality come from some of music's more famous names who have not generally been seen in the context of civil rights agitators, like "We Are Americans" from Nat King Cole, and the hilarious "The Prayer" by Ray Scott, written by Redd Foxx, about one of the most famous segregationists, former Alabama Gov. George Wallace: "Oh Lord, let the governor have a 17-car accident, with a gasoline truck, that's been hit by a match wagon, over the Grand Canyon ..."

There are also songs that recount the killing of Emmett Till and Medgar Evers, as well as simple cries for equality, such as "When Do I Get To Be Called A Man?" At times, listening to these songs, it seems unbelievable such experiences could ever happen in America; at other points, it seems as if not much has changed.

From the blues to folk songs to funk to hip-hop, "Let Freedom Sing" is an amazing journey of a people and a country, with comprehensive liner notes to accompany it (with an introduction from Chuck D).

CHECK THIS TRACK OUT: It's hard to top the fiery passion Nina Simone exudes in her brilliant musical

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090302/ap_en_mu/music_review_let_freedom_sing/print

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(Photo: <http://www.news.com.com/cgi-bin/prm/20081114/5E46211>)

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”

-- Multiple Grammy Award Winner Peabo Bryson