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SONGS OF THE SOUTHERN FREEDOM MOVEMENT

from We Shall Overcome
Compiled by Guy and Candie
Carawan for the Student
Nonviolent Coordinating
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INTRODUCTION

On February 1, 1960 four Negro college students sat at a lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina and asked for service. Their single act has grown into a great historic movement that has stirred the conscience of the nation. This collection of songs is meant to help document that growth and give support to the testimony of those who have seen the movement in action -- that it has developed a singing spirit that moves the hearts of all who hear....

Freedom songs are sung in many kinds of situations: at mass meetings, prayer vigils, demonstrations, before Freedom Rides and Sit-ins, in paddy wagons and jails, at conferences, work shops and informal gatherings. They are sung to bolster spirits, to gain new courage and to increase the sense of unity. The singing sometimes disarms jail guard, policemen, bystanders and mob participants of their hostilities.

The freedom songs are of many kinds and range through many moods. The important ones are the old, slow-paced spirituals and hymns (some in the minor mode) that sing of hope and determination, and, the rhythmic jubilee spirituals and bright gospel songs that protest boldly and celebrate eventual victory. These are in the majority and usually have new or revised words to old tunes. Then there are some contemporary pop, rock 'n roll and Ray Charles-type tunes with new lyrics, many of them humorous, about Jim Crow, Uncle Tom, some whites who "love segregation like a hound loves a bone" and two dogs, one black and one white, who like to sit under the apple tree together. Finally there is a small miscellany of songs imported from the north, including a couple of revised union songs and a handful of newly adapted folk songs. These have come from exchange students, freedom riders, folk singers and hit records.

The songs ... sing a special kind of short history of many of the major developments and events of the nonviolent movement in the South. First begun as a protest against segregated lunch counters, museums, art galleries, churches, court rooms, parks, beaches, swimming pools, laundromats, employment, interstate transportation and voter registration. As each of these new areas has come under attack, new ways of dramatizing the issues to the public have been needed. The Negro students have played the major role in initiating these new forms of demonstrations...

For some Negro college students, as well as for some adults, this revival of spiritual singing has meant a turning back to a part of their cultural heritage -- an embracing of something which for years they have ignored or rejected. Educated by Negro teachers who were trained in white schools and taught to ignore, emasculate or scorn Negro folk music, and culture,

brought up in churches where ministers and music masters excluded the Negro's traditional style of worship and spiritual singing, while substituting stiff imitations of more 'civilized' white churches, and raised on a steady radio, record and TV diet of nearly every kind of religious music except old time spiritual singing, many Negro college students felt indifferent towards these songs.

It has taken the hardships and crises of the student demonstrations, along with the need for ways to bolster the morale and courage of those participating, to change some of these attitudes and give the old songs renewed meaning. Those students who have faced the angry mobs, suffered the beatings and jailing, and gone through so many other trials these last three years, have found from experience that singing these songs has inspired them and given them sustenance for the continuing struggle...

SIT-INS

We Shall Overcome

We shall overcome, we shall overcome,
We shall overcome someday.
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe
That we shall overcome someday.

We are not afraid, we are not afraid
We are not afraid today.
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe
That we shall overcome some day.

We are not alone, we are not alone,
We are not alone today.
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,
That we shall overcome someday.

The truth will make us free, the truth will make
us free,
The truth will make us free someday.
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,
We shall overcome someday.

We'll walk hand in hand, we'll walk hand in hand,
We'll walk hand in hand today.
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,
That we shall overcome someday.

Black and white together, black and white together
Black and white together now.
Oh deep in ~~in~~ my heart, I do believe,
That we shall overcome someday.

We shall all be free, we shall all be free,
We shall all be free someday.
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe
That we shall overcome someday.

They Go wild over Me

I'm as mild mannered man as can be,
And I've never done no harm that I can see,
Yet on me they put a ban
They would throw me in the can
They go wild, simply wild over me.

Oh the manager he went wild over me
When I went one afternoon and sat for tea
He was breathin' mighty hard
When his pleas I'd disregard
He went wild, simply wild, over me.

Then the judge he went wild over me
And I plainly saw we never could agree
So I let his nibs obey
What his conscience had to say
He went wild, simply wild, over me.

Then the jailer he went wild over me
Well he locked me up and threw away the key
In a segregated cage
~~I'd be kept, it was~~
I'd be kept, it was the rage
He went wild, simply wild, over me.

They go wild, simply wild, over me
I'm referring to the bedbug and the flea
They disturb my slumber deep
They would rob me of my sleep
They go wild, simply wild, over me.

Will the roses grow wild over me
When I've gone into that land that is to be
When my soul and body part
In the stillness of my heart
Will the roses grow wild over me?

Will my children go wild or go free?
When it's time for them to go down to tea
Will those bedsheet wearin' whites
Still yell "Down with civil rights"
Or will justice have come to Tennessee?

FREEDOM RIDES

Which Side are you On?

Come all you freedom lovers, and listen while I tell,
Of how the freedom riders came to Jackson to dwell.
Which side are you on, boys, which side are you on?
Which side are you on, boys, which side are you on?

My daddy was a freedom fighter and I'm a freedom son
I'll stick right with this struggle until the battle's wa
won.

Which side are you on, boys, which side are you on?
Which side are you on, boys, which side are you on?

Dont tom for Uncle Charlie, dont listen to his lies,
Cause black folks havent got a chance until they
organize.

Which side are you on, boys, which side are you on?
Which side are you on, boys, which side are you on?

They say in Hinds County, no neutrals have they met
You're either for the Freedom Ride, or you 'tom' for
Ross Barnett.

Which side are you on, boys, which side are you on?
Which side are you on, boys, which side are you on?

Oh people can you stand it, tell me how you can
Will you be an Uncle Tom or will you be a man?
Which side are you on, boys, which side are you on?
Which side are you on, boys, which side are you on?

Captain Ray will holler 'move em on' but the Freedom
Riders wont budge
They'll stand there in the terminals and even before
the judge.

Which side are you on, boys, which side are you on?
Which side are you on, boys, which side are you on?

Keep you Eyes on the Prize

Paul and Silas, bound in jail,
Had no money for to go their bail
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on.
Hold on, hold on,
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on.

Paul and Silas begin to shout
The jail door opened and they walked out
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on.
Hold on, hold on.
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on.

Freedom's name is mighty sweet
Soon one day we're gonna meet.
Keep your eye on the prize, hold on.
Hold on, hold on.
Keep your eye on the prize, hold on.

Got my hand on the Gospel plow,
I won't take nothing for my journey now.
Keep your eye on the prize, hold on.
Hold on, hold on,
Keep your eye on the prize, hold on.

The only chain that a man can stand
Is that chain of hand in hand.
Keep your eye on the prize, hold on.
Hold on, hold on.
Keep your eye on the prize, hold on.

The only thing we did wrong
Stayed in the wilderness too long
Keep your eye on the prize, hold on.
Hold on, hold on.
Keep your eye on the prize, hold on.

But the one thing we did right
Was the day we started to fight
Keep your eye on the prize, hold on.
Hold on, hold on.
Keep your eye on the prize, hold on.

We're gonna board that big Greyhound
Carryin' love from town to town.
Keep your eye on the prize, hold on.
Hold on, hold on.
Keep your eye on the prize, hold on.

We're gonna ride for civil rights,
We're gonna ride both black and white
Keep your eye on the prize, hold on.
Hold on, hold on.
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on.

We've met jail and violence too,
But God's love has seen us through
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on.
Hold on, hold on.
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on.

Havent been to heaven but I'm been told
Streets up there are paved with gold
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on.
Hold on, hold on.
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on.