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Using qualitative research methods and social movement theory, I explored the significance of gospel music to the Forward Together Moral Movement in North Carolina and the meanings the singers who perform the music apply to their roles and contributions. Five themes emerged from interviews with three gospel singers, field observations, and document/media analyses concerning the role of gospel music in the moral movement: intentionality, collective identity, music as hope, music as strength, and music as education. The study makes several contributions to the field of cultural studies. First, the singers provide a firsthand perspective to the literature on social movements. First-person narratives of gospel singers are far less common in the literature than the first-person narratives of their secular musical counterparts. Second, this study gives music scholars additional insights into the importance of gospel music and social movements through the eyes of the people who perform it. Third, the music of the moral movement and the study of its singers can serve as a teaching tool, adding culturally relevant perspectives to lessons in history, tolerance, and culture that are presently taught in American education.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GOSPEL MUSIC TO SOCIAL ACTIVISM IN NORTH CAROLINA

by

Libra N. Boyd

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Approved by
Kathy Hytten
Committee Chair

To my mother, Margaret Williams Boyd, who challenges me to dream big and never doubts my ability to complete, with success, anything my hands find to do.

I love you, Mother.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation written by LIBRA N. BOYD has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair Kathy Hytten

Committee Members Silvia Bettez

Brian Clarida

Nathaniel Frederick, II

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

For centuries, social movements have been a powerful means of inciting change. In American history, social movements have been evident as far back as the pilgrims' protest of religious intolerance and their subsequent quests to experience freedom anew in America (Stewart, Smith, & Denton, 2012). Social movements have continued to be trajectories for change in support of myriad causes historically, from the abolishment of slavery to equal rights for workers, women, ethnic minorities, and LGBT communities; and from environmental protection to animal rights (Stewart et al., 2012).

The Movement Strategy Center (n.d.) explained that social movements occur "when a fundamental injustice is felt deeply and widely enough that communities mobilize to challenge power holders, institutions, and society's norms" (para. 1). Affected communities throughout the United States have mobilized around the previously mentioned causes as well as others, resulting in well-known American social movements such as the abolition movement, the women's rights movement, the labor movement, the anti-war movement, the disability rights movement, the environmental justice movement, and several civil rights movements which include the civil rights movement of the 1960s (Building Movement Project, n.d; Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities, 2014; Gillespie, 2011). Stewart et al. (2012) pointed out that social movements "are large in terms of geographical area, life span, events, organizations, leaders, participants, goals,

strategies, and adaptations" (p. 10). They are national in scope and tend to grow in size as their causes gain additional attention and support from participants. Social movements can also last several years or decades (Movement Strategy Center, n.d.; Stewart et al., 2012), since progress toward desired outcomes can be difficult to achieve due to political opposition, societal norms, or tactical delays. Notwithstanding, scholars such as della Porta and Diani (1999) and Freeman (1978) have concurred that social movements, through the shared vision of their participants, are powerful, effective means of enacting social change.

Freeman (1978) said of social movement participants, "Since a social movement's primary resource is the commitment of its members, it must rely on their dedication to get things done. Movement participants don't do things because they have to; they do them because they want to" (para. 8). Participants propel the movement, and their devotion sustains it. Christiansen (2009) identified four stages of social movements–emergence, coalescence, bureaucratization, and decline–and his description of these stages affirms that the role of the participants throughout is key. During the emergence stage, prospective participants become dissatisfied about a particular injustice and begin to voice their discontent among each other. At the coalescence stage, they voice discontent in a more collective manner as a leader emerges and members outline specific strategies for the movement. In the third stage called bureaucratization, the success of the movement demands "trained staff" with "specialized knowledge" (Christiansen, 2009, p. 3) to execute the goals of the movement until the movement eventually reaches the fourth stage, decline.

Whether participants are on the front lines as leaders, speakers, singers, and protesters, or behind the scenes as staff members and operations managers, collective involvement is the engine of social movements. In the state of North Carolina, for instance, when four Black North Carolina A&T University students staged a sit-in at Greensboro's Woolworth's counter in 1960, their nonviolent but assertive actions caused a surge in the momentum of the civil rights movement, especially among college students, and similar protests took place in Durham and Winston-Salem before spreading to other states during the early 1960s (Powell & Criner, 2006). In Raleigh, high school and college students, along with a small group of older people, participated in events such as rallies, marches, protests, and sit-ins. Enthusiastic participants created excitement within the movements, thereby energizing the discontented. Participants took on varying roles–speakers, marchers, and song leaders, among others (each significant in its own right)–but were united in their commitments to overcome injustices that impacted them and others.

In his discussion of the Raleigh demonstrations of 1963, during which mass marches for equal access to public accommodations took place, Appleton (1975) pointed out that singing was a prominent feature of the protests. One particular song he mentioned was the gospel tune entitled, "We Are Soldiers." The words sang by the participants that day were:

> *We are soldiers in the army,*
> *We got to fight although we have to cry.*
> *We got to hold up the freedom banner,*
> *We got to hold it up until we die.*

The demonstrators believed themselves to be tenacious soldiers in a fight for freedom. They emphasized their resolve by repeating the first two lines three times before moving on to the next line (in which the words "freedom banner" replaced "blood-stained banner," the original lyric to the song). The demonstrators sang and marched. They were seen and they were heard. They were united in step, in emotion, and in lyric, as they moved along the streets of Raleigh.

Gospel music performance is a component of social movements that scholars have not widely explored. My interest in gospel music and social movements has drawn me into an exploration of its significance in North Carolina, and particularly, to one of the state's largest social movements during the past decade, the Forward Together Moral Movement. In this study, I use *gospel music* as an overarching term to describe the sacred music the movement singers perform. I use this term based on a description Walker (1979) provided. He explained,

> Today, the Gospel umbrella, in its most advanced form, embraces the spiritual idiom, contemporary social comment, elements of meter music style, and, when needed, the lyrics of Euro-American hymns. The composite result is a form of urban spiritual, a song of faith which rallies the hope and aspiration of the faithful in the face of devastating social conditions. (p. 127)

I make further distinctions of songs under the Gospel umbrella as spirituals, hymns, and gospel songs. I use the term *spirituals* to describe a specific type of song under the Gospel umbrella that slaves first sang (A. C. Jones, 2004a; Walker, 1979). I also reference *hymns*, which are songs that are largely "Euro-American in origin and authorship" (Walker, 1979, p. 110), but "whose message of hope and inspiration spoke to

Black Christians" (Walker, 1979, p. 111). Because of the way in which the hymns were rendered in the Black community, they were coined "gospelized hymns" (Marovich, 2015; McGann, 2004; Walker, 1979). Finally, I describe certain songs under the Gospel umbrella specifically as *gospel songs*. These songs are distinct from spirituals and hymns in that they contain "regularly adopted elements of the secular popular music of the period: Blues, Jazz, Rhythm and Blues, and most recently, Hip Hop" (R. Jones, 2007, p. 10).

Before moving forward, I also note the use of the terms *Black* and *African American* interchangeably throughout the dissertation. The terms define the same group and do not connote any political or cultural differentiation on my part. Rather, the terms are used within the context of the time periods in which they are associated.

Research Problem

The Forward Together Moral Movement has gained national attention in the past several years (Berman, 2014). The attention is so prominent that the movement has been the subject of commentary from flagship media outlets such as *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, *TIME*, CNN, and MSNBC. In fact, the movement's Moral March on Raleigh, held February 8, 2014, was the South's largest civil rights rally since the Selma to Montgomery march of 1965, which was in support of the Voting Rights Act (Schlanger, 2014). The concept for this massive movement, which includes the Moral Monday Movement and the Historic Thousands on Jones Street (HKonJ) People's Assembly Coalition, came from Reverend Dr. William Barber, II, President of the North Carolina chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

(NAACP). He and the organization launched the movement to "challenge the extremist attacks on voting rights, economic justice, public education, equal protection under the law, and more" (Historic Thousands on Jones St. People's Assembly Coalition, n.d., para. 6). Like other social movements in the United States, organizers of the moral movement incorporate music performances into the events, alongside the speeches of community organizers, clergy, and other activists. Although the various events are often at sites other than houses of worship, they typically include gospel music performance, even when they do not include other genres of music.

Gospel music is prevalent in the moral movement as it was in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. As I describe in the next chapter, the role of music in the civil rights movement often appears in the literature. Dreier and Flacks (2014) wrote, "No political crusade integrated music and activism as fully as the civil rights movement" (para. 6). Despite their assertion, scholar and gospel music historian Robert Darden (as cited in Smith, 2013) believed that scholars have neglected gospel's significance to the civil rights movement, and history researcher Michael Castellini (2013) agreed. Likewise, compared to the civil rights movement's secular singers, few of its gospel singers' first-person accounts of their roles and contributions appear in the literature. Darden posited that as a consequence, "the importance of [gospel] music to the civil rights movement has been largely forgotten" (as cited in Smith, 2013, para. 30). I concur with his assertion.

Similarly, we know little about the role of gospel music and its singers in the present-day moral movement–which is quickly becoming historic. I contend that unless

the singers are given the space to discuss their roles and contributions, they along with their music risk being forgotten in years to come, leaving part of the history of American and North Carolina social movements undocumented.

Purpose of the Study

In light of this problem, the purpose of my research was to learn from gospel singers about how they make meaning of their roles in, and contributions to, the moral movement. Through interviews, document and media analyses, and observations, I explored their stories about their involvement in their own words and from their own frame of reference. Two questions guided my research study:

1. What role does gospel music play in the Forward Together Moral Movement?
2. Who are the singers who participate in the movement, and how do they describe their roles and contributions to the movement?

My hope is for the singers' firsthand experiences to offer historians, activists, and scholars unique insights that are beneficial to understanding their contributions to the movement. These singers are people with stories, perspectives, and emotions that matter to social movements.

My Background as Researcher

My interest in this topic stems from my involvement with gospel music and social activism. As a magazine freelance gospel music writer, founder and editor of a national award-winning gospel music blog, gospel music researcher, and gospel musician, I strive to advance gospel music as an art form and to make sure those who perform it receive

recognition and credit for their contributions. I am also an advocate for gospel artists– especially artists who performed extensively throughout the 1940s and 1950s during the surging national popularity of gospel music described by Boyer (1995) as the Golden Era of Gospel. Renowned present-day gospel acts have now eclipsed many of these singers in name recognition and popularity. I frequently use my blog platform to publicize artists' contributions to the genre through exclusive one-on-one interviews and news updates.

In addition to being immersed in gospel music, I have been heavily involved in social activism most of my life. My mother, who was well acquainted with Blacks' struggles for equal rights, introduced me to activism. As a Black woman born in the 1940s, she experienced racism, discrimination, and segregation firsthand. Her eventual commitment to social justice was one way to help make sure that her only daughter would not experience the same attitudes. I attribute my participation in social activism to my mother. She was a single parent, and she took me wherever she went; I had no choice. I attended NAACP meetings at the tender age of five and officially joined just a few years later. At that time, I was also a member of my town's Committee on the Affairs of Black Citizens. Local preachers in the community led these organizations and doubled as experts and spokespersons whenever the local news outlets needed a quote on race relations. Sometimes the monthly meetings took place in church sanctuaries, fellowship halls, and basements; sometimes they were at people's homes or at the Classical Palatium, a local record store and pool hall. In any case, the presiding officer always opened the meetings with prayer, followed by a verse and chorus of the Baptist

hymn "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior." Despite attending these meetings with my mother because I had no other choice, she never forced me to be an active participant. I took part willingly, however, and the local NAACP chapter's youth branch eventually elected me secretary. I found these affiliations empowering, for they exposed me to racial injustices and the need for advocacy.

As a musically inclined preteen, I frequently received requests to play the piano and/or sing for local NAACP functions. The events always opened with the Negro National Anthem, "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing" and closed with the unofficial anthem (Library of Congress, n.d.) of the civil rights movement, "We Shall Overcome." Besides performing these songs regularly, I composed a song to perform during the Martin Luther King, Jr. city-wide commemorative observance. I am admittedly a gospel music aficionado, but in an effort to make my composition accessible to both sacred and secular audiences, I chose to avoid religious references; rather, I wrote lyrics that acknowledged King's principles and inspired listeners to uphold his legacy. The chorus underscored the song's central message:

> *We have the legacy of a dreamer to help us find our way*
> *Great minds like Dr. King passing through this world today*
> *You can live the dream and share the dream, but there's no time to lose*
> *To keep the dream alive is up to you*. (Boyd, 2000)

I hoped my song would arouse awareness and urge listeners to make personal commitments to carry King's ideals forward in their communities.

My commitment to social justice advocacy and my work in the field of education as a public school teacher-turned-counselor turned my attention toward the Forward Together Moral Movement, especially the initiatives for equity in the funding, quality, and diversity of public schools (14 Point People's Agenda for North Carolina, n.d.). As I watched various televised and streamed events, I noticed how the organizers integrated gospel music performance into the agenda. I remember my fascination after watching the WRAL-TV news one night in June 2010. That night, the police arrested four people– three of whom I knew had connections with the moral movement–at a Wake County school board meeting for second-degree trespassing. Tensions had been high in the Wake County school district for months. For 10 years, the school district, which is North Carolina's largest, had incorporated a busing plan to prevent schools from having high populations of students impacted by poverty.

In March 2010, however, the school board voted 5-4 to shift to a plan that focused on neighborhood schools (Khadaroo, 2010). Opponents of the board's decision argued that such a change would lead to school "resegregation" (WRAL News, 2010a). That June evening, WRAL reporter Adam Owens described the scene inside the school board meeting where the arrests took place. More captivating than his description was what I saw and heard as the footage aired: a middle-aged African American lady standing at the podium to address the school board with several others. I recognized her. She was Mary D. Williams, a local gospel singer. She did not speak on camera, but she led the people standing with her in the spiritual, "Woke This Morning with My Mind Stayed on Freedom," and later, "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around." The police eventually

arrested her and three others, and I was intrigued. Why was Mary there? Was she there just to sing? Why was she willing to face arrest? Did that school board meeting really mean something to her? What did her presence and singing mean in that context? Wearing the trifocal lenses of gospel music aficionado, social justice proponent, and public school educator, I became intrigued by the significance of gospel music to social activism, especially as I continued to watch the events, observe the audiences' responses, and hear little or nothing about the performers themselves.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Music has been prevalent throughout some of the largest social movements in the United States, helping to arouse emotions and provide a soundtrack for the causes of the day. Corte (2013) referred to music as an "organizing device" (para. 1). Similarly, Morris (2000), in his discussion of social movement theory, conceded, "Collective behavior theorists were right to argue that movements often occur in the context of mass enthusiasm and highly charged emotions" (p. 448). I assert that within this context, music not only helps to organize, as Corte pointed out, but it also unites those in a movement and provides them an added means of expression. By the same account, Merriam (1964) explained:

> Music, then, provides a rallying point around which the members of society gather to engage in activities which require the cooperation and coordination of the group. Not all music is thus performed, of course, but every society has occasions signaled by music which draw its members together and reminds them of their unity. (p. 227)

As I describe in the next chapter, the United States had several movements during which music artists emerged with compositions bespeaking the culture and sentiments of the members of a society. Music of social movements served as a means of organization, unity, and expression, offering "strength and hope where it could be found nowhere else" (Olson, 2005, p. 59). Gospel music, in particular, has been common in several social movements throughout the United States, including the moral movement. By making space for the moral movement's singers to tell *their* stories and make meaning of *their* contributions, I understand that multiple realities emerge from their narratives. Accordingly, as a researcher, I align with the interpretivist paradigm, because my research centers on participants' lived experiences and the meaning that arises as a result. Like Dilthey (as cited in Ponterotto, 2005), I believe that lived experiences exist within a "historical social reality" of which the participants may not be immediately cognizant but could become aware (p. 129). From an ontological perspective, I agree with Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) that "reality as we know it is constructed intersubjectively through the meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially" (p. 103). As I previously mentioned, there are often multiple realities and, as such, multiple meanings and interpretations of those realities. The goal of my research, then, was to contextualize, understand, and interpret the relationship between gospel singers and social activism, assuming that the singers would offer meaningful understandings of their social world.

According to Rogan and Luckowski (1990), a paradigm or framework is "a loosely connected set of ideas, values and conventions that govern inquiry in a discipline

and influence the subsequent formulation of hypotheses and interpretation of data" (p. 18). The framework that influenced how I designed my study and influenced how I interpreted the research results was social movement theory. I located collective identity theory and popular education theories under the broad umbrella of social movement theory.

Social Movement Theory

Social movement theory frames why and how social mobilization takes place as well as the movement's potential impact on its society members (Morris, 2000; Roy, 2013). There have been a number of theories of social movements (see Cohen, 1985; della Porta & Diani, 1999; Eyerman & Jamison, 1995; Morris, 2000; Morris & Mueller, 1992). Nevertheless, della Porta and Diani (1999) identified four characteristics of movements on which scholars from varying theoretical backgrounds agree. These characteristics are *informal interaction networks* that "promote the circulation of essential resources for action (information, expertise, material resources) as well as broader systems of meaning" (p. 14); *shared beliefs and solidarity*; *collective action focusing on conflicts* that are "meant to promote or oppose social change at either the systemic of non-systemic level" (p. 15); and *use of protest.*

For this specific study, I was interested in whether *shared beliefs and solidarity* and *collective action* would emerge in the themes or participant rationales as I analyzed interview transcripts and other data sources. Social movement theory guided my interrogation of the role gospel music plays in the moral movement, because within the context of social movement theory, the formation of belief systems and shared goals

among movement participants encourages the collective action that is necessary to mobilize. Mohammed-Akinyela (2012) used the civil rights movement of the 1960s as an example:

> Within the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement, the cultural framework of many African Americans reinforced beliefs that necessitated political action. The ways in which these beliefs were supported became a tactical approach to movement as many included formal and informal organizations, communication networks, local movement centers, social movement organizations in addition to leadership structure (Morris, 1999). Within this framework, theorists have come to recognize that artists and the music they produce serve as both informal and formal tactics used to view the importance of particular issues necessitating social engagement (Calhoun-Brown, 2000; Tarrow, 1992; Morris, 1999). (p. 9)

Since social movements tend to mobilize around culture (Calhoun-Brown, 2000; Roy, 2013), music and its characteristic cultural influences become strategic means of bringing people together.

Collective identity. Situated under the umbrella of social movement theory is collective identity, which Taylor and Whittier (1992) described as "the shared definition of a group that derives from members' common interests, experiences, and solidarity" (p. 105). Fundamental to a social movement is the common cause(s) around which its participants unite, or as della Porta and Diani (1999) called it, "shared beliefs and solidarity" (p. 14). Music helps to unite its participants and to reinforce the cohesiveness of the movement. In his discussion of the cultural politics of social movements, Eyerman (2002) asserted that "music and other forms of cultural expression can articulate as well as fuse a group, offering a sense of group belonging and collectivity as well as strength in trying situations, such as confronting violent resistance and repressive authority" (p. 447).

The relationship between music and collective identity recurs in the literature (see Eyerman, 2002; Eyerman & Jamison, 1998; Snow, 2001). Walker (1979) made an explicit connection between gospel music and collective identity:

> Gospel music … is religious folk music that is clearly identifiable with the social circumstance of the Black community in America. The authenticity of folkways and folk expressions (including music) can be gauged by how closely they mirror the experience of the group. Gospel music does precisely that, in very much the same manner as does its early predecessor the Spiritual. Gospel music, then, is an individual expression of a collective predicament within a religious context. (p. 128)

If gospel music intrinsically has the capacity to address the sentiments of the socially conscious Black American community, then its presence throughout key social movements (especially movements involving issues pertinent to Blacks) is both logical and useful in providing an additional means to express shared beliefs.

Scholarly literature is rich with evidence of the unifying power of music (see Appleton, 1975; Eyerman, 2002; Eyerman & Jamison, 1995; Lewis, 1985). Consequently, in my study, I used this understanding of collective identity in social movements to analyze whether the gospel singers believe they contribute to the moral movement in a manner that emphasizes rallying people together.

Popular education. Another component of several social movements is popular education, which is grounded in the work of Paulo Freire. Foley (1998) defined popular education as "forms of education which involve people in processes of critical analysis so that they can act collectively to address inequalities and injustices" (p. 140). More explicitly, Hurst (2007) said,

> Popular Education is, at root, the empowerment of adults through democratically structured cooperative study and action, directed toward achieving more just and peaceful societies, within a life sustaining global environment. Its priority is the poor, the oppressed and the disenfranchised people of the world–ordinary people. (p. 15)

While popular education may not be prevalent in every social movement, it has certainly played a role in key United States movements such as labor organizing and the civil rights movement (Costanza-Chock, 2014). Project South (as cited in Popular Education News, 2009) further described popular education as:

> [A] learning process which:
> - Is inclusive and accessible to people with a variety of education levels;
> - Addresses the issues people face in their communities;
> - Moves people toward a place of action;
> - Develops new grassroots leadership;
> - Is based on the lived experience of those participating in the learning;
> - Incorporates non-traditional methods of learning–such as poetry, music or visual arts. (para. 4)

Eyerman and Jamison (1995) described social movements as "the carriers of one or another historical project, or vision; they articulate new 'knowledge interests', integrating new concepts or world-view assumptions with organizational innovations, and sometimes with new approaches to science" (p. 450). They proposed taking a cognitive approach toward social movements, contextualizing the movements "primarily as knowledge producers" (p. 450). They posited that social movements create conditions for knowledge production. The construction of knowledge can occur in many forms, including through music (Gerdy, 2013). Highlander Research and Education Center is one example of an organization that used (and continues to use) popular education to

educate for critical consciousness and collective action (Glowacki-Dudka, Dotson, Londt, & Young, 2012). In fact, it was through the use of the song "We Shall Overcome" during Highlander's workshops in the 1950s and 1960s that the tune–adapted from a church hymn–became the anthem of the civil rights movement (Highlander Education and Research Center, n.d.).

In my study, I explored potential relationships between popular education and the moral movement. From interview transcripts, field observations, and document reviews, I analyzed how the singers' music aids in knowledge production; whether the singers perceive their performances to be educative tools; and whether the movement leaders have deliberately tried to incorporate popular education into this movement.

It bears repeating that my research study focused on making space for the moral movement's singers to share their stories and ascribe meaning to their contributions to the movement. Kurzman (2008) discussed the implications of acknowledging meaning-making as a critical component of social movements. He explained that "social movements may be a particularly conducive site to privilege meaning-making, because their activities foreground resistance to the dominant norms and institutions of society.… Social movements actively make meaning, challenging established meanings" (p. 6). Through this study, which follows a social movement theory framework that incorporates collective identity and popular education, I explore how participants contextualize their involvement in the moral movement, and through the analyses, I offer insight into if and/or how their roles help to "foreground resistance to the dominant norms and institutions of society" (Kurzman, 2008, p. 6). Morris (2000) pointed out that "social

movement theory should focus on what movement leaders do and why what they do matters" (p. 450). Accordingly, it is fitting for us to hear from those who lead the movement in song, *in their own words*, about why what they are doing is significant for themselves and the movement's participants.

Significance of the Study

One significant facet of my study on this topic is that it narrows a gap in North Carolina and American history about the importance of gospel music to social activism by bringing the singers' perspectives into a conversation that has been documented mainly through the eyes of historians, clergy, civic leaders, community organizers, and news commentators. A second significant aspect of my study is that it places additional scholarship about gospel music and social activism in the hands of gospel music scholars and historians. Darden (as cited in Smith, 2013) stated, "The last significant conference on black gospel music was in 1992, and it's the only major music form that has no academic journal" (para. 39). Additionally, Dwandalyn Reece, music curator at the National Museum of African American History and Culture, contended that research that examines and preserves the art form and its place in the context of social movements is sorely needed to "help future generations understand the development of black gospel and its cultural influence" (as cited in Smith, 2013, para. 10).

Finally, gospel music is a cultural art form with roots in African chants and songs (Walker, 1979). In America, these chants and songs became a part of the plantation slave culture, where they helped to express the slaves' existing social conditions as well as their anticipation of the Promised Land or Canaan (Walker, 1979). The songs often

spoke of a society that was void of the cruelties of their present lives: bondage, mistreatment, and inequality. In this sense, they used gospel music as an agent of change–from pessimism to optimism, from darkness to light, from bondage to freedom. The capacity of gospel music to elicit change has not diminished; neither has its ability to speak to social tensions. Gospel music is an art form that aids in prompting change, but before it does so, it educates people about systems of oppression, power, social injustice, and privilege. Its lyrics call attention to these systems and practices and their effects on the oppressed. Like the sentiments of Rose (2007) concerning the music and singers of the civil rights movement, I assert that the music of the moral movement and the study of its singers not only provides insight about the music itself, but may also serve as a teaching tool "about history, tolerance, culture, and the most substantive and far-reaching goals of every educational institution" (p. 66). Accordingly, the third significant aspect of this study is that interviews with the singers of the moral movement, along with observations and document and media analyses of their roles in the movement, add depth and a firsthand account to an ongoing examination of the impact of music on social activism while simultaneously teaching lessons that are culturally relevant in American education.

Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced my study by providing a rationale for understanding the prevalence of gospel music in social movements, particularly the moral movement. I have also proposed the importance of hearing the firsthand accounts of the singers who perform this music. In the second chapter, I review the literature on music

and social movements in the United States. I begin with secular music and some of the singers involved in notable movements. Then I review gospel music in social movements, tracing its connection to the spirituals sung during slavery and its progression to the gospel music of recent decades. I also review the literature on gospel singers who were active in these movements and include their perspectives in instances where they described their roles and contributions in their own words. I complete the chapter with a review of literature on gospel music and the moral movement.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars often cite the prevalence of song in United States social movements. Its use has served a variety of purposes including building community, expressing dissent with the status quo, conveying coded messages among movement participants, igniting hope, instilling courage, and offering strength (Corte, 2013; Fenner, 2012; Roy, 2010). As varied as the movements themselves are the musical offerings that propel them. Both secular and gospel music have contributed to the soundtracks of United States movements, as I make apparent in my review of the literature in this chapter. I begin with a review of the literature on secular music and social movements. I then examine the literature on gospel music and social movements, including the moral movement.

It is useful to note that much of the literature I reviewed in this chapter refers to music of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. It is not my intent to minimize the importance of music to other American social movements; however, the civil rights movement heavily emphasized music and many saw it as "a singing movement" (Appleton, 1975, p. 243; Eyerman, 2002). In fact, Appleton (1975) contended that "the central importance of song to the movement is probably unprecedented in the history of major social movements in the United States" (p. 243). Accordingly, much of the literature on the secular and gospel genres of music that I discuss in this chapter concerns its association with the civil rights movement.

Secular Music and Social Movements

American movements have comprised a range of secular musical styles. In 19th-century America, one of the most popular groups to demonstrate activism through song was the Hutchinson Family Singers. As early as the 1840s, the group performed songs in support of abolition of slavery and women's suffrage (Algeo, 2014), even traveling with abolitionist Frederick Douglass (Averill, 2003). Many consider the New Hampshire-based singers the forerunners of the 20th century's protest and folk singers. Algeo (2014) noted that the Hutchinson Family Singers "were as influential to their generation as Elvis Presley and Bob Dylan would be to theirs a century later" (p. 3).

Folk Music

Well into the 20th century, amid the myriad of social ills in American society, a number of singers and songwriters expressed dissent through their songs, and folk music emerged as a popular genre for depicting their complaints. One popular and influential singer-songwriter was Pete Seeger. In the 1940s, he joined the Almanac Singers, a folk music group, and collaborated on union and labor songs with its members (Barnes, 2014). Seeger's writing and performances evolved with the times, dispensing songs with themes in love, unity, labor, and protest (Barnes, 2014). Fox (2015) credits Seeger for popularizing "We Shall Overcome" during the civil rights movement, stating that Seeger learned it from activist and educator Zilphia Horton and subsequently taught it to fellow folk singer Guy Carawan. In turn, Carawan sang it for delegates at the 1960 initial meeting of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Raleigh (Fox, 2015), and the song spread throughout the civil rights movement, becoming its anthem. Seeger

briefly explained the significance of songs for activism with the simple statement, "A good song reminds us what we're fighting for" (as cited in Dunaway, 2009, p. 206).

Another prominent 20th-century folk singer was Phil Ochs, who gained popularity in the 1960s for his political songwriting with topics on civil rights, the Vietnam War, and other social causes (P. Ochs, n.d.). His song, "Draft Dodger Rag," is an example of his anti-war satirical critique. S. Ochs (n.d.) acknowledged the folk singer and his or her music's impact in disseminating important messages of the day, prior to the availability of mass communication:

> Before the days of television and mass media, the folksinger was often a traveling newspaper spreading tales through music.… There is an urgent need for Americans to look deeply into themselves and their actions, and musical poetry is perhaps the most effective mirror available.… Every newspaper headline is a potential song. (para. 1)

Several singers seemed to echo Ochs's sentiments and either wrote or sang the headlines. Two of them are folk musicians Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, who composed and performed songs that mirrored the thoughts and attitudes of those engaged in the 1960s civil rights movements and anti-war protests (Gonczy, 1985). For example, in his song "Blowin' in the Wind," Dylan (1963/2004) inquires,

How many roads must a man walk down before you call him a man?

Moments later, he asks,

Yes, 'n' how many times must the cannonballs fly before they're forever banned?

Baez's performance of "Saigon Bride" was an outcry over the Vietnam War. This folk tune, for which she composed the music, asks the questions:

> *How many dead men will it take*
> *To build a dike that will not break?*
> *How many children must we kill*
> *Before we make the waves stand still?* (Duscheck, 1967, side B, band 5)

Many people gleaned political messages from Dylan's lyrics and considered him "the voice of his generation" (Leung, 2004, para. 21) for his ability to sing the collective sentiments of a politically restless, socially tense society. Dylan (as cited in Leung, 2004) viewed his work differently. He argued, "My stuff were songs, you know? They weren't sermons. If you examine the songs, I don't believe you're gonna find anything in there that says that I'm a spokesman for anybody or anything really" (para. 27). In contrast, Baez (as cited in Kaviani & Asatiani, 2013) reflected:

> All I can say is from my own experience–that [the intersection between art and activism] is the connectedness with the people, the prisoners, the people in the war; that I was able to speak where a lot of people couldn't speak. But that's what's given my life the richness that it has. The first gift I had was this voice. It was a gift. So I can say whatever I want about it. And the second gift was that I wanted to use it the way that I've used it because it has brought me the most satisfaction in my life and the richness. (para. 15)

Baez's comments suggest that she makes meaning of her involvement in the movements as an advocate who was uniquely gifted to be heard above the metaphorical whispers of the oppressed collective.

Folk music also had a place at the 1963 March on Washington, a gathering of 250,000 people on the occasion that Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his "I

Have a Dream" speech. In addition to Dylan and Baez, Odetta–a classically trained singer who traversed the genres of folk, gospel, and blues–performed "I'm on My Way," "Come and Go with Me," and the spiritual "Oh Freedom" (Moorehead & Cox, 2008; Weiner, 2008). Odetta's popularity soared during the 1960s, and some have called her music the soundtrack of the civil rights movement (May, 2012; Melmed, 2015). Dylan and Baez, among others (Reed, 2008), credited her with having influenced their appreciation and performance of folk music. Odetta herself preferred to be called "a musical historian" (Anderson, 2009, para. 12) for ensuring that the stories of strength in adversity were archived as well as perpetuated through her music (Evans, 2008). Folk group Peter, Paul, and Mary sang Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind" and "If I Had a Hammer," co-written by Seeger and Lee Hays, at the historic march. As the trio sang the Dylan tune, many of the participants held hands and waved them in the air. Group member Mary Travers (as cited in Rosenburg, 2013) recalled afterward during an interview, "We started to sing, and I had an epiphany. Looking out at this quarter of a million people, I truly believed at that moment it was possible that human beings could join together to make a positive social change." Her comments bespeak feelings of community, collective identity, and collective behavior–all of which are the intended effects of music in social movements, according to several authors (Eyerman, 2002; Eyerman & Jamison, 1998; Snow, 2001; W. T. Walker, 1979).

Another group from this time period that called attention to injustice was the Staple Singers. The Staple Singers were actually a gospel group whose folk sound and folk music performances helped fuel the folk and civil rights movements (Kot, 2014). In

fact, they were the first gospel group to record Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind" and "Masters of War" (Marovich, 2015). Roebuck "Pops" Staples and his singing children– Cleotha, Pervis, Yvonne, and Mavis–were ardent supporters of the civil rights movement and became close friends with Dr. King. Their social activism was likely the combined result of firsthand encounters with racism and mistreatment and Pops' interest in helping King advance the message of the movement (Kot, 2014). "If he can preach it, we can sing it," he had determined after a 1963 visit to Montgomery's Dexter Avenue Church and a face-to-face meeting with King, who was the pastor (Kot, 2014, p. 91). Like Ochs, Pops took cues from the headlines. After seeing footage of the 1965 protest marches from Selma to Montgomery in support of voting rights, he wrote the group's first message song, "Freedom Highway." Message music, which eventually became the nucleus of the Staple Singers' repertoire, is an Africa-inspired lyrical tradition. Akpan (2006) describes it not as a distinct genre, but rather as a "medium through which artists entertain while also conveying to their audience the 'truths' about life and 'warnings' about social existence as the singers know them" (p. 92). Another of Pops Staples' compositions, "Why? (Am I Treated So Bad)," was a frequent request of King (Kot, 2014). Pops wrote the song as a mournful tribute to the Little Rock Nine, a group of nine Black students who were forbidden from entering Little Rock Central High School in 1957, although the US Supreme Court ruled segregation unconstitutional three years prior.

In later years during a forum at the University of California at Davis, Mavis Staples gave a succinct summation of what she believed the group's involvement in

social activism meant to lesser-known participants. "There were no big 'I's and little 'you's," she offered. "Everybody was the same" (as cited in University of California Television, 2009).

One characteristic of folk music is that traditionally, people learn it aurally and "in informal, small social networks of relatives or friends rather than in institutions such as school or church" (Nettl, 2014, para. 3). Accordingly, another important characteristic is "its dependence on acceptance by a community–that is, by a village, nation, or family–and its tendency to change as it is passed from one individual to another and performed" (Nettl, 2014, para. 8). The folk singers I discussed in this section are but a short list of the artists who reiterated socially conscious messages through their performances. Their compositions, performances, and perceptions of their music's role and impact help to frame the importance of folk music to America's social movements.

Like folk music, soul music was a vehicle for expression in social movements, particularly the civil rights movement. In the next section, I examine the literature on soul music and social activism.

Soul Music

Twentieth-century social movements that promoted racial equality for African Americans were at their height in the 1950s and 1960s (African American Civil Rights Movement [1955-1968], 2014). Also, in the late 1950s, soul music–a genre that combined rhythm and blues and gospel–emerged (Ritz, 2016). Both rhythm and blues and gospel were grounded in African American culture. Accordingly, Rielly (2003) wrote:

> The 1960s were a time conducive to soul music, which fit well with serious social movements, especially Civil Rights, and corollary developments like Black Power and the Black is Beautiful theme. In addition, growing numbers of whites who wanted to express solidarity with African Americans, or merely wanted to be chic, sought out soul wherever they could find it, including in dress and food. (p. 173)

Soul music was a source of ethnic pride (Johnson, 2008) and, in some instances, "pointed to deeply rooted emotions that stemmed from the discrimination faced by black Americans" (Kohli, McGee, & Reuse, 2007, para. 1). Soul singers performed with emotional intensity that prompted a response and subsequent activism (Maultsby, 1983).

Like some folk songwriters, a number of soul writers wrote and performed music with explicit racial and political messages. In 1964, inspired by personal encounters with racism, Sam Cooke wrote and recorded "A Change is Gonna Come." He donated the song to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference for a tribute album to Dr. King (Leli, 2010). According to Leli (2010), "King would later ask him to participate in a civil rights benefit concert, a request reserved for the artists having the greatest impact on the people" (para. 25). The lyrics were so poignant, in light of the social climate, and startling, given Cooke's sudden murder under questionable circumstances before its release, that the producer removed the third verse–"I go to the movie / And I go downtown / Somebody keep telling me, 'Don't hang around'"–from the recording prior to release (Rutledge-Borger, n.d.).

The same year, the Impressions, a Chicago-based soul group, released a single, "Keep on Pushing," which the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Black Panther Party, and others "used to encourage activists at civil rights rallies and

demonstrations" (Kohli et al., 2007, para. 3). "Keep on Pushing" was among a string of songs written by group member and lead singer Curtis Mayfield that heightened social and political awareness in America. "People Get Ready," released in 1965, also became a popular song of faith, redemption, and inclusion for society's marginalized (NPR, 2003). According to the Curtis Mayfield Estate (2015), it was the group's 1967 inspirational single, "We're a Winner," that most directly addressed the political and racial turmoil of the day.

Soul singer James Brown also performed music that voiced advocacy for equal rights and opposition to war, though he cautiously avoided direct references to both (Eyerman & Jamison, 1995). Brown was well respected among African Americans and often used his influence to promote Black pride and nonviolence (Kohli et al., 2007). His song, "I'm Black and I'm Proud," according to Maultsby (1983), "encouraged blacks to participate by shouting, 'I'm black and I'm proud' in response to his call-out, 'Say it loud'" (p. 56). Rosenthal and Flacks (2015) posited that the crowd's engagement and participation was not just a collective point of view, but also an expression of a shared identity.

Soul/funk singer Edwin Starr also vocalized opposition to war, specifically, the Vietnam War. His early 1970s anthem, appropriately titled "War," was a deliberately direct reference to this contentious war. Singer, songwriter, and musician Marvin Gaye dedicated an entire album, *What's Going On?*, to specific issues of police brutality, the Vietnam War, hatred, poverty, and injustice. He said he derived inspiration for the social justice-oriented album from God (as cited in Symes, 2014).

Interspersed with songs written expressly about social and political issues were songs that found their way into social movements because of the dual applications of the lyrics. In 1964, Martha and the Vandellas' single, "Dancing in the Street" became a massive hit dance number and a civil rights protest song. At least one of the co-writers said the song was inspired by seeing people in Detroit's streets cooling off in hot summer months with the water from opened fire hydrants (Romig, 2013). Even the song's lead singer, Martha Reeves, described it as "a straightforward party song" (Romig, 2013, para. 21). Nevertheless, because the release of "Dancing in the Street" coincided with the height of the civil rights movement, some African Americans interpreted it as a call to demonstrate in the streets, especially the city streets that Reeves calls out in the song–Chicago, New Orleans, New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, DC, and the Motor City (i.e., Detroit)–all of which had large African American communities (Romig, 2013). As a result, the single was both a dance number and a protest anthem.

Similarly, in 1965, soul singer Otis Redding penned and released an up-tempo rhythm and blues tune about disenchanted lovers called "Respect." Aretha Franklin re-released it in 1967. The song carried the same message, but became a declaration for the civil rights and Black power movements as well as the second-wave feminist movement (Artesani, 2012; Soeder, 2011). Aretha Franklin (2014) conceded that her hit version of "Respect" was not recorded as a social movement anthem, but was "more about a relationship thing." She was nevertheless a proponent of the movements that the song helped to fuel (Doyle, 2014). Franklin performed regularly at civil rights events and was

a personal friend to Dr. King. Inspired by his vision for the nation, Franklin (2014) "thought it was important and relevant" to lend her voice to the movement.

The singers I have briefly discussed are a few of many who used their artistic platforms to create and/or perform music that stirred social consciousness. Years after the movements, their narratives are embedded in American history alongside the accounts of the movements' other key figures.

Gospel Music and Social Movements

Like secular music, gospel music holds a place in the history of social movements. In the latter half of the 19th century, slaves sang the religious songs that subsequently gained the title of spirituals. W. T. Walker (1979) noted that a "pronounced aspect of social significance of the [spiritual] is the recurring theme of the hope and confidence of liberation" (p. 46). Several, such as "Wade in the Water," doubled as coded messages during escapes to freedom (Jones, 2004b; Rose, 2007; Ward, 2005). A reference to Canaan or the Promised Land, for instance, also sometimes served as a reference for an escape or sojourn to a better place such as the Underground Railroad (W. T. Walker, 1979). Additionally, W. T. Walker maintained that one of the most important contributions of the spirituals to the slave community was the "cohesive influence they had upon the 'invisible church' and the general populace of the slave quarters" (p. 46). Invisible churches were informal gatherings, usually held in secluded places without their masters' knowledge, during which they would listen to preachers they chose (Raboteau, 1978), rather than the ones their masters subjected them to hearing during the formal church gathering. W. T. Walker (1979) explained that music was the uniting force of the

invisible church, because it allowed everyone, regardless of talent or skill, to participate. Non-singers could still participate with bodily movements and vocal affirmations. He summarized the purposes of spirituals as follows:

1. To give the community a true, valid, and useful song
2. To keep the community invigorated
3. To inspire the uninspired individual
4. To enable the group to face its problems
5. To comment on the slave situation
6. To stir each member to personal solutions and to a sense of belonging in the midst of a confusing and terrifying world
7. To provide a code language for emergency use (p. 47)

In the collective, the use of spirituals was a means for the oppressed to share in the struggle and to encourage one another in times of angst. Spirituals have remained an important musical component of social movements over the years. Some have undergone lyric adjustments to speak more directly to the social cause. The spiritual, "Go Down, Moses," for instance, was transformed into "Go Down, Citizens" by an unidentified Saint Augustine's College student, just prior to several 1963 Raleigh, NC mass marches for equal access to public accommodations (Appleton, 1975).

In the early 20th century, minister and composer Charles A. Tindley penned a number of hymns that referenced hopeful outcomes for transforming the societal ills of his day (Hawn, 1981), including "I'll Overcome Someday," from which the folk song "We Shall Overcome" was derived (Rose, 2007; Ward, 2005). The first use of "We Shall Overcome" was in response to labor strikes in the 1940s (Adams, 2013). It eventually

became an anthem of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The Highlander Education and Research Center (n.d.) described how the song came to the movement:

> During a 1960 spring weekend workshop [Guy Carawan] taught the song to Nashville student sit-in leaders. A few weeks later, "We Shall Overcome" was sung at the historic meeting of student sit-in leaders at Shaw University in Raleigh, NC. Organized by Ella Baker, then executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), this gathering led to the founding of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). As Guy Carawan began to lead the song, all present in the room began to rise from their seats singing and reaching out to join hands, and the signature song of the Civil Rights Movement was born. (para. 4)

Activists continue to sing "We Shall Overcome," adapted from Tindley's hymn, at events commemorating the civil rights movement of the 1960s, as well as at present-day rallies and demonstrations against social injustice. Perhaps the most glaring distinction between "We Shall Overcome" and the hymn from which it derives is the shift from the singular "I" to the collective "we," signifying a deliberate effort to bolster solidarity.

Songs like "Go Down, Citizens" and "We Shall Overcome" became known as freedom songs during the civil rights movement (Appleton, 1975; Hartford, 2011). As explained by Hartford (2011), "Freedom songs evolved out of our collective memory and creativity. Almost all of them were based on, or adapted from, existing songs [and] the major source of freedom songs was music of the Black church" (para. 1). He further expounded on the distinction between these and other songs performed in the movement:

> Sometimes professional performers sang political songs for listening audiences–Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam," Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come," Bob Dylan's "Blowing in the Wind" are examples–but when movement veterans speak of "freedom songs" we mean the songs that we all sang together.

> Songs that we sang not as a performance or for entertaining others, not as something to be passively listened to, but as something we ourselves created anew each time we lifted our voices. And it was the act of singing, more than the beauty of the songs, that gave them meaning and power. (para. 3)

King (2000) described freedom songs as "the soul of the movement" (p. 48). Scholars (Hartford, 2011; Jones, 2004b; King, 2000) denote that activists indeed used freedom songs like "Oh Freedom," "We Shall Not Be Moved," "Woke Up This Morning," and "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around" to promote solidarity, courage, determination, and commitment. Spencer (1990) contended that freedom songs were significant for at least one other reason:

> As historic documents, the freedom songs chronicle the history of events that transpired during the movement: the various forms of protest, responses to injustice, as well as personal reflections and testimonials. Those songwriters involved in the movement were both history makers and historians; they were participant historians. (p. 104)

An African American group formed in 1962, called the Freedom Singers, also helped spread these messages by touring and teaching freedom songs. The choral group, organized in Georgia, traveled to various rallies and events and used vocal performance to raise awareness about civil rights issues, according to group member Rutha Mae Harris (Martin, 2013). The singers worked closely with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which came together in Raleigh in the months following the Greensboro sit-in of February 1960. Together, the Freedom Singers and SNCC "[carried] the message of civil rights nationwide and [raised] the spirits of protest marchers and organizers" (Conan, 2010, para. 2). The Greensboro sit-in and subsequent tag-team

efforts of the Freedom Singers and SNCC not only boosted the momentum of the 1960s civil rights movement in North Carolina, but also prompted additional sit-in movements all over the country (Kowal, 2004). Bernice Johnson Reagon (2001), who is a scholar, activist, and original member of the Freedom Singers, described how freedom songs linked movement participants in her day to the struggles of participants in the 19th-century abolitionist movement:

> As a singing participant in the Movement, I began to notice how well the old songs we knew fit our current situation. Many of the freedom songs we sang we had learned as spirituals, sacred songs created by slaves. Our struggle against racism often found us reaching for connections with those who had during the nineteenth century fought to end slavery in this country. (p. 104)

Another freedom song of the civil rights movement was "Take My Hand, Precious Lord," a gospel song written by Thomas A. Dorsey. The lyrics are the lament of a weary traveler on an arduous journey in adverse conditions:

> *Precious Lord, take my hand*
> *Lead me on, let me stand*
> *I am tired, I am weak, I am worn*
> *Through the storm, through the night*
> *Lead me on to the light*
> *Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home*.

Dr. King often requested that famed gospel singer Mahalia Jackson sing "Take My Hand, Precious Lord" at various rallies. Banks (2012) asserted that "the song addressed some of the helplessness the Baptist minister must have felt as he constantly faced threats and attacks" (para. 12). On April 4, 1968, King asked jazz musician Ben

Branch to play it at the meeting where he was to speak later that night (Rutherford, 2015). Just a short time after making the request, King was slain. In a final tribute, Jackson performed the song at his funeral (Kot, 2014).

Other gospel songs besides "Take My Hand, Precious Lord," were performed at civil rights demonstrations and gatherings, especially from the mid-1950s through the 1960s (Castellini, 2013; Darden, 2004; Darden, 2014). Understandably, gospel music was prevalent in the civil rights movement because the movement had its beginnings in the church (Roy, 2010). Additionally, several of its leaders were ministers (Fenner, 2012). Mass meetings, designed for collective interaction and inspiration as well as education and instruction about the movement's goals (Morris, Hatchett, & Brown, 1989), took place weekly at various churches and included the singing of hymns that were familiar to the attendees, such as "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms" and "Onward, Christian Soldiers" (Darden, 2014). During the early boycotts, according to Darden (2014), gatherers often sang the hymn "Lift Him Up."

Dr. King regularly enlisted the assistance of Mahalia Jackson to empower the crowd with her booming alto and earnest gospel vocal delivery (Glinton, 2010). Not only was she gospel's most famous singer, but "the most political of all major gospel artists" (Darden, 2014, p. 91). Her political involvement dated back to the 1930s (Darden, 2014). Werner (2006) wrote, "If King gave the movement a vision, Mahalia Jackson gave it a voice" (p. 4). At the March on Washington in 1963, Jackson riveted the crowd with two selections, the melancholy spiritual "I've Been 'Buked and I've Been Scorned" and Clara Ward's gospel arrangement of "How I Got Over." The former was a personal request by

King. After she finished "I've Been 'Buked and I've Been Scorned," the multitude of gatherers erupted in sustained applause. In that moment, CBS News commentator Roger Mudd remarked, "Mahalia Jackson. And all the speeches in the world couldn't have brought the response that just came from the hymn she sang" (Hansen, 2013; McRae, 2015). As King delivered the speech he prepared the night prior, Jackson is said to have called out, "Tell them about the dream, Martin. Tell them about the dream" (Marovich, 2015; D. Walker, 2013). At her prompting, he put aside his manuscript and ascended to his oratorical pinnacle with the repeated proclamation, "I have a dream." He had incorporated the "dream" theme at least two previous times during speeches in Detroit, MI (Hansen, 2013) and Rocky Mount, NC (ABC News, 2015). Werner (2006) posited, "At the moment when it seemed most likely that the movement just might get all of us over, it was Martin *and* Mahalia, the politics *and* the music" (p. 10). His assertion underscores the significance of the singers and the music–particularly gospel music–to the strength of the movement and its leaders.

Gospel singers in addition to Mahalia lent their voices to the movement. Reverend Cleophus Robinson, a preacher and well-known gospel recording artist, regularly sang to raise money for the movements in the South (W. T. Walker, 1979). Dorothy Love Coates was another gospel singer-songwriter who doubled as an activist (Darden, 2004; Frederick, 2009; Werner, 2012). Darden (2004) wrote:

> Through the heady days of the movement, Coates marched the streets of Birmingham with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., spent nights in jail, and worked in voter registration drives. In 1967, she narrowly missed death in the nightmarish

> Newark riots. But her unflinching calls for equality, as well as her uncompromising spiritual stance, earned her the sobriquet of "prophet." (p. 253)

Coates and the group with whom she sang, the Gospel Harmonettes, also directly confronted injustices through their music during a time when many gospel singers found it safer either to remain silent or to rely on listeners to pick up on the coded political messages the songs contained (Goyette, 2015; Roberts, 2015).

With songs like "I Won't Let Go (of My Faith)," Coates–like Dylan, Baez, and others–sang the sentiments of the oppressed. She did it, however, in spiritual and tenacious terms:

> *I've been ostracized and criticized but I'm (holding on to my faith);*
> *The things I have to suffer bring tears to my eyes but I'm (holding on to my faith).*
> *Old Satan is busy stirring up wrath, gathering stones to block my path.*
> *My enemies inflicting all the hurt they can, throwing their rocks and hiding their hands.*
> *If you dig one ditch, you betta dig two–the trap you set just may be for you!*
> (Coates, 1963, track 2)

Like the spirituals, her gospel lyrics were pronouncements of hope in the midst of oppressive conditions. Boyer (as cited in Fippinger, 2014) said, "Dorothy became a political activist though her singing … when it sounds clearly like a reference to the Bible or the religious life there is a social aspect to this as well" (p. 50). Consequently, her performances aroused social consciousness, unity, and uplift throughout the movement–whether on national platforms or in local auditoriums, churches, and city streets.

Many have acknowledged that spirituals, hymns, and gospel songs all helped to energize social movement participants. However, the names and firsthand accounts of

participating gospel singers have appeared less in the literature than their secular musical counterparts. Presently, gospel music plays a role in North Carolina's Forward Together Moral Movement, which is swiftly gaining momentum throughout the country. In the next section, I review the literature on gospel music and the moral movement.

Gospel Music and the Forward Together Moral Movement

The Forward Together Moral Movement, like some of the social movements that preceded it, integrates an amalgam of live and recorded folk, soul, and rhythm and blues music with both implicit and explicit socially conscious themes. Inspired by a Moral Monday rally in Raleigh, a performance group called the NC Music Love Army, consisting of more than 25 NC-based musicians and songwriters, even released a compact disc of protest songs (NC Music Love Army, 2013, para. 1). The chorus of the title track, "We Are Not for Sale," is insistent, voicing opposition to government greed:

> *We are not for sale*
> *We are not for sale*
> *If you think that you can silence us, you'll need a bigger jail*
> *Because we are not for sale*. (Haskins, 2013, streaming audio)

Again, as is common to the music of social movements, the pronoun use of "we" signifies a *collective* voice of dissent against oppressive systems, in this case, the government.

"We Are Not for Sale" is a folk song, but gospel music is also prominent in the moral movement. At the 2014 Forward Together Voting Rights Rally against Voter Suppression in NC and Across America, which took place in Raleigh, a recording of

gospel artist Kirk Franklin's (1998) urban contemporary hit "Revolution" blared through the loud speakers. The song's hook is call-and-response, a tradition in which a speaker or singer issues a statement or call in order to engage a response from the listener:

> (Call) *Do you want a revolution?!*
> (Response) *Whoo Whoo!*

Listeners understand the response as wordless urban slang that gives an affirmative answer. The verses follow in the style of rap, with socially conscious lines:

> *No crime, no dying, politicians lying, everybody's trying*
> *To make a dollar–it makes me wanna holler*
> *The way they do my life, the way they do my life!*
> *There's gonna be a brighter day*
> *All your troubles will pass away*
> *A revolution's comin', yes it's comin', comin'.*

Both the lyrics and call-and-response nature of the song evoke audience participation, but more importantly, a common cause to confront and a call to mobilize.

Later that day at the Moral March on Raleigh, gatherers swayed and clapped to a live performance of the hymn "Higher Ground." At other moral movement protests, singers led spirituals like "Over My Head" and "Wade in the Water," with lyrics altered to fit the justice theme (ProtestFilm, 2014). While it is sometimes the case that protesters in the crowd spontaneously burst out in song and fellow protesters subsequently join in, it is also often the case that a soloist leads the protesters in song. Not often, however, are the singers identified by name in media accounts, unless their actions are disruptive, such as the literal trespasses of professional gospel artist Mary D. Williams. In 2010, police

arrested her, a well-known civic leader, a local pastor, and a scholar-activist for second-degree trespassing during a Moral Monday demonstration when they interrupted a school board meeting in protest of Wake County Schools' assignment plan. The plan threatened, according to the protesters' accounts, to resegregate schools. Between speakers' comments, she led protesters in strains of the spirituals "Woke Up This Morning with My Mind Stayed on Freedom" and "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around" (WRAL, 2010b).

In the related WRAL-TV news story, though the report identified her as a parent (which suggested that she had a vested interest in the matters pertinent to the school board meeting) and showed her standing at the speaker's podium, the media outlet either chose not to ask for or chose not to air comments from her. Rather, the media source aired the comments of two other arrestees–the civic leader and the pastor. In the days following Williams's arrest, local television news affiliate WTVD profiled her and the others at another gathering, where they each spoke about the meaning of the protest to them. The two-and-a-half-minute story also showed footage of Williams energizing the attendees with "Wade in the Water" (ABC News, 2010). Again, this bi-dimensional view of a gospel singer shown performing *and* speaking about his or her involvement in a social movement is not commonly discussed in the literature.

Scholars writing about the moral movement acknowledge Yara Allen and Sauuda Eshé as song leaders in the movement (Barber & Wilson-Hartgrove, 2016; Barber & Zelter, 2014). They are possibly the most familiar musical voices of the movement, having been likened to Bernice Johnson Reagon and Mahalia Jackson, respectively

(Barber & Zelter, 2014; Wake Forest University School of Divinity, 2014). Yara Allen travels extensively with Barber and sings at most movement events in and out of state (Navajo, 2015). Her song selections consist primarily of spirituals, hymns, and gospel songs. She is also the moral movement's cultural arts coordinator–overseeing the integration of music, spoken word, and other forms of artistic expression into the movement's agenda. Like Allen, Sauuda Eshé performs spirituals, hymns, and gospel songs for the moral movement. Upon hearing Eshé's performance of "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," which derives from the spiritual "Keep Your Hand on the Plow," Barber remarked to the live audience, "This voice will be the voice of the HKonJ" (S. Y. Eshé, personal communication, Sept. 14, 2015). According to Barber and Zelter (2014), the singers' impact on the moral movement is significant. They asserted:

> Ms. Yara Allen and her sister Sauuda Eshé have been for us what the Book of Kings calls "minstrels"; they are the cultural artists of our movement. Together they have ensured that the arts play a central role in cementing our coalitions. (p. 167)

Although several scholars and activists acknowledge their contributions, there is no research or detailed narrative in which Allen and Eshé describe, in their own words, the meanings they apply to their roles in the moral movement.

Decades prior to the moral movement, North Carolina was a hotbed for social activism, and the North Carolina historical collections document the stories of several activists (Southern Oral History Program, n.d.). Among those who describe their involvement in the movements are clergy, civic leaders, and community organizers. Still,

few know much about the gospel singers–many of whom may be less famous than the singers I have already discussed. There is little documentation that includes narratives and names of the lesser-known singers–such as the unidentified St. Augustine's student I mentioned earlier, who changed "Go Down, Moses" into "Go Down, Citizens" prior to the 1963 Raleigh, NC mass marches–depicting how they contextualized their contributions to the social movements in which they were involved.

Researchers and media sources have collected, and continue to collect, first-person accounts from organizers, civic leaders, clergy, and outspoken activists about their associations with various social movements, including the moral movement. I argue that music–as it was to previous social movements–is significant to this one. More specifically, *gospel* music plays a large role in cultivating solidarity and momentum for the moral movement. Yet, the singers, though present in performance, are largely absent from the narratives.

Summary

The literature I reviewed consistently points to the intent and effect of music in the United States' social movements. The literature also points to the presence and power of *gospel* music in social movements–notably, movements that articulate racial equality. Researchers cannot neglect its significance. Nevertheless, what has appeared less common in the literature are the stories of the singers who have performed this music, arousing emotion and evoking unity across cultures. Through my study, I provide a space for these singers to situate themselves in the context of the moral movement, as well as look at the ways others have situated them in the movement, thereby expanding the

scholarship available on social movements and their participants. In the next chapter, I explain the methods I employed to do so.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

My research goals involved understanding the role of gospel music in the Forward Together Moral Movement and the meanings that the singers who perform the music apply to their contributions. To meet these research goals, I developed two research questions.

Research Questions

The two research questions that guided my study regarding the significance of gospel music to social activism, specifically, the moral movement, were:

1. What role does gospel music play in the Forward Together Moral Movement?
2. Who are the singers who participate in the movement, and how do they describe their roles and contributions to the movement?

I selected these questions based on my review of the relevant literature and media coverage and based on my own experiences as a gospel music enthusiast, social justice proponent, and school educator. I addressed these research questions through the narratives of singers I interviewed, field observations, and document/media analyses. I describe these methods, and the assumptions that ground my choices, in the sections below.

Research Paradigm

Creswell (2012) defined a paradigm as "the philosophical stance taken by the researcher that provides a basic set of beliefs that guides action" (p. 299). The research paradigm that guides this study is interpretivism, which involves researchers seeking to "gain understanding by interpreting subject perceptions" (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 102). The ontological assumption of this paradigm is that reality is socially constructed through the lenses of the researcher and the study participants. Since my research goal is to make interpretations based on the perspectives of the participants, it is appropriate to say that the interpretivist paradigm also informs my research approach and methodology. This approach entails "[participating] in the research process with our subjects to ensure we are producing knowledge that is reflective of their reality" (Lincoln et al, 2011, p. 103). Put another way, the research goal, and my research goal in particular, is to rely to the greatest extent possible on the participants' perspectives of their situations in order to understand how they make meaning of their roles in the moral movement (Creswell, 2012).

The epistemological assumption of interpretivism is that there is a relationship between the researcher and participant. In other words, what we know influences the manner in which we interact and understand ourselves, others, and the world (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Creswell (2012) explained it this way: "Researchers recognize that their own background shapes their interpretation, and they 'position themselves' in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural,

and historical experiences" (p. 25). The manner in which I approached data collection and analysis reflects the epistemological assumptions of this paradigm.

The methodological assumption of interpretivism, which flows from the ontological and epistemological assumptions, is that knowledge is constructed collaboratively between the researcher and participants and is interpreted against the backdrop of the researcher's own amalgam of research, data analysis, and experiences. Accordingly, interpretive researchers use a range of methods such as interviews, field observations, and document reviews to ensure sufficient data collection (Lincoln et al., 2011) and to strengthen analysis and interpretation.

Research Design

For this study, I used a basic interpretive qualitative design. Merriam (2002) explained that in a basic interpretive qualitative study, "the researcher is interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon, this meaning is mediated through the researcher as instrument, the strategy is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive" (p. 6). This research design is well suited for my inquiry because I used inductive as well as deductive approaches to analyze the data and to examine and describe how gospel singers make meaning of their roles in the moral movement. I explain more about how I use these approaches later in my description of the data analysis process.

Setting

This study's context is the state of North Carolina, where the Forward Together Moral Movement arose in response to state legislation that Barber and Zelter (2014) called "extremist" and "regressive" (p. ix), and where it continues to gain momentum. Though the movement has spread beyond North Carolina to various locales across the nation, it remains led by North Carolina's NAACP chapter (Barber & Zelter, 2014). The initial protests that ignited the present movement were called "Historic Thousands on Jones Street (HKonJ)" People's Assemblies, a direct reference to the number of participants and the site of the assembly–Jones Street in the state capital of Raleigh, where the North Carolina Legislative Building is located. In 2013, participants began assembling there each Monday to protest. Thirteen Moral Mondays were held in Raleigh during the legislative session to oppose extremists' policies (Barber & Zelter, 2014). The Moral Monday rallies soon spread to various cities throughout the state. Presently, the moral movement–which encompasses the Moral March on Raleigh and HKonJ People's Assembly, Moral Mondays, and various rallies and demonstrations–includes events in Raleigh, Winston-Salem, and other cities throughout the state. Gatherings occur at churches, legislative buildings, and town halls. Events also take place outdoors, on the grounds of city and state buildings and, sometimes, in the streets (whenever marches ensue).

In addition to studying media portrayals of these movements and interviewing gospel singers, I conducted three field observations for this study, each at different locations. I conducted the first at the "Equal Protection Under the Law" Moral Monday

rally held at the North Carolina Legislative Building in Raleigh. I conducted the second at a mass meeting called the Voting Rights Ecumenical Service, held at Union Baptist Church in Winston-Salem. I conducted the third observation at the Mass Moral Monday March and Rally for Voting Rights, which took place at Corpening Plaza in Winston-Salem.

Participants

For this study, I interviewed singers who performed gospel music in the form of hymns, spirituals, or other subgenres at the moral movement's associated events. I wanted to learn about the experiences that led to their involvement and understand how they described their roles and contributions. I used several methods to locate participants for this study. I examined video, newspaper, and photo archives to identify singers in the movement and their performance repertoires. Through this initial search, I identified Mary D. Williams, Reverend Rodney Lavon Coleman, D.Min., and Claude Gardner as gospel singers with ties to the moral movement. I also used snowball sampling, a qualitative method that "uses a small pool of initial informants to nominate other participants who meet the eligibility criteria for a study" (Morgan, 2008, p. 815). To begin, I contacted Yara Allen, the cultural arts coordinator and primary song leader for the moral movement; she suggested that I contact Sauuda Yejide Eshé. Then, during the participant interviews, I asked the interviewees for assistance in identifying other potential participants. Each interviewee mentioned one or more of the other interviewees, which suggested that I had identified most, if not all, of the singers who currently perform gospel music in the moral movement. Two singers who met the

eligibility criteria for the study, Mary D. Williams and Yara Allen, did not participate in interviews. I address this limitation later in the chapter.

Through interviews, I explored each participant's music background and influences, interest in social activism and the moral movement, song selection process, and intended outcomes of his or her performances. Since a goal of my study was to add the singers' names and firsthand accounts to the rich American and North Carolina history of social movements–which may be referenced by scholars, historians, and students in years to come–I identified the three participants by their real names. In chapter four, I provide an in-depth portrait of each participant. For now, I briefly introduce each.

The Reverend Rodney Lavon Coleman, D.Min. is a gospel singer, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, music producer, and pastor. In 2015, he performed "I Am Somebody," a song he composed, at the Moral March on Raleigh and HKonJ People's Assembly. Besides his involvement with the moral movement, Rodney is engaged in social justice work in and around Chapel Hill, where he pastors.

Claude Gardner is a gospel singer, musician, and worship leader. He has been actively involved with the moral movement since 2013. Claude was introduced to the moral movement by his childhood neighbor Yara Allen and her sister Sauuda Eshé. Claude's understanding of Christian spirituality and Divine assignment, rather than his views on activism, connect him to the moral movement.

Sauuda Yejide Eshé is a singer, lyricist, composer, community activist, and storyteller. After hearing her sing in late 2012, Reverend Barber publicly declared that she would become "the voice of the HKonJ." She has been affiliated with the moral movement as a performing artist since approximately 2013. Eshé, as many refer to her, is the older sister of Yara Allen.

The interview participants' involvement with the moral movement is voluntary. They do not receive monetary compensation for their roles. They offer their time and talents to the movement, while maintaining full-time employment in various professions. Due to their work schedules, they participate primarily in evening and weekend events associated with the movement.

As I describe in chapter four, each participant bonded with his or her family and church in ways that cultivated musicality and spirituality. The participants' spiritual formations also presently shape their commitments to social activism. In the next section, I describe my data collection procedures and methods.

Data Collection

I collected data for this study through semi-structured interviews with each participant, observations (supported by researcher field notes), and document/media analyses. Data collection occurred over a period of six months.

Semi-structured Interviews

According to Brinkmann (2008), "The qualitative research interview has become one of the most widespread knowledge-producing practices across the social scientific

disciplines" (p. 471). Interviews are important tools in qualitative data collection because they reveal information about how people experience, understand, and make meaning of their lives (Kvale, 2007). Interviews also add richness to data that other forms of data collection, such as observations, would not reveal (Patton, 1987), by "[allowing] the subjects to convey to others their situation from their own perspective and in their own words" (Kvale, 2007, p. 11). Additionally, interviews, when triangulated with other data sources, strengthen the credibility of the research findings (Rothbauer, 2008).

I chose to use a semi-structured interview format for this study because of the exploratory nature of my inquiry. In other words, although I had an interview guide with specific open-ended questions, I remained open to responses that might lead to unanticipated areas that might have proved meaningful to the research findings. The aim of this kind of interview, Glesne (2011) explained, "is to capture the unseen that was, is, will be, or should be; how respondents think or feel about something; and how they explain or account for something" (p. 134).

First, I conducted initial interviews by phone with each participant. Because of their own hectic schedules, the participants found phone interviews to be more convenient than face-to-face interviews. Two of the interviews lasted approximately one hour; one lasted an hour and a half. The purpose of these interviews was for participants to share the background experiences that led to their involvement in social activism. Next, I conducted a second interview by phone with each participant. Two of the interviews lasted approximately one hour; one lasted two and a half hours. The objective of the second interview was to invite participants to talk specifically about their activism

in, involvement with, and music performances for the moral movement. Both rounds of interviews were semi-structured. One additional question emerged during my analysis of Eshé's second interview. Consequently, I contacted her by phone for a third interview. This interview lasted approximately 40 minutes.

I audio-recorded each interview. Immediately following each interview, I employed a transcription company to transcribe the interview verbatim. Once I received the transcript, I reviewed it while listening to the audio recording to ensure accuracy. I also emailed the participants their transcripts and invited them to make additions, deletions, or clarifications. One participant requested to strike certain portions of a response. I noted the request on my transcript copy and agreed to omit it, as neither of us believed its exclusion would affect the data analysis and interpretation. Additionally, I posed follow-up questions to the participants by email, text message, and phone to obtain clarifications, as needed.

Observations

According to Merriam (2002), "Observational data represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account obtained in an interview" (p. 13). Observations are the researcher's attempts to study life as experienced by the research participants. I chose to conduct field observations as a way to gain a fuller, deeper understanding of the atmosphere associated with the moral movement. During the observations, I took notes of the setting, conversations, demographics, speeches, live and recorded music performances and their effects on the

movement participants, the manner in which the music was introduced, and the way the singers and audience interacted with each other.

I was an observer in three different settings during this study: a Moral Monday rally at the North Carolina Legislative Building in Raleigh, the Voting Rights Ecumenical Service at Union Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, and the Mass Moral Monday March and Rally for Voting Rights at Corpening Plaza in Winston-Salem. My observations lasted approximately one hour and forty-five minutes, two and one-half hours, and two hours and fifteen minutes, respectively.

I recorded notes from my observations in the form of field notes. The field notebook was important because, as Glesne (2011) explained,

> It becomes filled with descriptions of people, places, events, activities, and conversations; and it becomes a place for ideas, reflections, hunches, and notes about patterns that seem to be emerging. It also becomes a place for exploring the researcher's personal reactions. (p. 71)

I recorded field notes during and immediately following each observation. The notes included my observations of the setting, site layout, weather conditions, and demographics, as well as crowd size, behavior, and dress. I also recorded notes on crowd engagement and interactions, the use of live and recorded music and chants, my reflections on the observations, and biases that may have influenced my observations. As part of my note-taking, I took photos and drew diagrams to help me visualize and remember setting and proximity.

While I observed three events carefully as a researcher (taking field notes), I also took part in a service at Old Mount Zion Baptist Church in Roxboro, NC, during which I witnessed Reverend Dr. Rodney Coleman sing and deliver the sermon. Additionally, I attended the Forward Together Voting Rights Rally against Voter Suppression in NC and Across America, held in Raleigh. There, I heard a recorded gospel music performance of Kirk Franklin's "Revolution" and met cultural arts coordinator Yara Allen in person.

Document/Media Analyses

In addition to interviews and observations, I conducted approximately 35 to 40 hours of document and media analyses. Merriam (2002) explained the advantages of this method of data collection, noting that,

> The strength of documents as a data source lies with the fact that they already exist in the situation; they do not intrude upon or alter the setting in ways that the presence of the investigator might. Nor are they dependent upon the whims of human beings whose cooperation is essential for collecting data through interviews and observations. (p. 13)

Merriam also observed, "With the advent of computer technology and the World Wide Web, data can also be collected on-line" (p. 13). For this study, I gathered data through video files as well as newspaper and magazine articles that are all archived online. I examined several video files from the Fusion Films online channel, which is hosted by the Livestream video broadcasting website. Nearly every major event associated with the moral movement is streamed live and subsequently archived by Fusion Films. I also collected data from videos on YouTube and local and national news sites.

Additionally, I collected data from song lyrics associated with music performed in the moral movement. In some instances, the singers provided the lyrics. In others, I accessed the lyrics through online video and audio files. As Eyerman (2002) explained, "Songs as collective performance become texts, as words are linked to ideology and present experience to the past and to the future" (p. 450). Each of these archival documents aided in the triangulation of the data sources and added depth and further contextualization to the observations and participants' narratives.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis entails organizing and examining the data for patterns, themes, relationships, and insights (Hatch, 2002). In qualitative research, data collection and data analysis occur simultaneously (Merriam, 2002). From the moment data collection begins, the researcher engages in what Hatch says are "analytic judgments about what data are desirable" (p. 149). When data collection and analysis occur at the same time, Merriam (2002) contends that it "allows the researcher to make adjustments along the way, even to the point of redirecting data collecting, and to 'test' emerging concepts, themes, and categories against subsequent data" (p. 14). In this study, both deductive and inductive approaches helped me to identify the significance of gospel music to the moral movement and reveal the meanings that the singers ascribe to their involvement.

As I described earlier, data collection for this study consisted of interviews, observations, and document/media analyses. By drawing on the evidence of multiple

methods, I achieved triangulation, which enhanced the credibility of my research findings and "[provided] different insights regarding the phenomena under study" (Rothbauer, 2008, p. 893). The data from each interview were audio-recorded, transcribed, and reviewed again for transcription accuracy. Then, I conducted a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. A key aspect of this form of analysis is data coding (Glesne, 2011), which, according to Coffey and Atkinson (1996), "enables the researcher to identify meaningful data and set the stage for interpreting and drawing conclusions" (p. 27). Accordingly, after reading the interview transcripts, I identified commonalities among the participants' narratives. I began with a deductive approach, which entails starting with a social theory of interest and then testing its implications with data (Blackstone, 2012). I looked for patterns grounded in social movement theory, particularly *shared beliefs and solidarity* and *collective action* (della Porta & Diani, 1999). I also analyzed the data for themes in popular education. I then turned to an inductive approach to look for other patterns in the data. Inductive analysis, according to Patton (1980), "means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge from the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis" (p. 306). Next, following a process outlined by Maxwell (2012), I coded the data, organized the coded data into categories, searched for patterns and themes across categories, and formed interpretations. I analyzed my field note observations and notes from the archival documents in a similar manner.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of my study, I employed the following strategies recommended by qualitative researchers: triangulation of data sources (Glesne, 2011; Rothbauer, 2008), member checks (Guba, 1981; Sandelowski, 2008), thick descriptions (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Denzin, 2001), and reflexive journaling (Glesne, 2011; Ortlipp, 2008).

There are multiple approaches to triangulation in qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miller & Brewer, 2003; Rothbauer, 2008). For this study, I used data source triangulation, which involves corroborating evidence drawn from multiple data sources (Rothbauer, 2008). I compared and contrasted the data I collected from the interviews, observations, and document/media analyses to support my analysis and findings.

I also performed member checks, which are essential for establishing credibility (Guba, 1981). Member checking is a process in which the researcher gives participants the opportunity to review data for "accuracy of descriptions, explanations, and interpretations" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 48). To strengthen credibility, I emailed interview participants their interview transcripts for review. In the email, I invited them to make corrections, additions, deletions, and clarifications. Sandelowski (2008) explained that member checks may also occur during data collection. Such was the case during my interviews with each participant. Periodically, I summarized the participant's

response to a question or topic in order to assess the accuracy of my interpretation. Occasionally, I also explicitly asked the participant to clarify a response.

Additionally, I endeavored to capture thick descriptions by providing as much detail as possible. Thick descriptions increase trustworthiness by providing readers with rich details "that produce for the readers the feeling that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being described in a study" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129). Denzin (2001) described seven characteristics of thick description:

- It builds on multiple, triangulated, biographical methods.
- It connects biography to lived experience.
- It is contextual, historical, and interactional.
- It captures the actual flow of experience of individuals and collectivities in a social situation.
- It captures the meanings that are present in a sequence of experience.
- It allows the reader to experience vicariously the essential features of the experiences that are described and are being interpreted.
- It attempts not to gloss what is being described. (p. 117)

I provided thick description by supplementing the participants' narrative recollections with data I collected from observations or the archival documents associated with that particular event. I also used direct quotations wherever I believed the participant's own words rather than a paraphrase would more deeply connect the reader to the participant's lived experience. Additionally, for a richer contextualization linking the present and past, I juxtaposed the present-day context of music performance and the moral movement with the historical context of music and social movements.

Finally, throughout the study, I kept a reflexive journal. Creswell and Miller (2000) explained reflexivity as "the process whereby researchers report on personal beliefs, values, and biases that may shape their inquiry" (p. 127). In some cases, my reflections were interspersed throughout my field notes, indicative of self-monitoring during the actual data collection process. The reflexive journal allowed me to document and monitor my role as a researcher and to make the adjustments necessary to improve my data collection procedures. In the next section, I reflect on my role and subjectivity as researcher.

Subjectivity

Glesne (2011) posited that reflexive thought "forces you to think more about how you want to be in relation to research participants" (p. 159). From the beginning of this study, I was mindful of my positionality as a gospel music enthusiast, social justice advocate, and public school educator. I had not devoted as much attention, however, to how my own beliefs, characteristics, and values interact with other people in the research setting to influence the research. The need to pay closer attention came quickly the day of my first Moral Monday observation.

McKechnie (2008) explained that the role of the researcher in an observation can range "from complete observer (no interaction between the observer and the observed) through observer as participant, participant as observer, and complete participant" (p. 574). When I arrived for the first observation, I intended to be a complete observer. I believed this would allow me to remain as objective as I felt I reasonably could while

observing. Within the first five minutes, however, I realized that, while being a complete observer might afford me the most objectivity, it would not likely provide me the richest data. The realization came as I stood inside the main doors of the legislative building, waiting for the Moral Monday rally to begin. I looked across Jones Street and saw a small crowd of approximately 30 people gathered between the NC Museum of Natural Science and the NC Museum of History. If I remained inside waiting, I might miss some key moments. If I wanted a richer observation experience, I needed to be out there with the people. I needed to listen to the gatherers' conversations among themselves, hear the organizers' instructions in the minutes leading up to the rally, and experience outbursts of songs and chants–if there were to be any. I exited the legislative building and crossed the street to join the gatherers, who by now had grown to about 50 people. I moved around casually with my spiral notebook and pen in hand. I overheard a lot of small talk over the next several minutes, but no one initiated conversations with me. I wondered if my notebook made me look like an outsider–perhaps a student, a journalist, a researcher, or a reporter, but nonetheless an outsider.

Patton (2002) pointed out, "People may behave quite differently when they know they are being observed versus how they behave naturally when they don't think they're being observed" (p. 269). With this awareness, I decided that in order to capture the richest field notes in this social setting, I should assume the role of observer as participant. My decision was confirmed when just moments later, Reverend Barber cautioned the gatherers that there were likely to be people present who did not support the agenda but were there to gather information to take back to the movement's

detractors. I certainly did not want the crowd to assume that I was one of them. Consequently, in the role of observer as participant, this meant that when the marching began, I marched. When the marchers sang, I joined in. By gathering with the participants, marching with them, and being privy to their semi-private conversations and chatter, my notes would be thicker. I still grappled, however, with how to record my field notes. I could not exchange my notebook and pen for a voting rights sign or a rainbow flag in order to blend in entirely. Still, I tried to take notes as inconspicuously as possible, filling in details after the event was finished.

My next observation, which was at the Voting Rights Ecumenical Service at Union Baptist Church, presented a similar challenge. I sat in the second row from the front. I stood, clapped, and sang along with the other 1,200 people in attendance. This time, I opted to record notes on the front and back of the program bulletin. Once I ran out of writing space, I was forced to retrieve my spiral notebook. Each time I reached for it, the plain-clothes security official standing about 20 feet to my right–whose demeanor resembled a Secret Service agent–fixed his eyes on me. At that moment, I felt the spiral notebook was again impeding my data collection. I was self-conscious, the security officer was suspicious, and I sensed–as I did during the previous observation–that maybe some of the gatherers were at least curious about my presence and purpose. The 70-sheet notebook was too big, too obvious, and perhaps too "journalistic." Hence, I discarded it; not the content, just the notebook. For the subsequent observation at the Mass Moral Monday March and Rally for Voting Rights, I recorded field notes in a notepad that fit nicely in my pocket. I cannot be certain that I was perceived differently during that

observation; after all, I stood and marched among a much larger, and as far as I could tell, entirely different crowd of gatherers. I can be certain, however, that I felt more comfortable and self-assured as an observer *and* a participant.

Patton (2002) posited that an observer "must ultimately deal with issues of authenticity, reactivity, and how the observational process may have affected what was observed as well as how the background and predispositions of the observer may have constrained what was observed and understood" (p. 301). Attending to my reflexive inquiries during the early minutes of the first observation resulted in my decision to take on the role of observer as participant. By continuing to observe myself, others, and my interactions with them (Patton, 2002), I was also able to determine that I needed to attend to other issues–such as my choice of data collection instruments–that might affect my self-consciousness, others' perceptions of me, and others' behaviors around me.

By the time I scheduled my first interview for this study, I was already thinking ahead about ways in which my interaction with the participants might unintentionally influence data collection. Outside of my scholarly interests, I am the founder and editor of a national award-winning gospel music blog. To enrich the blog content, I occasionally interview both rising and notable gospel artists. The experience is consistently exciting and insightful. I desired for my interviews with the participants in this study to be exciting and insightful as well. During the interviews for this study, I took deliberate approaches to monitor reflexivity. First, although the interviews were semi-structured and open-ended, I kept the interview questions directly in front of me to help me remain focused on the objectives of the interview. Second, because I frequently

wanted to add details to the participants' stories whenever I was personally familiar with an artist, song, or event that they referenced, I consciously inserted a few seconds of silence after the participants completed their responses. This ensured that (a) I would not interrupt them by interjecting my own narrative, (b) they had completed their answers, and (c) I would have a few moments to decide what to ask next.

I disclose the reflexive details of my research experience because these critical self-reflections helped to shape my approach to data collection and interpretation. Furthermore, these reflections helped me to consciously employ approaches that helped to ensure the trustworthiness of my interpretations. In the next section, I describe how I attended to issues of ethics in this research.

Ethical Considerations

I adhered to specific protocols as mandated by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) throughout the research process. These protocols entailed obtaining a letter of support from the research site. I met with Reverend Curtis E. Gatewood, HKonJ Coalition Coordinator for the NC NAACP State Conference, and detailed my research interests. He subsequently provided a letter in support of my study. Additionally, I used IRB-approved phone and email transcripts when recruiting and following up with prospective interview participants for the study. The scripts outlined the nature of the study and described the details of their participation. I also sent a consent form detailing the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality measures, and benefits to society and the participant. Because a primary goal of my

study was to bring the gospel singers of the moral movement to the forefront in name, contribution, and perspective, I informed participants that real names and places would be used in the study. Still, to protect confidentiality, I limited access to the audio-recorded interviews and typed transcripts by storing both securely on a password-protected computer. Additionally, I provided each participant with his or her own transcribed interview to review. As I mentioned previously, I honored one participant's desire to strike certain portions of a response.

I learned during an interview with one of the participants that my involvement as a researcher was vetted, as well. After I first invited him to participate in the study, he spoke with Yara Allen, the cultural arts coordinator for the moral movement, to verify the legitimacy of my research study.

Limitations

A trio of limitations presented itself in this study. The first is that Yara Allen, the primary song leader and cultural arts coordinator for the moral movement, and Mary D. Williams, the gospel singer whose televised activism at the Wake County School Board meeting piqued my interest in this research topic, did not participate in the study. I spoke with Yara both face-to-face and by phone. Each time, she expressed her interest and willingness to participate; however, my follow-up phone calls to solidify an interview date and time were never returned. Thankfully, I was able to learn about her role and contributions to the moral movement through the narratives of other interview participants (especially her sister), through my field observations, and through archived

video files of various moral movement events. Mary did not respond to multiple phone and email requests for participation in the study. I believe her perspective would have been insightful. Few gospel singers have performed in the moral movement, and as a result of Yara and Mary's unavailability, I was able to interview only three people for this study. I addressed this limitation by conducting multiple interviews with the three participants and by using additional data sources, namely, firsthand observations and 35 to 40 hours of document and media analyses to provide thick descriptions. Eshé's narratives were especially insightful for this purpose. The length of her interviews and rich descriptive narratives may be attributed to her descriptive storytelling, inclusion of anecdotes about her sister Yara, and intimate affiliation with the moral movement. Of the three interview participants, she has the longest tenure and, quite possibly, the most familiarity with the movement. The second limitation is that, for the convenience of the participants, I conducted phone interviews although I would have preferred a face-to-face interview experience. At various times during their respective interviews, the participants spontaneously burst into song. A face-to-face experience, especially during these moments, would have allowed me to analyze and interpret both their verbal and nonverbal styles of communication. Finally, as part of my data collection, in addition to the two scheduled semi-structured interviews, I desired to observe and record each participant's performance at a forthcoming movement-related event and conduct a 10- to 15-minute informal post interview. However, none of the participants had upcoming related performances within my data collection window.

Summary

In this chapter, I detailed the methodological approach I took in this study, providing a rationale for the basic interpretive qualitative research design and data collection methods I used to explore the research questions. I also explained how I analyzed the data and addressed trustworthiness, subjectivity, and ethics. I concluded the chapter by discussing the limitations of my study.

In chapter four, I present findings of this study through the narratives of three singers who perform gospel music in the moral movement. Here I draw on their words to describe their upbringing, introduction to social activism, and present commitments to social justice advocacy. I then offer an analysis of the findings. In chapter five, I present findings and analyses on the role that gospel music plays in the moral movement. In chapter six, I summarize and discuss the findings, derive conclusions from the study, and make recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS ON THE SINGERS' MUSICAL BACKGROUNDS AND INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL ACTIVISM

The moral movement's events encompass a range of activities on both the state and the national fronts. Two regularly scheduled major events are Moral Monday rallies and the Moral March on Raleigh and Historic Thousands on Jones Street (HKonJ) People's Assembly. Jones Street is where the NC state legislature convenes and, consequently, where many of the Raleigh demonstrations occur.

Since 2013, the moral movement has held regular Moral Mondays. As the name suggests, these gatherings are typically held on Mondays and take place at regular intervals from late spring through late summer. These events frequently include prayer, singing, speeches, chants, and demonstrations that result in acts of civil disobedience leading to peaceful arrests. According to Barber and Zelter (2014), Mondays became the designated day for these rallies because the NC General Assembly usually convenes for brief sessions on Monday evenings, "and we knew that 5:00 p.m. right after work, would be the best time for working people to show their support for the [moral witness participants had decided to make]" (p. 21).

The initial rally took place in Raleigh with a focus on extremist policies. Subsequent rallies centered on topics ranging from health care, equal protection under the law, and education, to voting rights, labor rights, and women's rights. By the end of

2013, attendance at the Raleigh Moral Mondays alone topped 35,000 and resulted in almost 950 arrests (Barber & Zelter, 2014). Rallies have taken place in different cities and towns across the state with thousands in attendance. Attendance at the rallies is extraordinarily diverse across age, gender, sexual orientation, political party, race, socio-economic status, and other points of difference.

In 2015, organizers announced the Moral Monday schedule, themed the "Summer of Moral Resistance." They held Moral Mondays in different cities around NC, and held six on Wednesdays rather than Mondays. The reason for alternating Mondays and Wednesdays, according to Reverend Curtis Gatewood, HKonJ Coalition Coordinator, is because the general assembly "started putting up their guards on Mondays." The platform for Moral Mondays is to inform, to issue calls to action, and to energize supporters for upcoming protests. Attendees and supporters of the rallies have compared them to "a personal spiritual revival of solidarity and hope" (Barber & Zelter, 2014, p. 4).

In tandem with the Moral Monday rallies is the Moral March on Raleigh and HKonJ People's Assembly, held annually in February. The HKonJ People's Assembly Coalition was conceptualized in December 2006, under the leadership of Reverend Dr. William J. Barber, II and the NC NAACP. The mass rally that followed in February 2007 drew a crowd of 3,500 outside the NC State Capitol (Fuller, 2014). In 2014, organizers estimated the crowd size at 80,000, while other analysts suggested attendance was drastically lower and numbered approximately 20,000 (McDonald, 2014). Nevertheless, it was reportedly the largest civil rights demonstration in the South since the march to Selma for voting rights in 1965 (Berman, 2014).

The Moral March on Raleigh and HKonJ People's Assembly is like a Moral Monday rally on a grand scale. In addition to a carefully planned outdoor pre-rally consisting of speeches, prayers, live and recorded musical performances, and chants, there is a march that extends along a six-block downtown route, and a mass assembly that converges outside the State Capitol.

It is typical, both at the Moral Monday rallies and at the Moral March on Raleigh and HKonJ People's Assembly, to hear songs performed. The songs performed include gospel songs, as well as other movement songs adapted from gospel tunes. In this chapter, I introduce three gospel singers who have performed at the moral movement events. Through their narratives, I explore the ways that family upbringing, church involvement, and encounters through formal education influenced the participants' understandings of the roles they fulfill in the moral movement. I begin by presenting the singers through the lenses of their familial backgrounds and foundations in social activism. Then, I discuss their specific involvement with the moral movement. Finally, I examine the degree to which they perceive themselves as activists and ways, besides singing, in which they advocate for social change.

The Reverend Rodney Lavon Coleman, D.Min.

The Reverend Rodney Lavon Coleman, D.Min. is an African American male in his late 30s, a gospel singer, songwriter, musician, producer, and pastor. He performed an original composition at the Moral March on Raleigh and HKonJ People's Assembly in 2015. Rodney grew up in rural Leasburg, NC, and encountered music at a very early age through the church and his family, which he says is "a singing family filled with

musicians as well." His parents sang in a local gospel group, the Gospelaires. Other gospel music influences included professional recording artists like the Williams Brothers, Willie Banks, and the Jackson Southernaires. He considered these singers to be on the "cutting edge" with their musicality in their heyday.

As a boy growing up in the 1980s, being surrounded by music piqued his interests, and he started playing drums at age four and singing at his church–St. James Missionary Baptist Church. At age nine, he became the youngest member of its male chorus, mostly excited about the opportunity to sing alongside his father. As a teenager, Rodney sang with local gospel quartets, which later led to the organization of True Vision, a contemporary gospel quartet consisting of his brothers and other close relatives. During this time, a cousin also helped him to hone his skills on lead guitar. While in college, he learned to play the keyboard. His skill set as an instrumentalist expanded to include the organ as well as the bass guitar.

Rodney credits his parents along with other family members for nurturing his musical curiosities and talents. He also knows that the unifying power of music strengthened familial bonds, especially between him and his younger brother Chris, who is also a writer, producer, and multi-instrumentalist.

> We rehearsed all the time. When my brother started playing–well, actually when both of us started playing–that was just the best thing in the world, because it gave us something to do together. I think that was a huge component of us getting as close as we are. Even today we are best friends, and I think that music was that component and the catalyst that brought us together. It took us beyond brotherhood, but it took us into a friendship realm and partnership realm. It was really awesome.

It was, in fact, a family member who inspired him to try his hand at songwriting. The family member was a writer for one of the quartets Rodney sang in as a teenager, and Rodney became fascinated by the craft. Accordingly, he too decided to write a song for the group, which he says the audience received well when the group performed it live. Since that time, he has written both gospel and secular songs, but he exudes greater confidence about his gospel compositions. "I think that I am a much better gospel writer," he says. "It's easier. It's who I am. So even though I did get success from writing secular music, my heart is still gospel."

In addition to his music undertakings, Rodney is an ordained minister. He received his license to preach in 2000, and he currently pastors at First Baptist Church in Chapel Hill, NC. Not surprisingly, his style of preaching is heavily rhythmic and musical, a characteristic common in the African American preaching tradition. In fact, Spencer (1990) argued that Black spirituals evolved from intoned preaching. This style of preaching, Spencer (1990) wrote, typically includes call-and-response, a rhythmic speaking cadence, instrumental accompaniment (usually an organ), and a melody. A fairly common use of melody in preaching is the whoop–the celebratory conclusion of a sermon during which the preacher begins to sing his or her words (Blake, 2010).

As a seminary-trained homiletician, Rodney's preaching style is methodical and thorough. As a prolific musician, his preaching style is intentionally tuneful, crescendoing from audience involvement (call-and-response) and metered speech to intermittent hums, squalls, growls, and an eventual whoop in an identifiable musical key.

I witnessed firsthand the way Rodney engages and involves the audience during his sermonic presentation. That particular day, he was the guest preacher at a youth choir's anniversary service. Aside from the choir itself, the congregation consisted mostly of middle-aged and elderly adults. When Rodney stood to preach, he immediately burst into song. The song he selected was the contemporary gospel ballad "I Need You Now," written and recorded by Smokie Norful. Most of the youth seemed immediately familiar with the song and impressed by Rodney's vocal prowess. They fixed their gaze on him. As if satisfied to have arrested their attention, he turned a single phrase causing that song to segue into the Baptist hymn, "I Need Thee Every Hour." The older congregants suddenly appeared interested. Two elderly deacons seated near me leaned forward as if being drawn pleasantly and nostalgically into yesteryear.

Once Rodney finished singing, he delivered his sermon with the same methodical and intentional approach. His sermon was titled, "It's Goin' Down." The title was a reference to a hip-hop song by Yung Joc and another strategy Rodney employed to grab the attention of the youth. Over the next 30 minutes or so, his preaching metamorphosed from a conversational exegesis of Biblical truths interspersed with cultural references and slang to a frenzied musical chorus replete with his brother's musical accompaniment on the keyboard. The youth seemed fascinated that he could turn a hip-hop song into a sermon. The older congregants seemed equally fascinated that he could turn a sermon into song. Yet, the celebratory conclusion of his message was in an identifiable key–E-flat, to be exact–and many in the audience clung to every word, proving so by their response. Cedar Grove Online (2009) captured a brief excerpt:

(Rodney) Jesus said, "I am...!"
(Audience) "I am!"
(Rodney) "…the Good Shepherd!"
(Audience) Yeah!

Not surprising to many who have witnessed his homilies, Rodney's fervor, force, and stylistic approach to preaching have earned him the title "Pitbull of the Pulpit" among his contemporaries.

Rodney's seminary training not only afforded him the skills necessary to become a successful homiletician and pastor, but it also placed him in a context with other scholars who used their influence to address social injustices. His earliest exposure to societal ills, however, came through critical conversations with his father.

Beginnings in Social Activism

Rodney initially learned about social injustice through his father, who educated him about racism in general, as well as specific tensions related to his own military service in Vietnam. Rodney remembers, "[Dad] would tell me about how they were treated abroad as opposed to how he was treated [growing up]." These conversations were eye-opening, Rodney recalls, because Leasburg–where he lived–was rural. Moreover, the community was sheltered; Rodney lived among and interacted with family and extended family. Talks about racism and inequality awakened his awareness to a world beyond his hometown.

Rodney's introduction to activism came while he was a student at Winston-Salem State University. Concurrent with Rodney's matriculation, the Honorable Minister Louis

Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam was spearheading a major national event. Rodney describes this experience:

> That's when the Million Man March had taken place. Being on a college campus you meet a lot of people from a lot of different places. Those who really drew me and had my ear were those who were speaking truth to power and the powers that be. On campus, I had quite a number of friends, and still do, who are from the Fruit of Islam and the Nation of Islam, Muslims. Just to hear the conversation of those guys talk about what's going on in the community and what needs to be fixed–it was drawing to me, because I'd never heard that before. Well, I hadn't heard it in such a contained context where you could actually sit around the table day in and day out, days end on days end, and really talk about what's going on in the community.

As in the talks with his father, Rodney's conversations with college friends became eye-opening learning experiences. He also realized that he was able to listen and learn as well as to participate in making change happen through community activism. As a graduate student at the Wake Forest University School of Divinity, his exposure to social activism expanded beyond issues of race and into other social justice issues (gender equality, for example). Once he arrived at United Theological Seminary, where he earned the Doctor of Ministry degree, he understood that each institution and context presented various levels of exposure to different forms of injustice and advocacy. Through Rodney's family and college experiences with friends, he decided that whether at the forefront or behind the scenes, he wanted to be part of the solution to social injustices in his community. Not surprisingly, music would be one such means for him to engage.

Introduction to the Moral Movement

In 2015, Rodney received an invitation to sing his original composition, "I Am Somebody," at the NC NAACP state banquet. It was a song he penned in response to the Black Lives Matter movement and the Ferguson unrest following the controversial shooting of Michael Brown. After watching the disturbing reports on television, he went into his studio and began writing lyrics that very night,

> *Every time they want us to stay quiet, that's when we gotta get a little louder.*
> *Every time they want us to sit down, that's when we gotta rise a little higher.*
> *Every time they say it's not an issue, you gotta remind them that it is too.*
> *And when they say our lives don't matter, you gotta be willing to speak truth to power,*
> *Because I, oh I, world I, I am somebody.*

Rodney's primary objective was simple: to encourage those who are affected by racial discrimination and violence to believe that they matter and to keep pressing forward. Second, he wanted to motivate people to become part of the change they desired to see in their world. "There's not going to be change without change agents," he asserts. "And the more agents we have, the more powerful we can become."

Rodney's invitation to perform for the NAACP was unexpected. He had delivered a brief musical performance of "I Am Somebody" during a Freedom Day program at his church, and some members of the NAACP who were affiliated with the moral movement were in the audience. They subsequently invited him to perform the song at the upcoming state banquet of the NC NAACP. He consented, and he still

remembers the audience's response that particular evening at the banquet, during which Barber was in attendance.

> The thing that surprised me the most is, when I performed it at the banquet, there were people standing up rocking from side to side. I was really pleased that the chorus was so easy to pick up on, because by the time I'd sung the chorus the first time, by the next round people were singing it. Then, when I was looking off, I had young folks singing it and throwing their hands up and dancing. They were talking about how–even the young folks–it was a feel-good song. It made them feel good.

The intergenerational audience's favorable reception to the song's message and retro soul/gospel musical arrangement prompted a follow-up invitation to the 2015 Moral March on Raleigh and HKonJ People's Assembly. The experience of being a part of such a historic day is etched in his memory. He remembers it as a powerful, charged atmosphere of unity and positivity. His intent that day was to maintain the mood that others had already set and to "keep the people motivated" by encouraging them through his lyrical message. He deemed the opportunity to do so an honor at an event of that magnitude.

Perceptions of Self as Activist

Rodney assertively uses music as well as his pastoral influence to raise consciousness about social injustices in the local and broader community. His church is within walking distance of UNC-Chapel Hill's campus. Some of the college students are members of his congregation, and they, along with many other students at the university are connected to the pulse of the community, Rodney observes.

"They're very prepared in many instances to demonstrate," he comments. Accordingly, his church has supported student movements, including the Black Student Movement, on UNC's campus.

Another of his community endeavors includes affiliation with Justice United, a local group of clergy who advocate for affordable housing. Rodney has also participated in or moderated forums on fair policing of people of color, as well as school board policies affecting marginalized groups. Despite his involvement on the activist front, however, he doesn't readily describe himself as an activist. Instead, he prefers to call himself an "actionist." Initially, he grappled with the distinction.

> I would probably describe myself more so as an actionist, not necessarily an activist. Because with me, I tend to … I guess they're one and the same in a sense, because in order to be an activist, you have to be an actionist.
>
> I think some people are … they're just actionists, and they're classified by those who observe them in their element: actively participating, and actively leading movements and protests. Media has a lot to do with that external classification. I think most activists don't classify themselves as activists though.

As he teased out what he believes is the distinguishing characteristic of activists and actionists, which appears to simmer down to whether the classification comes from the self or the other, I realized that he may not describe himself as an activist because he believes that it is more appropriate for someone else to apply that descriptor.

> I think that [activists] probably classify themselves otherwise–as probably … actionists–because they're not really concentrating on the title. Their concentration is speaking truth to power, in addressing issues that need to be addressed.… I've never heard … activist[s] classify themselves as … activist[s]. They always keep the main thing the main thing, which is they want you to know

> what the problem is, and what the solutions are, and what the solutions need to be. Because again true activism is selflessness, and it's not about you.

His assertion is that activists are so consumed by the work that they do not necessarily give attention to themselves; rather, others who witness their work affirm them as activists. As Rodney continued to detail his involvement with social justice causes in the community aside from musical performance, he acknowledged that others might describe him as an activist. Still, he chooses to describe himself as an *actionist*–a person of action for change–whether in the role of a singer, a pastor, or a concerned citizen.

The other singers in this study share similar family and musical experiences, although their exposure to and involvement in social activism is varied. In the case of Claude Gardner, whom I present next, spirituality and Divine assignment are the lenses through which he views his work for social change. Then, I introduce Sauuda Yejide Eshé, whose narrative details a strong family upbringing and a focus on self-awareness and self-empowerment.

Claude Gardner

Claude Gardner is an African American male in his early 30s, a gospel singer, musician, and worship leader. He has been a performing artist with the moral movement since 2013. Claude was born in Richmond, VA but grew up in Rocky Mount, NC with his paternal grandparents. Like Rodney, he encountered music through his family and his church. He was reared, as he describes it, in a very strong Christian home with several cousins whom he counted as siblings. Claude's grandfather was a gospel quartet singer.

Whenever he sang in church, Claude and his cousins spontaneously formed a large choir to back him.

Music, in one way or another, filled the household. Gospel recordings of the Clark Sisters, Maggie Ingram and the Ingramettes, and F. C. Barnes were in frequent rotation, as were recordings of the Mighty Clouds of Joy and the Five Blind Boys of Alabama. As Claude grew older, the vocal technique of gospel singer Daryl Coley, the southern gospel harmonies of the Gaither Vocal Band, and, in his own words, the "powerful and convincing" voice of Mahalia Jackson appealed to him. Of Mahalia, he says,

> As I got a little older and could understand more of just how powerful she was culturally, to be a woman, to be a Black woman, and to break so many of those racial barriers, and people having her come literally all over the world to sing the gospel, I think I had a greater appreciation for all of what she did.…That voice is timeless.

Claude suggested that Mahalia's influence on him began with her captivating singing voice but later extended into how she used both her music and acclaim to effect spiritual and social change. Even prayer in his household possessed a musical quality, according to Claude. In particular, his grandfather's early morning tuneful prayers resounded throughout the house with tonal depth and richness, redolent of the prayer-chant style of African American Primitive Baptists. Interestingly, this was the same style of prayer in which a 12-year-old Claude would lead his family as his grandmother lay gravely ill, having suffered a stroke in the middle of the night. His prayers toggled from speech to song the entire time.

> As a young child, when I should've been broken all to pieces because I loved my grandmother, I was at the foot of her bed with my hands on her feet, singing and praying…
>
> I don't remember exactly what I was singing, because it was probably just … a flow of music out of me, and I'm sure I was singing and praying much like what my grandfather did. I am very sure that [I was not necessarily singing] a penned song, but just singing a prayer, praying. And singing a prayer, praying. That was the way I was taught.

Unfortunately, fervent prayers and singing did not prevail in extending his grandmother's earthly life. She passed later that evening. His response to such an event in the family's life points to the power and effect of prayer as well as song in times of difficulty, even helplessness.

Like music, spirituality infiltrated Claude's household, so much so that his house doubled as a non-denominational house of worship. His uncle was the pastor. On Sunday mornings, Claude and the other members of the household got dressed and walked down the hall to the living room, "just like we were led down the aisles at church," he vividly recalls. Claude sang his first solo in church–"Oh How He Must Love Me" by Candi Staton. He also got his start on drums by playing at the church. Eventually, he led songs as he played. Those early days were foundational for his present-day ministry involvement at Truth Tabernacle Ministries in Rocky Mount, where he is a worship leader. Additionally, he sang with his aunt and two cousins in a group called the Voices of Praise. His aunt's insistence that he learn, teach, and lead songs prepared him to direct and conduct choirs as a teenager. These budding talents blossomed into skills he further developed in band and chorus at school. There he met the person who became one of his greatest musical influences, Angie Ruffin, his

elementary and junior high chorus teacher. He credits her for expanding his awareness of other musical genres and for teaching with a passion that he now finds himself imparting to others as a church worship leader and music workshop clinician.

Claude also got to hone his vocal chops with a pair of sisters in his neighborhood. Sometime after his grandmother passed, he moved in with his aunt, who happened to live in the same apartment complex as a woman named Yara Allen. Yara and her older sister Sauuda Yejide Eshé were known throughout the community for their singing. Claude was much younger–"I mean [I was] really young, and they [were] fully grown"–but he delighted in spending time at Yara's apartment, sitting in the living room for hours, singing and harmonizing over gospel melodies with the sisters. This relationship would lead to his eventual connection to social activism and the moral movement.

Introduction to the Moral Movement

Claude's introduction to social activism and the moral movement were one and the same. Though he recalls having engaged in acts like transporting voters to the polls when he was younger, he never kept abreast of social justice issues until his involvement with the moral movement. His invitation to participate occurred under interesting circumstances.

> I was in Durham, NC supporting a friend who was in "The Black Nativity." [It's] not where I live, I don't know a whole lot of people there; just went up one evening, the last evening of the play. I'm relaxing, they have the intermission, and I'm going to get something to drink, and all of a sudden I hear somebody saying, "Cee! Cee!" which is my childhood nickname. It's Yara and Eshé … and they say, "Come here, we want to introduce you to somebody."

That "somebody" turned out to be Barber. Sauuda Eshé corroborates, recalling that she and Yara had wanted to introduce them to each other for quite a while. She describes their chance meeting in Durham as "the perfect set-up." On the spot, Barber invited Claude to sing at a rally the next day. Both surprised and humbled, especially since Barber had never heard or seen him sing, he accepted. The 2014 Moral March on Raleigh and HKonJ People's Assembly was also quickly approaching. By then, he had researched enough about the movement to understand its purpose and momentum.

> I was like, "Wow this is huge." And I did not expect even that he would ask me to come again … and then, here we go, HKonJ. I get a phone call saying, "Dr. William Barber wants you to come sing for HKonJ. It's going to be really huge, and they're expecting somewhere between eighty to a hundred thousand people."

Claude consented. That rainy, windy, cold February day on the Fayetteville Street mall in downtown Raleigh, he and sisters Eshé and Yara sang together. Claude followed their lead, singing whatever they sang.

He particularly remembers "just how electrifying Dr. Barber was that day" as he delivered the keynote address. Barber's delivery was sermonic–sprinkled with Bible passages and quotes from scholars, and lyrics from gospel hymns and movement songs. His messages typically include references to literary texts besides the Bible, and deliberately so, given the diversity of cultures and belief systems represented by the people affiliated with the movement. His style is scholarly and riveting, and his messages convey a heavy social justice slant. As is common in the African American preaching tradition, his messages also sometimes turn musical as he concludes.

During a movement teach-in, Yara Allen explained that the style of preaching the moral movement uses "is very strategic" and is used "because it came out of a tradition that has music as its undergirding" (Fusion Films, 2015). African American preaching is historically musical (Spencer, 1990). Just as some have compared the moral movement to the civil rights movement of the 1960s, some have compared Barber to Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Ostendorff, 2014). Besides being scholars, social justice activists, and visionaries, both are African American preachers who invoke the traditions of their culture in their orations. Barber's "electrifying" delivery may be the result of his ability to engage a widely diverse audience by connecting their commonalities while summoning the spirit and emotion of the musical African American preaching tradition, which links present-day movement participants to movement traditions of yesteryear. The stylistic elements of preaching that Barber uses heavily echo the stylistic elements incorporated by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose style was musical, impassioned, and climactic (Beckerman & Gray, 2014). By the time Barber reaches the climax of his messages, they become musical choruses with lively and sometimes frenzied audience members cheering, clapping, and hanging onto his every word.

That particular day at HKonJ, at the close of Barber's sermon, Barber asked Claude, Eshé, and Yara to sing "We Shall Overcome." As the trio led the massive crowd in the familiar protest anthem, Yara nudged Claude to take the lead on the stanza, "We are not afraid…" Claude, entirely afraid, began to sing and for the first time that dreary day, the sun appeared. He describes the amazement of the moment. "Dr. Barber grabs the mic in the midst of me singing and begins to yell, 'The sun is coming out! The sun is

shining! All of heaven is in agreement with justice!'" to which the crowd erupted in cheers, applause, laughter, and tears. He further reflects,

> It was powerful to see what I believe was representative of the kingdom of God. So many different denominations, so many different races, so many different people, and the common ground being love, and the common ground being unity, and the common ground being hope for better for all.
>
> That was powerful for me. That was real ministry to me.

As in his upbringing, Claude's spirituality comes to the fore in his reflection. His involvement is greater than a momentary opportunity to sing or to be affiliated with something historic. His involvement is "real ministry."

Perceptions of Self as Activist

Inasmuch as Claude describes his affiliation with the moral movement as a ministry, he is far less decisive about whether he considers himself an activist.

> I believe that I have a responsibility by virtue of the calling of God and the gifting of God on my life to share. That is to share the message of hope. That is to share a message of truth, a message of faith through the movement…
>
> I don't know if I would classify myself as an activist or whatever, but I am committed to hearing that message [of hope, truth, and faith] in whatever avenue God opens up.

He is certain about his spirituality and Divine assignment. He seems uncertain, however, about whether it is a form of activism. It is possible that his involvement can be described as spiritual activism, defined by Keating (2006) as "spirituality for social change, spirituality that recognizes the many differences among us yet insists on our commonalities and uses these commonalities as catalysts for transformation" (p. 11). The

idea of spiritual activism appears to be, as Keating (2008) posited, "a contradiction in terms" (p. 53). The reason, she suggested, is,

> Although the word "spiritual" implies an other-worldly, inward-looking perspective that invites escape from and at times even denial of social injustices, the word "activism" implies outward-directed interaction with the material world–the very world that spirituality seems to deny or downplay. Yet for spiritual activists, these two worlds and worldviews are not separate. The spiritual/material, inner/outer, individual/collective dimensions of life are parts of a larger whole, interjoined in a complex, interwoven pattern. (p. 53)

Claude, by his own admission, was uninvolved with the social justice movement and its objectives until he received a personal invitation to sing. Before this, his sole social justice involvement was giving folks rides to the polls. Though spirituality is not limited to Christianity or even religion itself, for Claude, it is his Christian upbringing–and its tenets of truth, hope, and faith–that inform his understanding of spirituality and connect him with the moral movement. It is his understanding that the Kingdom of God is vast, diverse, and loving that connects him with a movement that mirrors these attributes. To be clear, Claude does not refer to himself as a spiritual activist. If, however, his approach to social justice work is an act of spiritual activism, he does not consciously bring an activist perspective into his experiences and perhaps never considered that spirituality and activism could intertwine.

Clearly, Rodney and Claude's familial upbringings and divergent exposures to social activism have impacted how they describe and demonstrate activism. The spirituality of Claude's childhood has had a significant bearing on his love of singing. Even Yara Allen and her sister Eshé, with whom he presently sings in the movement,

shared with him their love of singing–including movement songs–when he was a child. The meaning that Claude ascribes to his role in the movement is that it is ministry, a Divinely orchestrated assignment to help impart hope, truth, and faith and thereby effect change for generations to come. Sauuda Yejide Eshé, whom I have already briefly mentioned, also acknowledges a Divine presence in her social activism. I discuss her experiences in the next section.

Sauuda Yejide Eshé

Sauuda Yejide Eshé is an African American female in her mid-50s, a singer, lyricist, composer, community activist, and storyteller. She has been affiliated with the moral movement as a performing artist since approximately 2013. Eshé, as many call her, was born in Rocky Mount, NC. She is the oldest of two girls; her younger sister (by two and a half years) is Yara Allen, cultural arts coordinator for the moral movement. Eshé's memories of music in the home date as far back as she remembers. "[Yara and I] actually started singing together at a very, very, very young age."

By nature, Eshé was shy as a child, and she immersed herself in activities that allowed her to engage without excessive interaction with others. Those activities were drawing and singing. Since Yara was also a talented singer and spoken-word artist, the two often teamed up to perform or act in one of Yara's self-written plays.

Eshé's parents cultivated her music interests. One Christmas, her parents bought her a guitar, and they bought Yara a drum set. There was also a piano in the house, which Eshé used to write songs and pick out melodies. In addition to the musical

instruments, Eshé's mother saw to it that her young vocalists encountered a range of music styles and genres. Eshé details,

> [Mom] exposed us to opera, calypso, classical, R&B, country, bluegrass, all of it. Show tunes. Broadway. We had all of that stuff in the house. We ended up learning those songs. When we would get around our peers, we're singing show tunes. We're singing stuff from Broadway. They didn't have one iota of an idea of what it [was] that we were singing. I'm singing opera. It was really interesting… [Mother] always encouraged whatever it is that she saw in us. She and my dad both.

The matriarch was herself a vocal force to be reckoned with. According to Eshé, her mother, who is now in her late 80s, could rival gospel singer Mahalia Jackson in her heyday. She sang in a group called the Busy Bees. Eshé's father was a singer as well; he performed in a gospel quartet called the Willing Workers. His booming baritone voice caused the walls of their wood-frame house to vibrate, she remembers.

Eshé grew fond of gospel singers who reminded her of her parents. She loved the music of Mahalia Jackson, and her mother had plenty of those vinyl records in the house. In fact, the influence of the gospel singer is so evident that people in Eshé's hometown call her "Little Mahalia." Not only does Eshé sing several of the songs popularized by Jackson, but she delivers them in a rich alto vocal range, similar to Jackson's robust contralto register. Because her father was a quartet singer, she also gravitated toward and drew upon the influences of gospel groups that sang in the style of gospel quartets and quintets–the Fairfield Four, the Dixie Hummingbirds, the Five Blind Boys of Alabama, the Five Blind Boys of Mississippi, and the Caravans.

Another gospel group Eshé favored was the Staple Singers. Throughout the 1960s, the group recorded and released "message music" (Hughes, 2015, p. 99) in support of the civil rights movement. The music's lyrical content underscored social justice and self-empowerment. Eshé particularly fancied lead singer Mavis Staples, a contralto like Mahalia, whose timbre was equal parts husky, sensual, and soulful–even when the group deviated from its gospel sound to perform folk songs. Still another influence on Eshé was Odetta, a classically trained folk, blues, and gospel singer whom I discussed in chapter two (Lewis & Boehm, 2008). Eshé liked folk music, and Odetta's performances resonated with her.

It is plausible that Eshé borrowed various performance elements from each of her musical influences when she started singing at her church as a youth. In fact, both she and her sister sang in the church choir and occasionally led songs. At home, her devoutly spiritual paternal grandmother continued to nurture the sisters' blossoming musical talents. Eshé recalls,

> She would call us every single day that we were out of school.
>
> During the summer, she would call us at 12:00 every single day and make us sing to her on the phone, and we had to sing in harmony… [There] was only one song that she had us sing. That was "There's a Bright Side Somewhere."

The spiritual hymn, whose author is unknown, contains lyrics of faith in and hope for a better future on the other side of the bleak present. The chorus declares,

> *There's a bright side somewhere,*
> *there's a bright side somewhere.*

Don't you rest until you find it.
There's a bright side somewhere. (Bastini, 2001, p. 630)

The song was her grandmother's favorite, and the sisters sang it to her daily until her passing in 1973.

Beginnings in Social Activism

Like Rodney, Eshé learned about social injustice from her parents. Both were activists. Of her mother, Eshé explains, "Her form of activism was more about defiance than actually, I guess, being active in a movement. The way that she declared her right to independence is by defying what was expected of her as a black woman."

Her parents did not necessarily demonstrate activism by demonstrating or marching. Rather, they educated themselves about systems of privilege, power, and difference. They educated Eshé as well. She recalls her father's advice: "My daddy used to say … you learn the system, and you learn how to make changes within the system. I think that was the beginning of [my exposure to social activism]."

Eshé again encountered social activism during college and in conversation with an acquaintance. Eshé was a non-traditional student in nearly every sense of the word. By this time, she had been in college at least once already; she was a wife, and she was a mother. She had reached a critical point in her adult life. "I was really doing a lot of self-evaluation, a lot of introspective kinds of stuff," she concedes. A sociology classmate, whom Eshé says was "a Muslim brother," engaged her in conversation regarding self-awareness. "I had listened to him talk," she says, "because he always talked about the Afrocentric self and knowing yourself."

As her level of self-awareness evolved, Eshé decided to change her name, requiring others to affirm what she was also now choosing to affirm about herself. She explains,

> The reason that I chose this name–"Sauuda," which means *dark beauty;* "Yejide," which means *in the image of her mother;* "Eshé," which means *life*–is because all through my childhood, although I was loved in my family, I always felt unloved in a crowd and always on the outside. Add to that the fact that I am melanin rich, and I was a chubby child. I got a lot of what [people] would call bullying now…
>
> I deliberately chose a name that would actually celebrate the very thing that made me feel sad. I said, "Whenever someone calls my name from now on, when they say "Sauuda," they would have to affirm that I am a dark beauty just by saying my name."

Eshé did not disclose her birth name during our interviews; however, she stated that she legalized her name change in 2003, seven years after she began using it. The fact that she chose to discuss self-awareness and an eventual name change as her introduction to social activism suggests that her name change was one of the earliest acts of resistance to oppressive, self-defeating thoughts and emotions. Subsequently, self-liberation accompanied her new name.

Introduction to the Moral Movement

Eshé first had the opportunity to sing in Barber's presence at a local NAACP banquet in her hometown of Rocky Mount. Reuben Blackwell, IV, CEO at the Opportunities Industrialization Center, where Eshé works, had extended the invitation. Barber was the keynote speaker. That night, she sang the hymn "Higher Ground."

> *I'm pressing on the upward way,*
> *New heights I'm gaining every day;*

Still praying as I'm onward bound,
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

Lord, lift me up and let me stand,
By faith, on Heaven's tableland,
A higher plane than I have found;
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground. (Bastini, 2001, p. 646)

As she sang the lyrics of the late 19th-century song by John Oatman, Jr., Barber was riveted. Eshé recalls,

> I don't know, there was something about that song and the way I delivered it, and the Spirit and everything got to working together. Reverend Barber just was so moved that he started requesting that I sing whenever he came to Rocky Mount.

One occasion that soon followed was a poverty tour stop in the city, hosted by the Opportunities Industrialization Center. The stop was part of the Truth and Hope Tour of Poverty in North Carolina–an initiative of the NC NAACP and several social and economic justice organizations to visit impoverished counties and neighborhoods throughout the state in order to bring visibility to the prevalence of extreme poverty (Hawes, 2012). Barber returned to the city, and as Eshé remembers, "the place was packed." At that particular event, she sang "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," a folk song that gained great popularity during the civil rights movement of the 1960s because of its message of perseverance. The audience was moved. "They just jumped up, and everybody was all into it," she reminisces.

At the conclusion of the song, Barber made a statement to which she responded with great surprise. "As I was going to sit down, Reverend Barber stood up and made

this declaration. I got so tickled–it actually shocked me–but he made this declaration. He said, 'This voice will be the voice of the HKonJ.'"

Eshé was familiar with the HKonJ rallies. She had attended two, and there was another coming up soon. She had never sung at one, however; she had marched with the crowd. Eshé would soon find out exactly what Barber's declaration meant.

> A couple of days went by, Reuben calls me on the phone and he goes, "Listen to this. I got something you need to hear." He played it over the phone and it was the promo for the HKonJ, and there I was at the beginning of it. I thought, "Oh wow, he really did mean that."

Eshé sang at the opening of the promotional drop for the HKonJ rally. That year, she made her first of several appearances as a singer for the HKonJ. She sang with Yara and her friend, Linda Joyner.

Despite being "the voice of the HKonJ" and a well-known singer in her community, Eshé confessed that her initial involvement with the moral movement in that capacity brought about a bit of uneasiness.

> I sang in church. I sang at memorials, I sang at programs, but I did not do movements. The very first time that [Reverend Barber] gave me this assignment, I can't say that I was afraid, but I was a little bit apprehensive, because I wanted to make sure I did exactly what it was that he wanted me to do. Honestly, I didn't know what that was. I had been to several HKonJs, and I had seen other people on the stage doing things. I don't know what he told them. I don't know what their instructions were.

She credits Barber's guidance, nurturing nature, and specific instructions for easing her anxieties as she set out on uncharted movement territory. Heretofore, she had been

content below the radar, participating in the movement and showing support by marching with the crowd.

> Were it not for [Reverend Barber's] insistence that this is where I needed to be, I probably wouldn't have done it. Even though within me I'm an activist and whatnot, I never saw myself that way, standing in front of that many people.

Eshé is the only singer in this study who described herself explicitly as an activist. Even before she became affiliated with the movement as a singer, she engaged in community activism. In the next section, I further discuss how activism has shaped her daily life and involvement in the moral movement.

Perceptions of Self as Activist

Eshé describes herself as a cultural activist. Buser and Arthurs (2013) defined cultural activism as "a set of creative practices and activities which challenge dominant interpretations and constructions of the world while presenting alternative socio-political and spatial imaginaries in ways which challenge relationships between art, politics, participation and spectatorship" (p. 2). Singing is one artistic expression of Eshe's cultural activism, and sometimes the songs are original pieces that come to her in her sleep. The Spirit gives these songs to her, she shares.

> I sleep with a tape recorder beside me because when I hear the song … let me change that. I don't compose anything. The Spirit composes it. I'm recording it. When I wake up and that tune is in my head, I grab the recorder.

Similar to Claude, Eshé speaks of Divine intervention and guidance in her participation in social causes. She relies on this inspiration to convey messages that align with the

themes of the events to which she lends her voice. Storytelling is another art form that Eshé uses to promote social change. Her objective as a storyteller is to use spoken word, historical facts, and imagery to communicate essential truths that empower by creating self-awareness, fostering pride, celebrating uniqueness, and activating change.

Eshé is quick to point out that her activism extends beyond participation in a social movement, which is why she defines herself as a cultural activist:

> [My activism is] not defined by the scope of my involvement in a movement– whether it is the Forward Together Movement, which is also known as the Moral Monday Movement, [or] whether it is something local where we are advocating for youth services, which is what I do day in and day out. All of that is activism. Within all of those frameworks there is always, always a place for cultural art. The cultural arts–whether it is singing, whether it is spoken word, whether it is drama, dance, all of this–the end goal is to bring about a change. [The goal] is to educate and to bring about action that will lead to change.

In addition to using cultural arts to challenge mainstream ideologies, Eshé makes activism a part of her daily life. In particular, she enjoys one-on-one interactions with people to whom she can extend assistance. On any given day, she may help individuals to secure housing, mental health resources, or employment. On another day, she may facilitate partnerships with community-based organizations to provide resources to marginalized people in the community. Eshé details the reason she describes these undertakings as forms of activism:

> Again, everything that I do, the end goal is to educate so that people will become active and then they can bring about the change. They have to be educated about what the issues are because they don't understand that they are not a single issue, but they're a part of a whole array of issues that a community is facing. If they don't understand that, then they will feel isolated, and they won't extend

> themselves outside of their own problem to build a coalition of any kind to address these problems that are in the community, and in the broader community.

Eshé is intent on advocating for change, and she insists that activism begins with education–awareness and understanding of the issue to be confronted. Whether she is singing, telling a story, providing individual empowerment support, or serving as a community liaison, she is happily engaged in activism. In fact, she confesses that it is an inescapable identity.

> I eat, sleep, and breathe this.
>
> When I say 'I eat, sleep, and breathe this,' it's like I don't have any control over it. I'm walking around all day long, and everything I see reminds me that somewhere there's a struggle, and what do we need to do about it? Who can we involve? It's me. That's who I am.

Summary

The narratives in this chapter suggest that the bonds the singers shared with their families and through their churches from childhood are significant to their musical development. The narratives also suggest that in the case of Rodney and Eshé, critical conversations with Muslim peers while in college offered insight into interrelationships of privilege, power, and difference. Consequently, Rodney began a journey of social activism–or as he would say, *actionism*–for the betterment of his community. For Eshé, the critical conversations resulted in an awakening and liberation of self that empowered her to seek to liberate others from potentially oppressive conditions.

Additionally, church involvement and spirituality are significant to the singers' commitments to social activism. Rodney and his congregants promote social change in

the community where the church is located and where its members live, work, and attend school. Claude perceives his involvement in social activism as a spiritual act, an extension of his ministry, and part of a Divine assignment. Eshé describes the Spirit's involvement in her performance as well as her songwriting for social justice advocacy. Given their involvement in the moral movement, gospel music itself plays an important role in the movement's overall impact. In the next chapter, I explore the significance of gospel music to the moral movement.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS ON THE ROLE GOSPEL MUSIC PLAYS IN THE MORAL MOVEMENT

Reverend Barber, the architect, leader, and primary spokesman for the moral movement, emphasized that music is pivotal to the movement. He posited, "In the book of Kings, we are told that the prophet cannot prophesy until the minstrel sings" (Fusion Films, 2015a). The basis for Barber's assertion is a Biblical passage in Second Kings, in which the prophet Elisha called for a minstrel to play. In response, Elisha directed his attention to the voice of the Lord and the prophetic message he was to deliver to the people. Stewart, Smith, and Denton (2012) explained that within a social movement, members sometimes refer to activists as prophets, because "they lead through their words, strive for perfection, and work for the good of society" (p. 91). By Barber's own acknowledgement and Stewart et al.'s description, Barber is the moral movement's prophet. It is also the case then, that Rodney, Claude, and Eshé are three of the movement's minstrels.

These gospel singers whom I introduced in the previous chapter perform a range of song styles within their movement repertoire. Rodney performed a message song that he composed. As I mentioned in chapter two, message music is a lyrical tradition in which the music's message underscores truths about social existence from the singers' perspectives (Akpan, 2006; Maultsby, 2004). Claude and Eshé have performed gospel

hymns, gospel ballads, and freedom songs. Freedom songs make up the largest portion of their repertoire, mainly because they are familiar tunes–mostly adapted from spirituals–with lyrics that they can easily update for contextual relevance. Another reason these singers sing freedom songs frequently may well be because, as King (2000) asserted,

> In a sense the freedom songs are the soul of the movement. They are more than just incantations of clever phrases designed to invigorate a campaign; they are as old as the history of the Negro in America. They are adaptations of the songs the slaves sang–the sorrow songs, the shouts for joy, the battle hymns and the anthems of our movement. I have heard people talk of their beat and rhythm, but we in the movement are as inspired by their words. (p. 48)

King suggested that freedom songs propelled the civil rights movement because they connected participants to the plights of their ancestors. Yara Allen concurred, stating during a freedom song workshop that "music speaks the sentiments of those activists who came before us" (Raise Up for 15, 2013). The presence of these songs in a movement is imperative, said Allen, because they give the movement "personality" (Raise Up for 15, 2013).

In the previous chapter, I introduced three gospel singers who have sung in the moral movement. In this chapter, I explore, through the narratives, observations, and document/media analyses, the significance of their music to the moral movement. Specifically, I discuss intentionality as an important aspect of the power of gospel music and the attention given to song selection, song structure, elements of delivery, and vocality. I then discuss how gospel music is strategically used to build collective identity. Finally, I discuss music's ability to offer hope, strength, and education.

Intentionality

Throughout the course of this study, I do not recall attending a single event or reviewing a single movement-related video file that did not integrate either a music performance or a conversation about its importance. During the course of data collection, it became apparent to me that the organizers carefully plan and execute every aspect of the moral movement, including music performances and song choices. At the "Equal Protection Under the Law" Moral Monday I attended in Raleigh for example, protesters sang "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around" as soon as we began marching toward the legislative building. Yara Allen was among the marchers, but from my vantage point, I could not tell whether she or someone else had started the song. As we repeated the first stanza, however, it became clear that Barber was leading us in song. I also noticed that the second time we sang the stanza, we sang noticeably louder–perhaps to convey our growing confidence and resolve as we approached the building. For a moment, Barber stopped singing to speak with Yara. Without missing a line and without Barber's prompting, fellow activist Reverend Kojo Nantambu took the lead. It seemed both important and strategic for him to keep the song and momentum moving despite distractions. The insight Yara (as cited in Empathy Educates, 2014) offered attendees at a Selma, AL moral movement teach-in helps us to understand why the music at these events is carefully planned. She explained,

> If you're out there on a Moral Monday, and you hear the music–not just coming from my sister [Eshé] and [me], but coming from the participants in the movement, from the people–you'll find it's a special kind of energy flowing throughout the movement. And we know that movements have to have music; it's the personality of the movement.

In conversation with me, Eshé confirmed her sister's assertion that movements need music, stating that "the music is not an accompaniment. It is an essential part of the whole strategic plan." As mentioned previously, Yara is the movement's music coordinator, and part of her responsibilities is to screen all artists who express interest in singing, because ultimately, the music and message have to align with the goals of the moral movement. "Sometimes, I sit and I watch Yara planning out these events," Eshé adds. "I sit and I watch her plan. Every song is planned to the tee, planned down to the minute."

Because moral movement events often include speaking, singing, prayers, and chants over a limited amount of time, every program participant operates within a specified time frame and therefore must make clear and deliberate connections to the movement's agenda. For the gospel singers, this is especially true regarding song selection, delivery, and intended purpose of the songs. I observed such an instance at the Voting Rights Ecumenical Service in Winston-Salem. Program participant, Reverend Julie Peoples, led the congregation in a litany for voting rights, which read in part:

> We will not be silent or denied the right to vote. For we have come too far by faith. We will remain faithful to the God of all the weary years and hopeful for a brighter tomorrow for all God's people.

Yara sang immediately following the reading of the litany. She introduced the spiritual "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around" by connecting the song's message to the litany as well as to the moral movement participants' unrelenting fight for voting rights. In just under one minute she rallied the attendees, expressing,

> Our litany just let us know that we're not turnin' around….We're right here at the door of victory, and we can't turn around. So in the spirit of Moral Monday, I'm gonna ask that you stand. We're gonna go back to one of our old favorites. And I want you to join with me and raise your voices just as high as they can go.

Yara began singing, and the audience clapped and sang along in unison. The duration of her performance, including her initial remarks, was approximately five minutes.

It is impossible to emphasize the strategy behind these performances enough, according to Claude:

> It is absolutely all intentional. I think if you don't go into it being intentional, then you miss it. It's not just singing to be singing. It's not just "I'm trying to get discovered" or anything like that. That's not it. You have to be intentional. We are there to do a job…. We are there with one cause and that is the cause of freedom, the fight of freedom.

Claude pointed out that the moral movement is not a platform for singers who seek exposure. Rather, it is a platform on which the singers become the voice of the people, musically conveying the same messages that have reverberated for the entire event. At the 2014 Moral March on Raleigh and HKonJ, for example, Reverend Barber's remarks included calling attention to a litany of proposed regressive legislative actions– such as Medicaid cuts, tax increases for the poor and middle class, tax cuts for the wealthy, re-segregation of schools, and funding cuts in public education–that he denounced as "mighty low" politics (Catchatoorian, 2014, para. 24). Barber (as cited in Catchatoorian, 2014) contended, "In policy and politics we face two choices. One is the low road to destruction and the other is the pathway to higher ground" (para. 25). Barber continued the higher ground motif for the duration of his impassioned remarks, rallying

the crowd in call-and-response fashion. When he left the podium, hundreds of folks–if not thousands–continued to chant, "Higher ground!" Within seconds, Claude, Eshé, and Yara stepped to the podium and burst into a rousing chorus of the gospel hymn "Higher Ground," excerpts of which Barber had referenced moments earlier. The trio became the voice of thousands, and in turn led thousands in a song that reiterated the message of the rally.

Song Selection

Because the music must align with the agenda of the moral movement, the singers carefully consider which songs to perform. Rodney, Eshé, and Claude have their own processes for selecting songs. For Rodney, it appears that the song selected itself. After he performed his message song "I Am Somebody" at the NC NAACP banquet, a few NAACP members who worked with the moral movement reached out to Barber about adding it to the Moral March on Raleigh and HKonJ's program. Subsequently, Yara contacted Rodney and coordinated the song's placement on the program.

Eshé, on the other hand, selects songs for the movement by staying attuned to issues that are at the forefront of the campaign and by communicating with Barber. She details her process:

> If there is a particular campaign that [Reverend Barber] wants vocals for, I will select a song that speaks to the heart of that particular issue, or as close as I can get to it.
>
> What I do is, once [Reverend Barber] calls me and he tells me where he's going to be and what the event is about, then I pretty much just kind of get quiet, and I think back on the songs that we have done in the movement, where we did them, and pretty much just think about the lyrics. I look at the lyrics a lot because even

> though it's a song that is familiar to the people, we don't just want a feel-good song, we want a song that's going to reiterate the message for the day.

Sometimes the lyrics require modification in order to reiterate the message, which is not uncommon for songs in a movement. During the HKonJ, for instance, Eshé performed "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," a popular song of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The traditional opening lines are,

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

To reinforce the theme of the moral movement campaign, however, she changed the opening lines to,

> *Forward together, not one step back*
> *Straight ahead, don't you get off track*
> *Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on*

These adjustments captured the message and mood Barber wanted, Eshé remembers. Still, there are other occasions for which Barber makes specific song requests.

Claude is acquainted with Barber's specific requests. He conceded that since becoming a singer with the movement, he has not actually selected his own songs. Rather, one of three people assigns them. He adds,

> [Song selection is] normally the responsibility of Eshé or probably Yara. Most often, it is definitely something that Dr. Barber will say, "I want you to make sure you sing this." No matter what other song [Yara] has [chosen], "make sure we include this" because he already knows kind of where he's going in his aim when he stands up to speak.

> He already knows his aim when he stands to speak, and so often he will communicate with Yara–because she's right there assisting him all the time, full-time.

Barber himself is not a singer. He is, however, the architect of the movement (Barber & Zelter, 2014) as well as its leader and primary orator. Because each movement event has a particular objective, an intended message, and an overarching theme, he is "adamant," according to Claude, that each element comes into alignment. Claude's account of his conversation with Barber about performing "My Soul Has Been Anchored in the Lord" at the Voting Rights Rally in Winston-Salem–where roughly 6,000 gatherers assembled on the first day of a federal trial (*NC NAACP v. McCrory*) opposing voter suppression tactics in NC–is one such example.

> [Reverend Barber] selected that piece several weeks [ahead of] that voting rally. He called me up and said, "What are you doing on that particular day?" I told him that I didn't have anything planned. He said, "Well, I want you to meet me in Winston-Salem, and I need you to sing 'My Soul Has Been Anchored.'" I said okay.
>
> I'm learning that when he says that, even if he doesn't offer a lot of details, I'm learning to just trust that and just do everything that I can to prepare to try and make myself in alignment with whatever needs to happen spiritually by sharing that song.

Claude's reference to "whatever needs to happen spiritually" might explain in part why Barber is intimately involved with song selection. As I stated earlier, Barber believes the musical message is essential to the impact of the spoken word message and refers to the Bible passage in which Elisha calls for a minstrel to play before he prophesies. The passage implies that "while the music went on [Elisha's] thoughts took

shape, and found vent in prayer, till at length he was prompted inwardly what to say" (Lumby, 1904, p. 27). It seems that, like Elisha, Barber relies on the music to help him gather his thoughts and prepare for the message he is to deliver. This idea is one he has imparted to the singers as well. Claude states, "He's a firm believer that the voices of a Levite, and the voice of a psalmist should always precede the seed of the word that he's going to release."

In the case of "My Soul Has Been Anchored in the Lord," though Barber was not on stage when Claude sang it, he was certain that the minstrel (Claude) had set the atmosphere for him to prophesy (deliver his keynote address) that day. Since Barber personally requested the song, he was quite familiar with its lyrical content. The first verse and chorus establish the song's overarching message:

> *Though the storms keep on raging in my life,*
> *and sometimes it's hard to tell the night from day,*
> *still that hope that lies within is reassured.*
> *As I keep my eyes upon the distant shore,*
> *I know He'll lead me safely to that*
> *blessed place He has prepared.*
>
> *But if the storms don't cease,*
> *and if the wind keeps on blowing,*
> *my soul has been anchored in the Lord*. (Miller, 1985/1988, track 2)

Following the rally, Barber, who was elated about the performance's spiritual impact, called Claude. Claude recalls,

> [Reverend Barber] said, "Cee." I said, "Yes sir." He said, "Man let me tell you something. I'm sitting here and I'm watching the playback, and I'm fighting the tears back, and I've got chill bumps. You are so anointed." I was like, "Well wow, I'm really humbled by that, Dr. Barber." He said, "When I stepped on the

> stage in Winston-Salem, immediately there was something that came over my body. It was a good thing, and I was like, 'What in the world is this that is just making me feel the way that I am feeling right now?' I know it was because of the anointing that you released on that stage before I spoke."

It seems likely that Reverend Barber was referring to a definition of anointing that is common among Pentecostal/charismatic denominations (Graves, 2005)–which Moon (1977) described as "the special presence of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of God's servant, which produces an inspiring awareness of the divine presence" (p. 27). Barber's remarks to Claude suggest that the anointing–the presence of the Holy Spirit–supernaturally empowered him for the preaching moment, enabled Claude to render a moving and effective performance of the gospel song, and gave hope and resolve to the gatherers.

Eshé alluded to this anointing also. As I discussed in the previous chapter, she mentioned this idea when describing her performance of the gospel hymn "Higher Ground" at Rocky Mount's NAACP banquet. She recounted that Barber was moved when "the Spirit and everything got to working together." She again alluded to the anointing when revealing that she receives songs in her sleep, through the Spirit. She, like Barber, is both aware and inspired by the Divine presence.

Claude agreed with Barber that the anointing flowed from himself and through the music he performed at the moral movement, and he believed that this component is essential to gospel music's impact on this movement. He reveals,

> I believe that it is the anointing flowing through our lives as we share things in our own assignment that brings real change. Most of the music that we share with the moral movement would be considered gospel music or spiritual [music], or

> something that has been founded on scripture or faith or one's love for their God; and it has helped them endure and get through and overcome. It is the same anointing that has helped for hundreds of years that we believe helps even today and helps now.

Both Claude and Barber rely on their understanding of the anointing to accomplish the aims of the movement. Accordingly, as Barber desired, when he stepped up to the podium that sweltering hot summer Monday evening at the Mass Moral Monday March for Voting Rights to deliver his urgent message, the atmosphere was charged as Barber sensed "an inspiring awareness of the divine presence" (Moon, 1977, p. 27). The crowd roared when Barber came into view on the stage. Frankly, I was impressed that after standing for more than an hour in 90-degree temperatures and marching 10 blocks in downtown Winston-Salem, the crowd was still able to muster the level of enthusiasm I witnessed. Barber himself had to be hot in his fuchsia clergy shirt, matching black vest and pants, and gold-trimmed red stole. Yet, he seemed unfazed by the heat. Now, I realize the intensity of the heat very likely paled in comparison to the intensity of the Divine presence he says he experienced as he stood on stage.

For the next several minutes, Barber delivered a fiery message on the federal court's need to overturn voter suppression laws that impose stricter registration requirements and are arguably discriminatory. The trial had begun that day in Winston-Salem, and during his message, Barber compared that day's march to the Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March of 1965, declaring over the city, "This is our Selma!" His style of delivery was the same as I described in chapter four: scholarly, riveting, and musical. At one point, he paid homage to voting rights martyrs of the 1960s–Medgar

Evers, Jimmie Lee Jackson, Viola Liuzzo, James Reeb, and others–and posited that the right to vote was "won by blood." As he gained momentum, he questioned the crowd,

> You wanna know why we've come to Winston-Salem? You wanna know why this is our Selma? We have come to re-commit and re-consecrate ourselves back the movement. We will not let what was won be taken away. America will be America. We will restore the dream. We will never give up the right to vote!

The crowd let out a thunderous roar of approval. Many either clapped or waved signs and banners. A few of the elderly who sat in chairs directly in front of the stage dabbed their faces. It was hard to tell whether they were wiping sweat or tears. Moments later, Barber explicitly summoned the crowd's participation, and the crowd ardently complied.

(Barber) Somebody tell your neighbor, say, "Neighbor"
(Audience) Neighbor

(Barber) "Every voting right"
(Audience) Every voting right

(Barber) "Came through the blood"
(Audience) Came through the blood

(Barber) "Every opportunity"
(Audience) Every opportunity

(Barber) "Came through the blood"
(Audience) Came through the blood

(Barber) "Every taste of freedom"
(Audience) Every taste of freedom

(Barber) "Came through the blood"
(Audience) Came through the blood

(Barber) "Every ounce of equality"
(Audience) Every ounce of equality

(Barber) "Came through the blood"
(Audience) Came through the blood

(Barber) Somebody shout, "Don't you mess…"
(Audience) Don't you mess…

(Barber) "…with the blood!"
(Audience) …with the blood!

Claude's performance of "My Soul Has Been Anchored in the Lord"–written in first person–called the audience members to draw upon the hope and tenacity within themselves. In tandem, Barber's intense sermon along with his and the audience's warning to legislators–"Don't you mess with the blood!"–called the crowd to a collective posture of hope and steadfastness in anticipation of a favorable outcome in the battle for equal voting rights.

The intentional message of steadfastness permeated the atmosphere the night before at the Voting Rights Ecumenical Service, as well. Though no theme was printed on the program bulletin, it became apparent to me about an hour into the service, as I sat in the second row of the Union Baptist Church sanctuary, that "war" was a developing motif. It was first introduced by the 40-plus voice Union Baptist Church Choir, who sang "War," an uptempo rhythmically driven gospel song. The musical declaration opened with,

I got joy in my soul
God is in control
I got Satan on my trail
But I'm singing all is well
He's attacking every day
But I'm watching while I pray
No matter the attack

I won't turn back
'Cause this means war (Jenkins, 2015, track 7)

Of the 1,200 people in attendance, about 150 immediately jumped to their feet clapping, singing, and rocking. A group of liturgical dancers stood in the left corner of the sanctuary; one of them waved a large flag that read: War Cry. While, from my vantage point, I viewed war as a *developing* motif, the organizers had in fact already conceptualized the theme as a strategic way to instill steadfastness in the movement participants. The presider called the entire audience to get involved in the moments following the song. He instructed, "High-five somebody and say, 'When they mess with my voting rights, this means war!'" Nearly everyone followed suit, including me.

Barber collaborated with Yara and the church's music director to coordinate the songs for the evening's service. The war theme was deliberate. In fact, according to Sheridan (2012), such themes and references are fairly common in social movements. Sheridan asserted,

> If you listen to social activists talk, you hear the language of battle–words and phrases that are often suggestive of military engagement (e.g., fighting for the cause, mobilizing resources, employing tactical strategies, neutralizing the opposition, aligning the troops). Social action is often grounded in righteous anger in response to some form of injustice; injustice that is often deeply and stubbornly rooted within systemic structures and maintained by dominant societal forces. (p. 194)

Barber was explicit about what the language of war meant in the context of the moral movement. He explained, "War means W.O.R.R. This week, we will have a 'week of righteous resistance.'" He then added, "If you don't like that [acronym], this is what war

means: 'warring against racism.'" Barber said he needed to be clear about the meaning; otherwise, media pundits might misinterpret and consequently misreport the moral movement's position on war. His comments brought to light another observation. Sometimes, songs are strategically selected for the purpose of communicating to people outside the movement as well as within it. An example of this was evident during an act of civil disobedience, which I discuss later in the chapter.

Before Barber delivered the homily, the Union Baptist Church Choir performed recording artist Patrick Lundy and the Ministers of Music's arrangement of "Even Me."

> *Lord, I hear of show'rs of blessing*
> *Thou art scatt'ring full and free,*
> *Show'rs the thirsty soul's refreshing;*
> *Let some drops now fall on me.*
>
> *Even me, even me,*
> *Let some drops now fall on me.* (Lundy, 2003, track 1)

As the choir's intricate harmonies filled the sanctuary, the hands of nearly a score of congregants were lifted worshipfully. Meanwhile, Barber sat on top of three stacked metal chairs behind the lectern, meditatively, with his eyes closed. When the choir reached its anthemic refrain, he opened his eyes and gazed past the ceiling into the heavens with uplifted hands. Shortly after he rose to preach, he petitioned in prayer, "As we stand, as we fight for justice, come Holy Spirit, come–even upon us." His prayer request, like his conversation with Claude about the anointing, strongly suggests that Barber depends on the Holy Spirit for preaching power, effectiveness, and perseverance in the pursuit of social justice. "Even Me" seemed to mirror the desires of Barber's heart.

Claude's narrative and my observations affirm that Barber always has a specific objective in mind when requesting certain musical selections. Notwithstanding, he does not always communicate his requests well in advance. In fact, sometimes the requests are quite spontaneous. Claude stated that while he, Eshé, and Yara keep a bank of song ideas, they remain flexible to Barber's impromptu requests. Sometimes, with a few hours' notice, he will tell the singers, "This is what I want to hear," says Claude. "Then of course," Claude adds, "it can just be spontaneous, in the moment, on the stage. He'll say something, maybe in an interview, speaking or whatever."

In summary, the intentionality of song selection ensures that the music aligns with the movement agenda. Gospel songs especially resonate with Barber and provide him with the spiritual, emotional, and mental preparation he needs to deliver sobering truths and urgent calls to action. The narratives also suggest that gospel music helps to link the moral movement to successful social movements of the past, particularly the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Several songs performed in the moral movement invoke the spirit and momentum of the civil rights movement in its heyday.

In addition to song selection, the singers also give careful thought to song structure. They must be able to convey a certain message and create a particular atmosphere within a strict time frame in order to make optimal impact. In the next section, I discuss the intentionality of song structure.

Song Structure

The gospel singers in the moral movement give a great deal of consideration to the musical and lyrical structure of the songs they perform. As discussed previously, one

primary objective for the gospel music performances is reinforcement of the movement's overall message as well as the message of specific campaigns within the movement. There are instances in which only part of the song thematically fits. In such cases, the performer might alter the lyrics, as Eshé did when she sang "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize." Sometimes, instead of altering the lyrics, the singer may choose to repeat a section of the song that best conveys the message of the moment. For example, during his performance of "My Soul Has Been Anchored in the Lord," Claude strategically chose to shorten the song by eliminating the vamp. "I didn't want to give [the audience] too much to try to hold on to," he offers. His decision was not based on time constraints, he says; rather, it was an effort to help the audience retain the message. This was a worthwhile consideration, especially given that there are no historical associations between the song and previous social movements and that the song was perhaps unfamiliar to many in attendance.

Because the people in attendance usually participate, singers must also think about how they intend to involve the audience. The singers must craft their songs in a way that makes it easy for audiences to interact and participate. Simply put, the majority of movement participants are not vocalists; therefore, the songs the singers invite them to sing must be singable. This includes making sure the lyrics are simple with memorable, easy-to-sing melodies. Eshé is mindful about these elements and has cautioned others who show interest in writing and performing songs for movements.

> If I were to say anything to anyone who's crafting a movement song, it would be the old adage, "Keep it simple." Keep it simple. You have thousands of people…

> How are you going to teach 80,000 people a song that has six verses? You can't do it.

Eshé's admonition further suggests that simplicity and length are critical components of creating and performing movement music that optimizes crowd engagement and participation. Singers teach many songs to the audience during the actual performance; therefore, it is necessary for singers to consider ways to involve them. Sometimes this means giving explicit instructions to the audience before singing or urging audience members to stomp on the floor or ground to mimic the sound of marching. Then, while the audience is interacting with the song leader, the song leader teaches the words to the song by speaking or singing them rhythmically and inviting the audience to sing along. If it is a call-and-response song, the singer might demonstrate the call as well as the expected response. At a Mecklenberg County Moral Monday, for example, Yara taught the attendees a new song in less than a minute and a half. She first asked them to stand. Then, as captured on video (Fusion Films, 2015c), she explained, "I'm gonna say, 'Somebody's hurting my brother, and it's gone on' you answer back, 'far too long.' I'll say, 'It's gone on,' you answer back, 'far too long.'" By this time, the attendees had figured out when to insert their response. It was a call-and-response song. When Yara finished teaching the words, she sang it to demonstrate the tune. Afterwards, she sang it again so the attendees could join in. She invited them to clap as they sang. Meanwhile, she added contextually relevant stanzas like, "Somebody's poisoning the water" and "Somebody's stealing my votes y'all." In less than 90 seconds, Yara had taught a song

and encouraged audience interaction by employing movement, simple lyrics, an easy melody, a call-and-response format, and hand-clapping.

When Rodney composed "I Am Somebody," he assigned a tempo suitable for marching. Additionally, he deliberately wrote the opening verse using first-person plural personal pronouns–"Every time they want us to stay quiet, that's when we gotta get a little louder"–to draw listeners' attention to shared experiences and the desired collective response. Eshé has both observed and employed a number of approaches for involving the audience, which she says might include "changing the lyrics of the song to fit the occasion but keeping the refrain the same [in order to] give people a jump-in point." She expounds on this strategy:

> Most of the songs that we sing … I would say there are about a good 12 to 15 songs that are what I would call staples in the movement. Those would be songs where you don't have to sing the whole song; [the audience just catches] the refrain, and they go with it, because that's basically what you want. You don't want to sing a song where they have to listen to three or four verses before they can get a piece of it.

As the singers' narratives reveal, the emphasis on song structure is intentional for the music in this movement. Since gospel music in particular is an art form that is unfamiliar to some in the moral movement (given the movement's cultural, racial, generational, and religious diversity), the singers must find ways to make their songs and performances engaging, inclusive, interactive, and relevant to the audience and the movement itself. They accomplish this by incorporating altered lyrics, repetition, simple arrangements, and spoken-word preludes or interludes that create space for audience involvement.

In addition to the considerations they give to song structure, the singers must also be deliberate about their delivery. In the next section, I explore how varied delivery styles impact the atmosphere of the moral movement.

Delivery

In this section I discuss elements of physical as well as vocal delivery in the singers' performances. Physical delivery includes elements such as posture, countenance, and gestures (Anonymous, 2012), while vocal delivery includes elements such as pitch, articulation, phrasing, and interpretation (Try, 2009). Physical and vocal delivery together impact how effectively the singers convey the meaning and mood of their musical conversations with the audience. The intended impact of the song dictates the singer's presentation of it.

One example of effective delivery was during an act of civil disobedience at the Voting Rights Moral Monday on Wednesday, which took place at the NC General Assembly on June 17, 2015. As Barber led a press conference outside the brass doors of the legislative chambers, he strategically scheduled the protest to extend beyond the legislative building's closing time so he and several others could exercise their right to civil disobedience. Lieutenant Martin Brock of the NC General Assembly Police Department issued several warnings for gatherers to leave. The majority of protesters complied, but Barber and nine others chose to exercise civil disobedience. Among those were Yara, who, as police began to arrest people for trespassing violations, fire code violations, and noise disturbance (Fusion Films, 2015d; Sbraccia, 2015; Waliga, 2015),

began blaring, “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around.” Given the steadfast stance of those who remained, there was no better soundtrack for the moment:

Ain’t gonna let nobody turn me around
Turn me around
Turn me around
Ain’t gonna let nobody turn me around
I’m gonna keep on walkin’, keep on talkin’
Marchin’ up the freedom way

Others joined in singing with Yara as she stood holding a sign to her chest that read: We Resist Voter Suppression. Her only movements were an occasional sway, a glance toward the officers as they moved about making arrests, and arched brows and rolled eyes as she emphasized, “Ain’t gonna *let* nobody turn me around.” Her vocal inflection matched, with both her volume and pitch increasing has she intoned, “... let noo-body.” She was making her point clear: absolutely no one in the building that day would intimidate them or make them back away from the cause for which they stood. Notably, even Lt. Brock refrained from confronting her early on. When he approached, it seemed he was planning to address her presence after hours, her loud and disruptive singing, or both. Yet, once his eyes met her gaze, he smiled and walked away without uttering a single word. Yara continued to sing, her rumbling alto heard easily over the rest of the people who sang with her.

About 45 seconds later, as arrests continued, Yara abruptly began belting the opening lines of “Something Inside So Strong,” an inspirational message song written by British songwriter Labi Siffre. The song made its way into the gospel genre when an aggregation of renowned gospel singers recorded it as a tribute to American civil rights

icon Rosa Parks. Yara's voice barreled well above the chaos in the lobby of the legislative building as she stood with a fixed gaze and sang, substituting "I" for the collective "we,"

The higher you build your barriers, the taller we'll become
The farther you take our rights away, the faster we will run
You can't deny me
You can't decide to turn your face away

The intentionality of her delivery seemed more apparent in this instance; for she stood apart from the small group of people she was with earlier and sang so loudly that no one could ignore her. Her actions signified defiance, unyielding attitude, and solidarity with those who were willing to accept arrest. The lieutenant returned to her this time to warn her that she faced arrest, but she never stopped singing and never made eye contact, despite their faces being just inches apart. Her next verse was perfectly timed, as he insisted that she leave or he would order her arrest:

The more you refuse to hear my voice, the louder I will sing
You're hiding behind those golden doors; your lies will come tumbling...

The original lines of the second verse are,

The more you refuse to hear my voice, the louder I will sing
You hide behind walls of Jericho, your lies will come tumbling...

Yara made the lyric adjustment to fit the moment; there are 14-foot-high brass doors that are gold in appearance at the entrance to the legislative chambers.

She continued to sing as he talked to her, never making eye contact with him, but instead belting and staring defiantly in the distance. Her refusal to comply resulted in her arrest and drew cheers and applause from the remaining onlookers. As the police handcuffed her and escorted her toward the elevator, her gaze remained fixed and her articulation even more precise throughout her resonant intonation of the chorus:

There's something inside so strong
I know that I can make it
Though you're doing me wrong, so wrong
You thought that my pride was gone
But oh no, there's something inside so strong
Oh oh oh oh oh something inside so strong

Arguably, Yara could not have depicted the moment better musically than through her song choices and manner of delivery. Her resolve persisted as she and the officers waited for the next available elevator. Unyielding to the perceived defeat of arrest, she abruptly burst into "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around" again. This time, her musical declaration was,

Ain't gonna let no jailhouse turn me around…

This time around, Yara's physical delivery was markedly different–it appeared victorious. She no longer stood firmly planted with a distant, determined gaze. Rather, she swayed from side to side and occasionally rocked forward as she musically emphasized her determination:

I'm gonna keep on walkin', keep on talkin'
Marchin' up the freedom way

Once she entered the elevator, she was out of view and earshot of the remaining onlookers, but the effects of her delivery remained. The intended messages of resolve and fortitude lingered in the atmosphere. Barber (as cited in Waliga, 2015) stated that the reason they wanted to stay at the legislative building was "because [the legislators are] trying to lock out North Carolinians from the voting booth" (para. 3). Yara's song selection coupled with her delivery reinforced the rally's intended messages for that afternoon: steadfastness, defiance, solidarity, and strength in adversity.

Sometimes the singers want to set a more uplifting, celebratory atmosphere. This was the case during the Moral Monday protest on May 20, 2013. It was the fourth consecutive week of protests at the legislative building in Raleigh, and Eshé and Yara were among the participating singers. One of their selections was "My Mind Is Made Up," a mid-tempo gospel hand-clapper recorded by the Clark Sisters in the mid-1970s. At the protest, Eshé sang the original lyrics, changing the last line from "going on with the Lord" to "walking on in love," thereby creating a more inclusive message for the diverse group of protesters represented:

My mind is made up
I'm on my way up
I'm gonna hold my head up
Walking on in love

There would be nothing somber about her delivery, for her purpose was to promote determination, courage, strength, and love among supporters who were possibly growing weary and less tolerant after four straight weeks of protests and arrests. In fact, Eshé was one of the arrestees the previous week, and her charge prohibited her from

going back on the property of the legislative building to protest. Undaunted, she stood across the street and delivered vocals that rang out over the gatherers both near and in the distance.

Yara joined her, and together, they led the protesters in song. Eshé's vocal presentation, which included physical gestures of hand-clapping, hip-slapping, and rhythmic swaying, enlivened the gatherers. Yara, who provided supporting vocals, conveyed jubilation through her beaming countenance. The mood–triumph over opposing circumstances–that was evident from the singers' delivery became the mood of the gatherers that day, even in the midst of the 57 arrests that occurred a short time later. Again, in this instance, the combined effects of physical and vocal delivery as well as relevant lyrical content acted on the gatherers in a way that enhanced the message and created the desired atmosphere.

Vocality

An additional strategic component of music performance in the moral movement is a singer's vocality. To be clear, one does not have to be a professional, trained singer to be part of the moral movement, but there are times when a specific kind of vocalist or vocal effect is necessary to enhance certain aspects of the movement. Eshé briefly described some of these instances, noting that her vocality is not necessarily suited for every movement campaign:

> There are certain [settings] where you want a really strong, strong voice, and I have that. There are other times when you want a sermonic type of voice. I may not be the one to deliver that. That may not be what [Reverend Barber desires]. He may not be hearing my voice [for that setting]; he might be hearing Yara's voice, although Yara's voice and my voice are very, very similar.

Eshé's assertion is that the appropriate placement of vocal stylings, textures, and techniques helps to create the desired atmosphere and mood within the context of each moral movement event.

She pointed out that she is a traditional gospel singer. Her vocality–which includes moans, blue notes, and Afro-melismas, among other stylistic elements–incorporates a particular "sound" or nostalgia associated with singers from other social movements, especially the civil rights movement of the 1960s. When Barber wants to create a moment that connects the history of struggle to the present-day fight for justice and equality, he requests the vocality of Eshé or her sister Yara. Perhaps it was prophetic that Eshé would be called "Little Mahalia" in her Rocky Mount community, because like Mahalia Jackson–who influenced Eshé and with whom Dr. King worked closely during the civil rights movement–she possesses a powerful and riveting alto vocal register. Eshé's masterful interpretation of mood and music is reminiscent of the glory days of the '60s movement and arouses hope for today's social justice proponents.

Yara too evokes a certain mood and atmosphere when she sings. More than once in the previous section, I not only described the timbre of Yara's vocal register, but I also pointed out the sheer volume she produced and her resonance in the large lobby outside the legislative chambers. Eshé contextualized why these vocal effects are necessary considerations by providing an example:

> If we are marching–let's say we're marching– [Yara] never puts all of the strong voices at one place. She might put strong voices at the beginning of the march, and then in the middle, and then in the back.

> [In May 2013], when we went into the legislative building, we understood that we were to be practicing civil disobedience on that day. The strategy was to make sure that [the organizers] pretty much knew how many people were going to be arrested. They pretty much knew about how long it was going to take them to arrest everyone. We wanted to make sure that those voices were distributed throughout the whole process.
>
> We knew that the ones that they were going to come for first were the ones that were the agitators–the "loud" agitators.

Eshé, who was near the front of the line singing, "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," was one of the first people the police arrested. As the arrests continued, Yara moved farther back in the crowd. Her voice not only projects but hovers, and she wanted to make sure that someone's strong voice would be on hand to lead songs of protest throughout the process.

Claude's vocality offers a contrast to that of Eshé and Yara. Twenty-plus years their junior, Claude grew up in a generation during which trends in gospel music were shifting heavily to more contemporary, jazz-infused sounds. Though influenced by the bluesy, sometimes-gritty traditional gospel music that reverberated through his household, he emerged with a notably crisp and jazzy tenor vocal register. Eshé described how Claude's vocality enhances the movement: "He just brings a different flavor. He brings a more contemporary flavor to the music, whereas my style ... is more '60s old time spiritual gospel and movement songs."

Because Claude incorporates contemporary gospel stylings into his vocals, he is able to bring a fresh sound that keeps the movement music from becoming monotonous and appeals to participants who relate to sounds, messages, and themes that he communicates through stylings akin to current-day music trends.

As I have shown through the comments of the singers and observations of their performances, the integration of gospel music is not an afterthought or a space-filler. It is a carefully crafted feature of the moral movement, and its singers, like Barber, give thoughtful attention to song selection, song structure, delivery, and vocality. Knowing this makes more apparent why movement organizers consider gospel music as essential to the movement's success. For example, I have illustrated how gospel music evokes "divine presence," which Barber feels he needs to lead the movement with energy and enthusiasm. Understanding gospel music's essentiality, the singers also structure and deliver their songs in a manner that reiterates simple messages of inspiration, boosts morale, and reinforces solidarity and collective participation.

Although the singers' deliberate and creative strategies transfer to other genres of movement music, gospel music–by one singer's account–unlike other genres, has the ability to create an awareness of as well as to invoke the presence of a higher power. This is especially meaningful for people of faith who would find the task of enduring the rigor of this movement without strength and guidance from a higher power insurmountable.

Each strategic element of song performance–song selection, song structure, delivery, and vocality–works in tandem to enhance the moral movement by reiterating its messages clearly, concisely, and convincingly. In the next section, I discuss outcomes of the strategic use of gospel music in the movement, particularly in creating a sense of collective identity among participants.

Collective Identity

The literature consistently points to the significance of music to social movements, particularly freedom songs, which often derive from gospel tunes (Eyerman & Jamison, 1998; Fenner, 2012; King, 2000; Reagon, 2006). Gospel music has the ability to unite listeners–whether religious or not–together (Walker, 1979). The moral movement uses gospel music strategically for this purpose.

When understanding the impact of song on collective identity, one must look into the annals of history, said Eshé. She explained:

> If you think about all of our ancestors coming over from different nations in Africa, different countries in Africa, different tribes that are all together in the hull of that ship–as was the culture, and still is, of our ancestors to use music to commemorate and to celebrate and to herald–music was just a center of life. The drums, the dance. People got married; they danced. People died; they danced and sang. All of that. Just imagining all of that energy in the hull of that boat, and they may not have been able to speak because of the language barrier, but for song.
>
> Once they got on the shores of America, the song is what stabilized and drew them together as one people. They may not have understood the words, but it transcends lyrics. It transcends because everybody's feeling the same pain. Everybody's feeling the same longing. Everybody's feeling the same spirit and apprehension.

Eshé's rationale supports what is recurrent in the literature regarding music, collective identity, and social movements: "music and other forms of cultural expression can articulate as well as fuse a group, offering a sense of group belonging and collectivity as well as strength in trying situations, such as confronting violent resistance and repressive authority" (Eyerman, 2002, p. 447).

Eshé posits, however, that despite the myriad of backgrounds the moral movement includes, a song still has the capacity to connect people around a common set of issues and to prompt a call to action. One lady at one of the movement events, she recalls, suffered from cancer and relied on oxygen. She confessed to Barber that she did not have any of the issues that were oppressive to some of the others who were there to protest. Nevertheless, she wanted to exercise her right to civil disobedience to show that she shared in their pain. "She didn't have any of these issues but she wanted to be there on the level of humanity," Eshé reflects. "Just for humanity's sake." In a letter the lady wrote to Barber shortly before entering hospice, she shared how the message and work of the movement inspired her participation. Eshé contends that music is one such key element of the movement, designed in part to allow everyone to share in the struggle of the other, whether directly affected or not. She asserts, "That's the significance of this song and movement thing. It's to make us one, and it has the ability to do that. It has always had the ability to do that."

Music provides a common language for expression. Through the use of gospel music, the moral movement fosters collective identity in a number of ways. First, the movement fosters identity through deliberate pronoun usage in the song lyrics. Singers perform the collective "we" songs–"We Shall Overcome" and "We Shall Not Be Moved"–regularly. Eshé has also sung the gospel hymn "We've Come This Far by Faith." These songs express–in a common language–shared struggles as well as the unity that lies within solidarity. The "I" songs are also meaningful to the collective identity of the moral movement. "I'm on My Way to Freedom Land" (adapted from "I'm on My

Way to Canaan Land"), "My Mind is Made Up," and "Woke Up This Morning with My Mind Stayed on Jesus" (with "freedom," "justice," and other subjects substituted for "Jesus" in the movement version) are all songs that, as Reagon (2006) described, "[give] you a chance to pour into the sound of your singing voice your individual personal commitment to be in the freedom struggle" (para. 5).

Call-and-response–a rich tradition in African American culture–is also a means by which the gospel singers that I spoke with foster collective identity. Werner (2006) asserted, "Both in its political contexts and its more strictly musical settings, call-and-response moves the emphasis from the individual to the group. For African American performance to work, the performer must receive a response" (p. 13). During the course of their performances, the gospel singers in this study integrate calls for a verbal, musical, or physical response from participants. Eshé described some of the ways this occurs during the moral movement:

> It may be knowing how to swing the mic back and forth to give folks a chance to participate. It might be getting to a certain part of the song, stopping the music, and doing that piece over and over and over again. It might be something just as simple as saying [to the crowd], "What you say?"

"Solidarity," written by Eshé, is a song she often uses to invigorate the crowd. The title itself explicitly promotes unity, but other elements of the song, especially its call-and-response structure, rally the collective. She explained,

> "Solidarity" is one of those songs that really gets people going. So when we're on the stage, we go, "Solidarity!" We point to them and they say, "Solidarity!" And we'll say, "Solidarity!" and they'll say, "Solidarity!" By that time, they've pretty

> much caught the idea of the song, and so the key to it is to always have a part that they can do, so that they can interact with the song and be a part of it.

Rodney's performance at the NC NAACP state banquet was also notable for the audience's response. "I had young folks singing it and throwing their hands up and dancing," he remembers. He believes the response was indicative of their agreement with the chorus's affirmation,

> *I, oh I, world I, I am somebody.*

When a singer issues a call and the crowd's response follows, especially in a social movement, the singer hopes that the crowd is voicing support and agreement with the message, rather than merely interacting with the singer and the song. For example, when Yara sings, "Somebody's hurting my brother, and it's gone on," and movement participants respond with "far too long, and we won't be silent anymore," she wants the movement participants to turn their collective response into action by speaking out against injustice in their communities. In fact, Yara (as cited in Temple Emanuel, 2016) once told an assembly of participants, "We've been just a little too quiet, and it's gone on far too long." In a way, this kind of collective performance is like getting dressed for battle and then calling the enemy to come to the battleground and face off. As Spencer (1990) put it, it is like "audaciously 'talking back' to the establishment" (p. 91). Another example is when Eshé performed the Angelic Gospel Singers-popularized version of "I Shall Not Be Moved" at a mass meeting in Selma, AL. Backed by Yara, she sang,

I will not, I shall not
I shall not be moved
I will not, I shall not
I shall not be moved
I'm gonna watch
I'm gonna work
I'm gonna pray every day
And I will not–I shall not–be moved

Looking into the crowd, she called out, "If you know it, sing along." Several people stood up and joined in from the pews. That was the immediate call and response. Eshe's more important call, however, was for the audience to take in the song's message and then respond by personally committing to persist in advocating for equality.

A third way the gospel singers cultivate collective identity through their performances is by making their song lyrics specific to the moment and the collective sentiments of the audience. As briefly mentioned, when Eshé sings the gospel tune "Woke Up This Morning with My Mind Stayed on Jesus," she makes lyrical adjustments based on the cause around which people have gathered. To that end, she may replace "Jesus" with "freedom," "justice," "health care," or "voting." During Claude's performance of "We Shall Overcome" with Eshé and Yara at 2014's Moral March on Raleigh, he added the stanza, "we are not afraid," at Yara's impromptu urging. The modifications made to the lyrical content of the songs serve a two-fold purpose: to reinforce the movement agenda and to bespeak the collective interest of the audience.

In view of the diversity of participants in the moral movement, it is probable that gospel music in the movement carries different meanings depending on one's religious, cultural, and musical background and/or interests. Burnim (1988) detailed the functional

dimensions of gospel music performance, and I describe them here, within the context of the moral movement. Among the groups of participants in the moral movement are African American Christians for whom gospel music carries both religious and cultural significance. The music, message, and historical importance all resonate deeply with this group of participants, which includes the singers in this study as well as Barber and Yara Allen. Their non-African American Christian counterparts are far less likely to have cultural connections to gospel music, but may identify with the religious messages contained therein.

Conversely, African Americans who are not Christians may dismiss some of gospel music's references to Christian themes such as Jesus or the cross, but may still appreciate the art form and its roots in the African American music tradition. Non-African Americans who are not of the Christian faith may have even less of a connection to gospel music, and, though disconnected from it culturally and religiously, may enjoy the music itself, especially the ways it helps them feel connected to those around them. Regardless of music preference or faith tradition, Eshé identified the common ground for the religious, nonreligious, and irreligious. She elaborated,

> As Reverend Barber always says, we have people of faith, [and] we have people who are not of faith; but actually, what brings us together is a moral compulsion. Even those who claim Atheism have said, "Okay, I'm not offended by your reference to God, because *if* I believed in God, it would be a God of justice. And *if* I believed in God, it would be a God of mercy and a God who would want people to come together–like we're coming together for the betterment of human kind. So using that context, we don't have a problem with your reference to God." So they will come together and they will sing those songs, and it doesn't faze them ... [because] the morality of the movement is what it's all about when you take everything else out.

Several social movement scholars posit that collective identity is necessary for movement mobilization, as well as conveying a strong message of solidarity to outsiders (Jasper & McGarry, 2015). The gospel singers in the moral movement do both by delivering music that arouses collective consciousness and calls attention to the social injustices that society must address. Additionally, the singers offer their gospel music as a source of hope in the midst of bleak conditions. In the next section, I explore this theme through the singers' narratives.

Gospel Music as Hope

When revered gospel singer Mahalia Jackson defended her allegiance to a career in gospel music performance over an arguably more lucrative career in blues, she contended, "Blues are the songs of despair, but gospel songs are the songs of hope. When you sing them you are delivered of your burden. You have a feeling that here is a cure for what's wrong" (as cited in Levine, 2007, p. 174).

Arguably, no social movement can be expected to gain traction without a sense of hope instilled in its participants, because at the fundamental level, the aim of a social movement is change. According to Goodwin and Jasper (2015), among the several hopes that movement leaders and protesters maintain are hope to change their opponents' behavior, hope to change unjust legislation and policies, hope for tolerance from law officials during protests, hope for aroused awareness from the public, and hope for "personal transformations and continued fervor for the cause" (p. 214) from the participants themselves.

In the moral movement, the singers use their gospel music to instill hope for positive change–affordable health care, quality education, equal voting rights, environmental justice, and other issues that are part of the "14 Point People's Agenda for North Carolina" (n.d.). "Higher Ground" is one hymn that Eshé and Yara perform whenever there is a need to reiterate a feeling of hope during the movement. By way of the hymn, the singers transmit the political message that, as one author puts it, "gaining higher ground demands a way of thinking and acting that is hopeful but grounded" (Kitch, 2000, p. ix). The theme of remaining hopeful but grounded also runs through the gospel ballad "My Soul Has Been Anchored in the Lord." Claude recognizes the song's political message but finds particular significance in its spiritual message: the hope that is necessary to endure the fight is the result of a firm grounding in a power greater than oneself.

> I'm anchored because I've been positioned on a solid rock, and that solid rock far exceeds any system. It far exceeds any political system [and] any level of education.
>
> [It] is the solid rock, the everlasting, [the] Alpha and Omega, Jesus Christ.

As a gospel singer, Claude identifies the greater power as Jesus Christ. Many in the crowd that day at the Mass Moral Monday March for Voting Rights in Winston-Salem received Claude's message of hope. I remember standing there that afternoon in the stifling heat, about 30 feet to the right of the stage. As his vocals rang through the speakers with clarity and conviction, I conversed with the middle-aged African American lady who stood to my left, and she shared why such a message so deeply resonated with

her. "It helps us get through the struggle," she declared. "It gives us hope in the struggle. A song might talk about the struggle, but then it talks about the hope." Indeed, the song's lyrics had initially depicted personal struggles, but it ended with the resolve to hope and rely on a power that is greater than oneself. Still, Claude understands that there are non-Christians or even the nonreligious altogether who will apply their own meanings to the song and will also likely apply other names to their own personal sources of hope.

"Woke Up This Morning with My Mind Stayed on Freedom," like several other freedom songs modeled after their gospel equivalents, declares a message of hope for the moral movement. These songs are perhaps as impactful today as when King (2000) spoke of them decades ago, stating,

> We sing the freedom songs today for the same reason the slaves sang them, because we too are in bondage and the songs add hope to our determination that "We shall overcome, Black and white together, We shall overcome someday." (p. 48)

Allen (as cited in Empathy Educates, 2014) supports the idea that the moral movement offers its participants renewal through hope. She elaborated:

> When we come together, and after (pause)–do you know it takes energy to fight? And so when your energy is depleted, and you come back together and you're singing together and you're chanting together, it gives you that renewal of hope.

Allen's suggestion is that music recharges the moral movement's participants. It helps them collectively to refocus on the expectation of and desire for victory, and it reminds them that the Moral Mondays, rallies, marches, acts of civil disobedience, and mass demonstrations are not in vain. Gospel songs in this setting are particularly

inspiring, because hope is in fact a central message of both gospel music (Dyer, 2002) and the moral movement.

Gospel Music as Strength

Along with the gospel singers' ability to arouse hope through gospel music, I also find that they use it to help participants–including themselves–to summon strength to continue on with the moral movement. Gospel music served a similar purpose during the civil rights movement of the 1960s. An author for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Museum (2015) wrote,

> With performers like [Mahalia] Jackson leading the charge, gospel became central to strengthening the civil rights movement. The lyrics often delivered double meanings and reaffirmed the importance of faith, while the music itself leveraged the energy of call-and-response, projected not only physical but also psychological strength, and encouraged solidarity. (para. 5)

This statement raises an important point about gospel music as a source of strength in that it brings strength to both the mind and the body. Eshé spoke specifically and personally about how she uses gospel music as a response to the toll of the movement. She detailed:

> In this whole civil rights movement piece, it can get a little bit tiring at times. It could be discouraging at times, and sometimes I sit at the house–and that's why I don't really look at news a lot. But when I look at the news and I see how it seems–and I want to be very clear when I say "seems"–that what we're doing is not working, that it's had no positive impact, and that "they're" winning, it can bring the spirit down. Then, a song will come into mind, and it starts to stir the soul, and it starts to stir the tenacity that's in all of us. Then, I get encouraged again.
>
> Sometimes, I have to encourage myself through a song. When I sing, "Hold on just a little while longer, everything is going to be all right," I'm talking to myself.

> A lot of times when I'm singing it to the crowd, I'm really talking to myself because it can be discouraging. Then, whenever it makes the connection–I don't know how it happens, but however it happens–I can feel it, and it makes that connection and snatches me out of that mindset into another mindset. Then, at that moment, everything really is all right. It really is all right. Then, I could go on and fight some more.

When Eshé speaks of gospel music's role in strengthening those involved in the movement, she does so with firsthand insight. Here, we acquire a glimpse into the weariness that she encounters, even as she engages in the uplift of others. The song she offers them is the same one she offers herself. It is a traditional spiritual, through which she exhorts,

> *Hold on just a little while longer;*
> *hold on just a little while longer.*
> *Hold on just a little while longer,*
> *and everything will be all right.*

The next stanza invites us to "pray on just a little while longer," and the third to "fight on just a little while longer."

Encouragement and strength for the struggle are also core messages of Rodney's composition "I Am Somebody." He claims "It's [a] song of motivation. Keep grinding, keep pushing, don't stop." In the bridge, he delivers the lines that give him strength and offer it for those to whom he sings:

> *We can't afford to turn around;*
> *We've come too far.*
> *We can't afford to lose our ground,*
> *Can't give up now.*

These narratives are consistent with researchers who cited gospel music as a strengthening agent in previous social movements, especially the civil rights movement (see Fenner, 2012; Horsfall, Meij, & Probstfield, 2015). Again, through the voices of the singers, we see that the significance of gospel music to this movement is its use deliberately and strategically to unite, strengthen, and build hope. Notwithstanding, gospel music is also an educative tool both within and beyond the moral movement. The singers recognize that there are lessons within the songs, some of which I describe in the next section.

Gospel Music as Education

Inasmuch as the intentionality of gospel music in the moral movement provides the singers opportunities to knit people together, offer strength, and kindle hope, the music also works as an educative device. In some instances, singers use it to depict societal ills and to echo the sentiments of the oppressed. In others, the songs and lyrics go as far as capturing and recording moments and events that might otherwise get lost, disregarded, or deleted with the passage of time. One such example is "The Ballad of Harry Moore," also called "Freedom Never Dies." Although the ballad is not a gospel song, both Eshé and Claude have sung it during the moral movement, particularly because the song's subject was an aggressive proponent of voter rights. Harry Moore and his wife Harriette, both teachers and civil rights activists, died when their home was bombed Christmas of 1951. Though one of the earlier and lesser known martyrs for civil rights in America, he might not have a place in history without the 1952 poem written by

Langston Hughes, "The Ballad of Harry T. Moore," which an African American a cappella group, Sweet Honey in the Rock, later set to song.

In this regard, the music of the moral movement not only unites and fortifies, but also educates its listeners about significant people and events in our nation's history. At the same time, Eshé explained, the listeners still have a chance to identify with and participate in the song's present-day message. She elaborated:

> The refrain is when everyone else comes in because now they've heard this story of how this man gave his life and he was fighting for the same things as we're fighting [for] now. It says,
>
> *It seems I hear Harry Moore; from the earth his voice still cries:*
> *No bomb can kill the dreams I hold, for freedom never dies.*

Another example more directly linked to gospel is "We Shall Overcome." Because singers sing the song so frequently, it would be easy to sing the words mindlessly, overlooking the song's historical context and accompanying lessons. While "We Shall Overcome" does not contain a storyline, Claude contended that its place in American history is a lesson in itself. He offered:

> I think the more that you learn about the fight, the movement, and so many things historically … [if you] could ever put yourself in the midst of that–in the midst of bombings and dog attacks and water hoses and fires and being slapped and [spat on]–and still be able to stand in the face of adversity and offer a message of hope to say "we shall overcome," [that's] really powerful.

Using Claude's assessment, if we evaluate "We Shall Overcome"–and other popular gospel songs performed throughout the most tumultuous periods of social unrest–considering not merely the lyrical content, but also the oppressive social conditions under

which they became "staples" of the civil rights era, we acquire important lessons that we can only gain through an intimate, even perhaps vicarious, connection to the music and its historical context.

Another form of knowledge production prevalent in the moral movement occurs through popular education. Popular education, "involve[s] people in processes of critical analysis so that they can act collectively to address inequalities and injustices" (Foley, 1998, p. 140). Beyond the most visible aspects of the moral movement, Eshé participates in movement workshops, sometimes called teach-ins. Since Yara is the cultural arts coordinator for the movement, she is often the facilitator. Besides North Carolina, some of the teach-ins take place in New York, Alabama, Wisconsin, and other locales where similar movements are mobilizing. During the workshops, participants learn the history of music in social movements as well as how to make original musical contributions. These experiences, said Eshé, give people "a chance to have that input and make their imprint in the movement by bringing on songs."

The *Bob Hale Youth College for Social Justice Participants' Handbook* (Bob Hale Youth College for Social Justice, 1995) outlined the learning process in popular education:

> In popular education, the learning process starts with identifying and describing everyone's own personal experience, and that knowledge is built upon through various activities done in groups. After the activity, a debriefing process allows us to analyse our situation together; seeing links between our own experience and historical and global processes in order to get the "big picture". Through the generation of this new knowledge, we're able to reflect more profoundly about ourselves and how we fit into the world. This new understanding of society is a preparation to actively work towards social change. In fact, in popular education,

> the education process isn't considered to be complete without action on what is learned; whether it be on a personal or political level. (p. 4)

A video excerpt of a moral movement teach-in (Fusion Films, 2015b) depicts Yara engaged in this process with a small audience of attendees. After giving attendees a brief overview of the role of music in the moral movement and presenting examples, she divided them into two groups and directed them to come up with words describing issues pertinent to the movement, from which they would compose a song. The activity required the group members to draw on their experiences and knowledge of the movement to come up with words, debrief by collectively identifying patterns and themes among the words, and then compose and perform a song that the moral movement could use. Through this approach, the attendees learned how to activate their prior knowledge and experiences to create music collectively as a means of empowerment and social change. Eshé confirmed that although some songs spontaneously "spring up out of the crowd" during the rallies, others emerge from movement teach-ins and workshops in the hopes that they can be added to the repertoire of the moral movement.

The presence of popular education as a learning process in the moral movement is consistent with Costanza-Chock's (2014) claim that popular education has played roles in major U.S. social movements. The moral movement is no exception. As it relates specifically to the music component of the movement, my findings suggest that it is not the task of the singers alone to maintain the momentum of the movement through song. Rather, all participants have opportunities to share the responsibility for their learning and collective empowerment. In a learning context that is rich with diversity, the music

birthed during the workshops and teach-ins is likely to be as diverse–across culture and genre–as the people who come together to compose them. Moreover, it provides a setting for the creation and performance of gospel songs written specifically with the moral movement in mind.

We can gain two insights from music's educative role in the moral movement. The first is that songs can be used to record as well as illuminate historical movements. As time passes, the likelihood increases that historical moments will become obscure, vague, or altogether lost. The singers in this movement deliver songs that provide a retrospective of Americans' plights from slavery through the earliest days of the civil rights struggle to the present day. From the data, we learn that they perceive gospel songs to be as much pedagogy as art form, which solidifies the songs' place in American history itself, as well as in the history of NC's moral movement.

The second insight is that the songs can teach lessons through both lyric content and historical context. From this, we learn why it is important for every song to fit the agenda of the moral movement: when a song aligns either lyrically or contextually, participants can more easily make personal connections between past and present contexts based on their prior knowledge and experiences. From this, we also learn the importance of movement teach-ins, workshops, and opportunities for participants to foreground their knowledge in the creation of new songs for the moral movement: such experiences and opportunities foster shared meaning-making, collective understanding, and collective identity, which contribute to movement mobilization.

Summary

In this chapter, I explored the roles that gospel music plays in the moral movement. Specifically, I discussed intentionality, collective identity, and gospel music as hope, strength, and education. I argue, drawing on data from interviews, observations, and document/media analyses, that intentionality is absolutely essential to the success of the moral movement. From a music standpoint, the singers must attend thoughtfully and carefully to every detail–song selection, song structure, and delivery strategy. The singer's vocality also influences which singer may sing during certain parts of a movement event or activity.

The findings also reveal that despite the movement's cultural, religious, and generational diversity, movement participants relate to and are united by universal messages of hope, strength, human rights, and unity–themes that run through several gospel songs in the movement. Finally, beyond the emotional and psychological effects of gospel music, it can educate. Through the moral movement, opportunities also exist for the composition of new gospel songs directly pertinent to the moral movement.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of my study was to learn from gospel singers how they make meaning of their roles in, and contributions to, the Forward Together Moral Movement. I explored their involvement, largely through their narratives, in order to gain firsthand insight into their experiences and understandings. I was also interested in whether two primary characteristics of social movements, as identified by della Porta and Diani (1999), would emerge as themes in my analysis: *shared beliefs and solidarity* and *collective action.* In my inquiry into the role of gospel music in the moral movement, I drew on social movement theory, because of the ways in which this theory illustrates how the formation of belief systems and shared goals among movement participants bolsters the collective action that is required to mobilize. I also interrogated relationships between popular education and the moral movement by analyzing the impact of gospel music on knowledge production, the singers' perceptions of their own performances as educative devices, and the organizers' strategic efforts to integrate popular education into the movement.

Overview of Problem

As I described in chapter two, the moral movement, similar to some of the American social movements that came before it, incorporates various genres of music

with both direct and indirect political and socially conscious themes. Gospel music is one such genre. Gospel music is important to the moral movement as it was to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Several researchers have documented the role of music in the civil rights movement (Castellini, 2013; Dreier & Flacks, 2014; Smith, 2013). Still, scholars such as Castellini (2013) and Darden (as cited in Smith, 2013) are concerned that there has not been much scholarship on gospel's significance to social movements. My review of the literature was consistent with their assertions. Notably, what appeared uncommon in the literature were first-person accounts of singers who performed gospel music in social movements such as the civil rights movement and singers who now perform it in the moral movement, which is steadily gaining national prominence. The recollections and experiences of the singers, their gospel performances, and their contributions to the movements previously had been told primarily through the narratives of historians, clergy, news commentators, and other witnesses to the movement. My argument is that unless the moral movement's gospel singers are given the space to discuss their roles and contributions, they, along with their music, are at risk of being overlooked in the course of time. Therefore, in this study, I provided space for the moral movement's gospel singers to explain, in their own words, the significance of gospel to the moral movement and the meanings they apply to their roles and contributions. I also observed events in the movement, both personally and through media representations and documents, in order to acquire a fuller picture of the role of these singers in the movement.

Review of Methodology

This inquiry was a basic interpretive qualitative study, for which I used both deductive and inductive forms of analysis and data collected through interviews, observations, and document/media analyses to address two research questions:

1. What role does gospel music play in the Forward Together Moral Movement?
2. Who are the singers who participate in the movement, and how do they describe their roles and contributions to the movement?

Over the next several pages, I summarize and discuss the conclusions from my research.

Summary and Discussion of the Findings

When I began my study, I was concerned with whether shared *beliefs and solidarity* and *collective action*–two of the four characteristics of social movements outlined by della Porta and Diani (1999)–would emerge as themes or rationales for the singers' participation in the moral movement. My findings suggest that *shared beliefs and solidarity* did emerge through the singers' narratives about building collective identity. The singers discussed how they intend, through their performances, to bring people together around a common cause. They also described the specific strategies and techniques they intentionally employ to do so, which I explored in detail in chapter five. Not only do the singers' roles include rallying the participants around shared beliefs, but the singers also acknowledge that they are involved with the moral movement because they too support the movement's agenda. They are not merely performers for the movement. *Collective action* also emerged as a rationale for the singers' participation; however, they recognized that they must build a collective identity among participants

before collective action for change can occur. Like any social movement, the moral movement emphasizes action for social change. The singers use gospel music intentionally and strategically to unite individuals around shared beliefs, to arouse hope, to strengthen, and to educate movement participants as they collectively rally for change.

I was also interested in whether there was a deliberate effort on the part of movement leaders to incorporate popular education into the movement. I found that both Eshé and Yara participate in moral movement workshops, also called teach-ins. Using principles emphasized by Bob Hale Youth College (1995), Foley (1998), Hurst (2002), and others, Yara–the primary facilitator–teaches attendees the significance of music in the movement as well as how to write songs based on the movement's agenda.

In the next section, I specifically address the first research question: What role does gospel music play in the Forward Together Moral Movement? In doing so, I summarize the five themes that emerged from the data: intentionality, collective identity, music as hope, music as strength, and music as education.

Research Question One: What Role Does Gospel Music Play in the Forward Together Moral Movement?

Theme One: Intentionality

In chapter five, I explored the role gospel music plays in the moral movement. Findings from the interviews, observations, and document/media analyses revealed several insights, one of which is that gospel music is deliberately implemented in the moral movement to reinforce concise and convincing messages of perseverance, solidarity, hope, strength, and human rights. The music performances are not merely

add-ons or fillers in a string of existing protest activities. The moral movement's organizers and singers employ specific strategies in song selection, song structure, delivery, and vocality to emphasize these messages. I found that although the singers occasionally select their own performance material, Reverend Barber, the primary leader of the moral movement, is integral in selecting and requesting songs that align with the movement agenda and that provide him the personal spiritual, emotional, and mental preparation to execute his responsibilities as its chief spokesperson. This finding is in harmony with authors such as Kot (2014), Marovich (2015), and Rutherford (2015), who noted that Dr. King–leader of the civil rights movement–requested specific songs of the singers who performed for that movement. Similar to King, Barber is not a singer, but a preacher whose speeches carry a musicality embedded in the African American preaching tradition, and who selects songs to support the messages he delivers in his orations.

My findings also suggest that an awareness and inspiration of the Divine presence of the Holy Spirit are perceived influences on song selection and performance for Barber as well as Claude and Eshé. Additionally, the singers purposely invoke the spirit and energy of successful social movements of the past by incorporating some of the songs of those movements into the current moral movement. This strategy is consistent with the research of Stewart et al. (2012) who asserted that in order to gain legitimacy, some social movements identify themselves with previous successful movements by employing alternate versions of famous songs used in the prior movements.

The singers also deliberately seek ways to structure songs and create song performances that optimize participation. The singers described a variety of techniques, such as changing the lyrics for relevance, inclusivity, and ease of singing; repeating certain sections of a song to reinforce its central message; shortening a song so participants can learn it quickly and sing along; and interjecting spoken-word preludes or interludes to invite audience interaction. My findings align with Eyerman and Jamison (1998), who reported that singers and songwriters in previous social movements strategically used similar techniques to encourage collective participation. The findings also build on Eyerman's (2002) claim that,

> Songs as collective performance become texts, as words are linked to ideology and present experience to the past and to the future. Songs are usually introduced with short, highly ideological statements and ended with a series of collective gestures, a raised and pointed right arm, and the shouting of slogans. This ritualized performance/text links the individual to a symbolic past, as the experience links the individual to a movement, a movement with a history, its own story, its own heroes and habitus. (p. 450)

This intentional strategy in song structure and performance not only serves to encourage collective participation, but, as Eyerman suggested, it aims to create a collective identity. I discuss collective identity as an emergent theme in a later subsection.

In addition to attending to song selection and song structure, I found that the singers intentionally use specific delivery strategies. The singers communicate not only through their vocal renderings, but also through their countenance, physical gestures, and stance. They carefully orchestrate each of these elements of delivery to reinforce an

intended message and to arouse certain emotions among participants. As Bunch (1995) posited,

> Public performance can be a manner of communication that is highly specialised with its own techniques for obtaining effects by voice and/or gesture. However, personal motivation and that derived from the text, and the music (in the case of singing), in combination with the performer's skills, personality and ability to create empathy will determine the success of communication at artistic, political or pedagogic levels. (p. 7)

The actions Yara demonstrated during her act of civil disobedience through her contextually relevant songs, anchored stance, determined gaze, and vocal inflections created an atmosphere of solidarity, defiance, and strength among the movement participants, and thus accomplished the intended objective of her music performance.

Finally, through Eshé's detailed account, I found that the placement of a singer based on his or her vocal style, timbre, and technique is a strategy Barber and Yara employ to enhance various aspects of the movement. As Eshé described in chapter five, singers with strong voices are strategically positioned during marches and acts of civil disobedience to ensure continuity in song, intensity, and resonance. Additionally, Eshé and Yara's voices are well suited for performances of hymns and spirituals, whereas Claude's voice lends itself to contemporary stylings. Accordingly, Claude's vocality and performance are often used to enliven the frequently sung traditional songs of the movement.

Theme Two: Collective Identity

The findings of my study consistently point to the importance of gospel music in building collective identity. Eshé asserts that both historically and presently, music holds the capacity to unite people around a common cause and to elicit a call to action. Her assertions align with those of researchers such as Eyerman (2002), Eyerman and Jamison (1998), Walker (1979) and others whom I cited in chapter one. The singers in this study incorporate the collective "we," call-and-response techniques, and lyrics that express collective sentiments of the participants into their gospel music performances as a means of fostering collective identity.

Notably, my findings also suggest that gospel music has the ability to reach both across and beyond faith traditions to connect people around shared beliefs. Some participants engage with gospel music through its religious themes. Others engage with gospel music through its cultural significance. Still, others find the core message in gospel music to be about morality. This finding addressed my grappling with how gospel music seems to resonate with so many among a broadly diverse group of movement participants.

Theme Three: Gospel Music as Hope

Arguably, if a movement is to gain and retain momentum, movement leaders and protesters must maintain hope for social change (Goodwin & Jasper, 2015). Findings from the interviews, observations, and document/media analyses suggest that gospel music helps participants set their sights on a transformative outcome to the collective struggle. The findings echo Miller (as cited in Fenner, 2012), who described music's

impact on prior civil rights movements. He stated, "The songs that sustained people initially were Negro spirituals and gospel music–religious songs that talked about salvation, hope, redemption and freedom" (para. 9). In particular, some gospel music lyrics like "My Soul Has Been Anchored in the Lord," which Claude sang for the Mass Moral Monday March and Rally for Voting Rights, depict the pessimism of the present and the optimism of the future all in one verse. Heilbut (1997) proposed, "Gospel is simply the only music sung by people in terrible conditions *about* those conditions, in an attempt to get out of them" (p. 297). In the moral movement, gospel music arouses hope for positive change.

Theme Four: Gospel Music as Strength

In tandem with inspiring hope, gospel music is a source of strength for the participants. The singers' narratives are consistent with researchers who described gospel music as a source of strength in prior movements (Fenner, 2012; Horsfall, Meij, & Probstfield, 2015). Particularly notable is how Eshé described gospel music as a source of personal strength in her own bouts of weariness and discouragement during the moral movement. Her narrative echoes literature on Dr. King, who also relied on the strengthening power of gospel and sometimes called Mahalia for her to sing to him over the phone (Norris, 2013). As Jones (as cited in Norris, 2013), King's attorney and adviser, recounted,

> I guess you would put it now as "telephone gospel therapy," and [King] would speak to Mahalia Jackson and he would say, "Mahalia, please sing to me. I'm having a rough day today." And she would sing one or more of his favorite songs, and...he would close his eyes listening to her. In some cases, tears would

> come down his face and then he would say, "Mahalia, you are giving me the Lord's voice this morning." (para. 11)

The singers' narratives, which are in harmony with several researchers and an adviser for King, appear to solidify the function of gospel music as a fount of strength for participants within the moral movement.

Theme Five: Gospel Music as Education

Gospel music also functions as an educative device in the moral movement. The findings from the data suggest that gospel music is an art form that educates listeners about systems of oppression, privilege, power, and injustice. Gospel's lyrics also sometimes describe social circumstances and discontent. Additionally, the findings suggest that the singers use their music to document as well as call attention to historical movements. Songs that chronicle or allude to pivotal moments in American history keep those moments from becoming hidden or forgotten as time passes. For instance, Claude's evaluation of "We Shall Overcome" as an American history lesson echoes Bobetsky (2015), who argued the importance of learning the "rich and complex histories" (p. 112) of songs like "We Shall Overcome." He contended,

> Learning their stories enriches our knowledge of U.S. history and enhances understanding of the path African Americans have taken to their current place in society. As they did in the 1960s, the songs still have the power to reinforce commonalities among Americans of different backgrounds. (p. 112)

In one of her interviews, Eshé revealed that she participates in teach-ins, movement workshops that allow attendees to learn about the role of music in social

movements and to compose their own songs for possible inclusion in the moral movement song roster. In the workshops, participants share meaning-making, collective understanding, and collective identity, which contribute to collective action. Their process derives from principles of popular education. As Hurst (2002) explained,

> The role of the popular educator is to bring people together, to facilitate the process until people can do it themselves; to articulate and enable the basic principles, especially by embodying them; to raise timely and critical questions; and to point people to resources when it is appropriate and when they are requested. (p. 13)

Hurst's description of the popular educator's role seems to confirm my finding that Yara acts in the capacity of a popular educator in the moral movement music workshops by teaching and demonstrating the importance of gospel music and other genres to the moral movement. Subsequently, she facilitates opportunities for the attendees to make their own musical contributions.

Research Question Two: Who are the Singers who Participate in the Movement, and How Do They Describe Their Roles and Contributions to the Movement?

The singers I interviewed for this study come from families grounded in a faith tradition. Their earliest exposure to music was in the home, through family members who sang or played instruments. Their earliest musical performances took place in church settings. Beyond these influences, they were exposed to, and influenced by, the music of a host of gospel recording artists.

Notably, like Barber and King, Rodney is a seminary-trained minister whose messages are carefully and methodically constructed. Also like Barber and King, he is an

African American minister whose preaching is rhythmic and musical. Additionally, Rodney is a songwriter. The song he wrote in response to the Black Lives Matter movement, "I Am Somebody," was the tune he ultimately performed at the Moral March on Raleigh. Based on Rodney's narrative account, he, like Phil Ochs (n.d.) and others, was inspired by news headlines to raise the collective consciousness of the oppressed and their oppressors.

Each of the singers was introduced to activism differently. Rodney and Eshé were introduced to activism in college, while Claude's initial involvement was concurrent with the moral movement. Although each supports the aims of the movement, each has varying perceptions of him- or herself as an activist. Rodney describes himself as an actionist rather than an activist to emphasize that he is a person of action for change. While he does not refer to himself as an activist, he recognizes that his actions support the marginalized–those whose voices have been muted from larger societal conversations. Claude describes his role in the movement in spiritual terms, seeming uncertain about whether he is an activist. He seems to view his involvement as a way to promote Christian messages of love, uplift, and justice by making use of his God-given gift of music. The way he describes himself seems to align with Keating's (2008) definition of spiritual activism, which I discussed in chapter four. Unlike Rodney and Claude, Eshé described herself explicitly as an activist and, more specifically, a cultural activist. Her description is consistent with Buser and Arthurs' (2013) definition in that her activism is not limited to singing; neither is it limited to the moral movement. As I

discussed in chapter four, the findings from her narrative suggest that she uses multiple forms of artistic expression in a variety of spaces for the betterment of her community.

The possibility that the singers engage in spiritual activism was an unexpected finding in this study. The finding emerged from Claude's uncertainty about whether he is an activist. I listened with intrigue as he described his role in the movement entirely through a spiritual lens. Subsequently, I explored literature for social justice advocates who described their work as activism but from spiritual frames of reference. Like Keating (2008), Sheridan (2012) explained the interconnectedness of spirituality and activism. He elaborated,

> Activists within this approach draw from spiritual worldviews and practices to sustain both themselves and their work. They practice neither a socially disengaged spirituality (i.e., withdrawing from the world to pursue self-realization or personal salvation), nor a spiritually disengaged social activism (i.e., focusing solely on the sociopolitical goals without careful consideration to how such goals are shaped and achieved). Rather, spiritual activists view spiritual principles as inextricably linked with the pursuit of justice. (p. 195)

People conceptualize spirituality differently. For these singers, it seems the "spiritual" component of spiritual activism might refer to "a transcendent sense of interconnection that moves beyond the knowable, visible material world" (Keating, 2005, p. 252). We learned in chapters four and five that the singers hold deep spiritual convictions. Rodney is a Christian minister. Claude refers to his involvement in the moral movement as ministry. Eshé speaks of the Spirit's influence on her songwriting and performance. Their narratives, in comparison to the approaches that spiritual activists take toward social justice, suggest that each singer engages in spiritual activism.

By detailing the role that gospel music plays in the moral movement, the singers also describe their roles and contributions: to rally people around a shared set of beliefs, to instill hope, to foster strength, and to reinforce the movement agenda through a common form of expression by which everyone can participate. Hartford (2011) noted that the mark of a skilled song leader is the ability "to shape and direct the emotions experienced by ourselves and those within the sound of our voices" (para. 39). The singers in this study accomplish this by strategically approaching song selection, structure, delivery, and vocality in ways that invoke the desired emotions and yield the desired outcomes.

Leichtman (2010) outlined the duties of song leaders in the civil rights movement, including developing and leading songs for a particular event to maintain momentum, encouraging other singers by calling out during their singing, and serving both as civic leaders and song leaders. Leitchman's claims are generally compatible with my findings, though during the interviews, the singers did not explicitly mention any civic leadership positions they held.

I stated in the opening chapter that, according to Morris (2000), "social movement theory should focus on what movement leaders do and why what they do matters" (p. 450). Through the singers' conversations, we gained insight into both. Although they did not explicitly identify themselves as leaders, this study's findings strongly suggest that they contribute to the movement in influential ways, including communicating persuasive messages and speaking through their music on behalf of the collective.

Conclusions

The findings of my study are consistent with previous research describing music as a device that builds collective identity, arouses hope, and offers strength for participants. The findings are also in harmony with the literature on the presence of popular education in major American social movements. Although these findings are compatible with previous research, my study also makes several contributions to the field of cultural studies. First, the singers in this study provided narratives that offer a personal, firsthand perspective to the conversation on music and social movements. In the literature, the importance of music in social movements, especially gospel music, has been documented mainly from the viewpoint of people other than the singers themselves. Moreover, firsthand narratives of gospel singers are far less common in the literature than the firsthand narratives of their secular musical counterparts. The singers addressed their roles within the context of gospel music performance and the moral movement. Neither gospel music performance in social movements through the eyes of its singers, nor gospel music performance within the moral movement, has been widely explored in the literature. In this study, through my interviews with them, the singers themselves engaged in making meaning of their roles and contributions to the moral movement. They described their roles within the context of gospel music performance and the moral movement in their own unique ways. Rodney, Claude, and Eshé's detailed accounts illuminate the essentiality of their functions to the movement. Though they are not as famous as of some of the singers cited in the literature, their narratives establish them as real people with real experiences related to social activism. In several ways, their roles

and contributions to the moral movement parallel those of their counterparts in earlier social movements.

Second, this study gives gospel music scholars additional insights into the importance of gospel music and social movements through the eyes of the people who perform it. The way the singers themselves contextualize their roles and contributions can now be juxtaposed beside the meanings scholars apply to the significance of gospel music and movements based on archival document reviews and the interpretations drawn from indirect accounts. Additionally, scholars can make interpretations based on direct personal accounts, which is in part why I included observations and media and document analyses alongside my interviews.

Third, like the sentiments of Rose (2007) concerning the music and singers of the civil rights movement, I believe the music of the Forward Together Moral Movement and the study of its singers not only provides insight about the music itself, but can also serve as a teaching tool "about history, tolerance, culture, and the most substantive and far-reaching goals of every educational institution" (p. 66). The study adds to the ongoing conversation about the impact of music on social activism while, at the same time, adding culturally relevant perspectives to the lessons in history, tolerance, and culture that are presently taught in American education.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are several opportunities for future research on the moral movement. Future studies could explore songs composed expressly for the moral movement. Since one finding of this study is that workshop attendees collaborate to compose songs that

align with the moral movement's agenda, an examination of the music birthed from it could provide additional scholarship on the use, style, and intended impact of music on the moral movement. At least one group, the NC Music Love Army, has written and recorded music inspired by the moral movement.

Future studies could also further examine Yara Allen's role and contributions to the moral movement through her own words. Yara is the movement's primary song leader. In this study, I offered much information about her role in the moral movement through the other singers' narratives and through document/media analyses. Given the depth of Yara's involvement and her duties as the movement's cultural arts coordinator, her narrative would offer another firsthand perspective to the literature on music–especially gospel–and the moral movement.

Similarly, future studies could further explore how Reverend Barber makes meaning of the musicality of the moral movement. He is not only influential in the selection of music for the movement, but he is musical in his speech delivery. Future studies could examine the role that music, particularly gospel music, plays in his leading of the movement.

Another avenue for future research is an interview-based qualitative study with other performing artists in the moral movement, besides gospel singers. Interviews with the Raging Grannies, Freddy Greene, and others who regularly perform at the rallies would broaden the scholarship on music and social movements, thereby juxtaposing their firsthand narratives with the narratives of singers in prior social movements like Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Mavis Staples, Phil Ochs, and others.

Future studies could also explore the role spiritual activism plays in the moral movement. Do key leaders in the movement describe their activism in spiritual terms? If so, what meanings do they apply to their involvement in this particular movement?

Finally, future studies could investigate the role of popular education in the moral movement. This study explored its role in the context of music. Future studies could focus more intently on how the moral movement as a whole uses popular education.

Final Thoughts

As I neared the end of this study, I learned two things about myself as a researcher. Foremost, I learned that I enjoy qualitative research. Particularly, I enjoy collecting data that includes interviews and observations. I am naturally inquisitive, so the experience of asking questions that may lead to new insights and ideas for future research fascinates me, as does watching people in their natural settings and making interpretations. Second, during the study, I learned that ongoing self-reflection was necessary so as not to put myself "in the way" of data collection. One thing I would do differently if repeating the study is arrange face-to-face interviews. The phone interviews I conducted for this study inhibited my ability to see and analyze the participants' nonverbal forms of communication. I wondered particularly about Claude and Eshé's gestures and countenances as they briefly sang some of the songs they spoke of during their interviews.

Despite my desire to have done this part of my data collection differently, I was pleased that the information I collected was descriptive and insightful. I was most surprised to learn that every musical aspect of the moral movement is intricately

coordinated so that the message of the movement is optimized in the music performances. I was also surprised to learn the extent to which Reverend Barber is involved in song selection, and, as I mentioned in the previous section, I would love to explore this further in a future study.

Perhaps the highlight of this process for me took place as Eshé and I closed the second interview. She was the last of the three participants I interviewed, and I was thankful that they each embraced the opportunity to be part of the study by telling me their stories. In the final minutes of her second interview, she shared, "To me, you are what we call a *Jalimuso*." I was unfamiliar with that descriptor, and I told her. She elaborated,

> This is basically what the definition of a *Jalimuso* is: This is a person who uses her voice to share ethics and to advise her community. This is a person who records stories that comfort, that encourage, that empower other people, and that promote independence and self-reliance. This is a person who works closely with other people–non-professional people and professional people, to maintain a sense of community. This is a person who's a motivator, who's a wordsmith. This is a person who's a sculptor of thought. I love that. This is a person who sculpts thoughts and ideas. This person is an orator, someone who uses her knowledge of history to move audiences to action.

Expressing her gratitude, Eshé continued,

> I thank you for doing what you're doing. I'm so thankful that you chose this particular research to do…. When people read your work, they're going to have a better understanding about what this whole music thing was about with the Moral Monday movement. The fact that you're recording this, that you're getting the stories, that you're putting them on paper. You're doing the research. That definitely qualifies you as a *Jalimuso*, my sister.

I feel humbled to have entered the study as a researcher and to have emerged, in the eyes of Sauuda Yejide Eshé, as a *Jalimuso.*

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Initial Interview

1. Tell me a little about yourself.

2. What is your gospel music background?

3. Who are/were some of your gospel music influences, and why?

4. How did you become interested in social activism?

5. At our next interview, I would like for you to share the lyrics or recordings of three songs you've performed as part of the Forward Together Moral Movement, why you chose to perform them, and what they mean to you.

Second Interview

1. How did you get involved in singing at the Forward Together Moral Movement events?

2. How do you select the songs you will perform at a rally or protest event?

3. Some people might say that lending your singing talent to social movements is itself a demonstration of social activism and advocacy. Others might say that one doesn't have to be an "activist" in order to sing at a protest event. How would you describe yourself?

4. (If you consider yourself to be an activist) In what ways do you demonstrate activism besides through your musical performances?

5. When you sing at a rally or a protest, I imagine there is a particular mood you sense and feeling you want to evoke. Describe a time when you sensed that your performance either set the atmosphere or altered the atmosphere of the protest.

6. At least one author says that the Freedom Singers, who traveled and performed at various protests during the Civil Rights Movement of 1960s, educated the public through their music. What lessons for the public does your music contain?

7. I requested that you share with me three songs you've performed as part of the Forward Together Moral Movement. What is the significance of these songs to you?

8. Given my research, is there anything I didn't think to ask that you want to share with me?

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO
CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT

Project Title
Significance of Gospel Music to Social Activism in North Carolina

Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor (if applicable)
Libra Boyd (PI) and Kathy Hytten (FA)

Participant's Name
[Insert Participant's Name Here]

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in the study is voluntary. You may choose not to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. There may not be any direct benefit to you for being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies. If you choose not to be in the study or leave the study before it is done, it will not affect your relationship with the researcher or the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Details about this study are discussed in this consent form. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study.

You will be given a copy of this consent form. If you have any questions about this study at any time, you should ask the researchers named in this consent form. Their contact information is below.

What is the study about?

This is a research project. Your participation is voluntary. The purpose of my study is to learn from gospel singers about how they make meaning of their roles in, and contributions to, the Forward Together Moral Movement. I am interested in exploring

their stories about their involvement in their own words and from their own frame of reference. My hope is that their firsthand experiences will offer historians, activists, and scholars unique insights that will be beneficial in understanding the contributions of these singers to the movements. These singers are people with names, stories, perspectives, and emotions that are connected to their functions. I seek for my study to bring them to the forefront in name, contribution, and perspective.

Why are you asking me?

You have been invited to participate in my study because you have performed gospel music at one or more of the Forward Together Moral Movement events.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?

I will ask that you participate in an initial interview of approximately one hour to share your background and experiences that led to your interest in social activism. I will conduct a second interview of one to one and a half hours inviting you to talk specifically about your activism in, involvement with, and music performances for the Forward Together Moral Movement.

In addition to the scheduled interviews, I will observe and video record, at minimum, one of your performances at a movement-related event and ask that you participate in a 10-15 minute informal post interview.

Is there any audio/video recording?

I will audio-record and transcribe all interviews. I will also video-record one or more of your performances at a movement-related event. Your voice and image will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears (or views) the recordings.

Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the tape, your confidentiality for things you say on the tape cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the tape as described below.

The audio-recorded data will be stored securely on a password-protected computer. I will transcribe the audio-recorded data in a location and manner where playback can be heard only by me. You will have the opportunity to review the transcribed interviews and correct errors, clarify statements, or request to add (or remove) comments that you do (or do not) wish to be included in my study.

What are the risks to me?

The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has

determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants.

If you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Libra Boyd and Kathy Hytten, who may be reached at (919) 225-6575. You may also reach Libra at lnboyd@uncg.edu and Kathy at kahytten@uncg.edu.

If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated, concerns or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study please contact the Office of Research Integrity at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

Additionally, if any questions posed during the study make you uncomfortable, you may choose not to respond.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of me taking part in this research?

There may be several benefits to society as a result of your participation. One is that it may fill a gap in North Carolina and American history about the importance of gospel music to social activism by bringing the singers' perspectives into a conversation that has been documented mainly through the eyes of historians, clergy, civic leaders, and community organizers. A second benefit is that your narrative may place additional scholarship about gospel music and social activism in the hands of gospel music scholars and historians. Last, your participation and narrative may add depth and a firsthand account to an ongoing examination of the impact of music on social activism while simultaneously teaching lessons that are culturally relevant in American education.

Are there any benefits to *me* for taking part in this research study?

Because you will be personally identified in my study, your name, role in, and contributions to the Forward Together movement will become part of the rich American and North Carolina history of social movements, which may be may be referenced by scholars, historians, and students in years to come.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you or payments made for participating in this study.

How will you keep my information confidential?

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. I will store the data that I collect for the study in a password protected computer. Real names of people and places will be used in my research study. For this reason, I will give you copies of your interview transcripts to review. During this time, you may correct errors, clarify statements, or request to add (or remove) comments that you do (or

do not) wish to be included in my study.

What if I want to leave the study?

You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, without penalty. If you do withdraw, it will not affect you in any way. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state. The investigators also have the right to stop your participation at any time. This could be because you have had an unexpected reaction, or have failed to follow instructions, or because the entire study has been stopped.

What about new information/changes in the study?

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing this consent form, you are agreeing that you read, or it has been read to you, and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing consent to take part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate, or have the individual specified above as a participant participate, in this study described to you by Libra Boyd.

Signature: _____ Date: _____