

## MLK Essay

By: Donovan Wingfield  
Lockland Middle School  
Teacher: Aaron Parker, Grade 8

Which one should I choose? As I researched various Freedom songs from the Civil Rights Movement, I could not help but to become overwhelmed with a sense of pride. The same pride I am sure that my ancestors felt back then. Although, I was not around at the time, the message from the lyrics resonates loud and clear. Music is the universal language. It crosses all barriers of race, sex and gender. This is true whether the music is being sung as an old Negro spiritual, a black man expressing his views onto the world, or a white man letting us know that it is okay to be diverse.

“Oh Freedom,” is a Negro spiritual that was sung by many African-American slaves. The song says “Before I’ll be a slave, I’d be buried in my grave/and go home to my Lord and be free.” Simply put, if I have not the right to live free, I’d rather be dead than serve another. This is very empowering and goes to show how self-pride and respect was an important aspect to a human being.

Sam Cooke, writer of “A Change is Gonna Come,” wrote this song after being denied a motel room in Louisiana because of his color. The song says “It’s been a long, long time coming/but I know change is gonna come.” The song is implying that trials and tribulations will always manifest in life. We just need to persevere. At a time when so many lives were given and taken, this song holds truth. It can be related to the life of Emmett Till who was lynched and killed for whistling at a white woman. Or the great Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who had a vision that one day all people will be created equal. It’s also speaks to the story of Rosa Parks, who refused to give up her seat after a tiring day at work. This is a battle that at the time she knew had to be won. This song is a prime example of hope and a new beginning.

“Let it be” is a song that was performed by the Beatles. The title speaks for itself. If people would not sit in judgment and allow individuals to lead their own lives, the world would be a very different place. Gays in the military is another example. One’s sexual orientation has nothing to do with their patriotism for their country. President Barack Obama holds the highest office in this country. He is the President of the United States. Yet some people still have an issue with the color of his skin. This has nothing to do with his ideas and what he is trying to accomplish.

Singing Freedom songs gave those of the Civil Rights Movement a sense of purpose. It served as a fellowship for a people trying to find their way. Sometimes we just need to be thankful for “Oh Freedom,” knowing that “A Change is Gonna Come” and just “Let it Be.”