

## Songs of civil rights and social justice – featured at the Journey to Justice Sings event, July 23 2014

***We Shall Overcome*** is a [protest song](#) that became a key [anthem](#) of the [African-American Civil Rights Movement \(1955–1968\)](#). It is widely believed that the title and structure of the song are derived from an early [gospel song](#), "I'll Overcome Someday", by African-American composer [Charles Albert Tindley](#) (1851–1933)

***Motherless Child*** The song dates back to the era of [slavery](#) in the [United States](#) when it was common practice to sell children of slaves away from their parents. Although the plaintive words can be interpreted literally, they might alternatively be metaphoric. The “motherless child” could be a slave separated from and yearning for his or her African homeland, his or her spouse, parents, siblings or child(ren) (from all or any of which he or she may have been separated in the trafficking process) or a slave suffering “a long ways from home”—home being heaven—or all.

***Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen*** is a [spiritual](#) song. The song is well known and many [cover versions](#) of it have been done by artists such as [Marian Anderson](#), [Lena Horne](#), [Louis Armstrong](#), [Paul Robeson](#), [Sam Cooke](#) among others.

***The Hammer Song*** is a song written by [Pete Seeger](#) and [Lee Hays](#). It was written in 1949 in support of the progressive, and was first recorded by [The Weavers](#), a [folk music](#) quartet composed of Seeger, Hays, [Ronnie Gilbert](#) and [Fred Hellerman](#).

***There Is Power in a Union*** is a song written by [Joe Hill](#) in 1913. The [Industrial Workers of the World](#) (commonly known as the Wobblies) concentrated much of its labor trying to organize [migrant workers](#) in [lumber](#) and [construction](#) camps. They sometimes had competition for the attention of the workers from religious organizations. The song is sung to the tune of "There Is Power in the Blood (Of the Lamb)".

***I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free*** is a [gospel/jazz](#) song written by [Billy Taylor](#) and [Dick Dallas](#) in 1963, best known for the recording by [Nina Simone](#) in 1967 on her [Silk & Soul](#) album. Billy Taylor has explained: "I wrote this song, perhaps my best-known composition, for my daughter Kim. This is one of the best renditions I've done, because it is very spiritual.

***Guantanamera*** ([Spanish](#): "from [Guantánamo](#) [feminine]"), is perhaps the best known [Cuban](#) song and that country's most noted [patriotic song](#). In 1966, a version by American vocal group [The Sandpipers](#), based on an arrangement by [Pete Seeger](#), became an international hit.

***Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around*** is a traditional song that was adopted by the civil rights movement in Albany, Georgia in the early 1960s. This recording features the SNCC Freedom Singers, a student group that travelled around the country singing at mass meetings and rallies. "Chief Pritchett" refers to Albany's police chief Laurie Pritchett, "Mayor Kelley" refers to Albany Mayor Asa Kelly.

***Imagine*** written and performed by the English musician [John Lennon](#). The best-selling single of his solo career, its lyrics encourage the listener to imagine a world at peace without the barriers of borders or the divisiveness of religions and nationalities, and to consider the possibility that the focus of humanity should be living a life unattached to material possessions.

**Oh Freedom** is a post-Civil War African-American freedom song, often associated with [Odetta](#), who recorded it as part of the "Spiritual Trilogy", on her *Odetta Sings Ballads and Blues*, and [Joan Baez](#), who performed the song at the 1963 [March on Washington](#), and has since performed the song live numerous times throughout the years, both during her concerts and at other events. The song predates these events by at least three decades for it was recorded in 1931 by the E. R. Nance Family with Clarence Dooley as "Sweet Freedom".

**Joe Hill** born **Joel Emmanuel Hägglund** in [Gävle](#), Sweden, and also known as **Joseph Hillström** (October 7, 1879<sup>[1]</sup> – November 19, 1915) was a [Swedish-American labor activist](#), songwriter, and member of the [Industrial Workers of the World](#) (IWW, also known as the "Wobblies").<sup>[2]</sup> A native [Swedish speaker](#), he learned English during the early 1900s, while working various jobs from [New York](#) to [San Francisco](#). Hill, as an immigrant worker frequently facing unemployment and underemployment, became a popular song writer and cartoonist for the radical union. His most famous songs include "[The Preacher and the Slave](#)" (also known as *There'll be Pie in the Sky By-and There Is Power In a Union* express the harsh, combative life of itinerant workers, and call for workers to organize to improve conditions for workers.

**Solidarity Forever**, written by [Ralph Chaplin](#) in 1915, is perhaps the most famous [union](#) anthem. It is sung to the tune of "[John Brown's Body](#)". Although it was written as a song for the [Industrial Workers of the World](#) (IWW), other union movements, such as the [AFL-CIO](#), have adopted the song as their own. It is still commonly sung at union meetings and rallies in the [United States](#), [Australia](#) and [Canada](#), and has also been sung at conferences of the [Australian Labor Party](#) and the [Canadian New Democratic Party](#).

**A Change Is Gonna Come** by American [singer-songwriter](#) [Sam Cooke](#) released on December 22, 1964 by [RCA Victor](#). Produced by [Hugo & Luigi](#) and arranged and conducted by [René Hall](#), the song was the B-side to "[Shake](#)". The song concerns African-Americans and contains the refrain, "It's been a long time coming, but I know a change is gonna come." The song was inspired by various personal events in Cooke's life, most prominently an event in which he and his entourage were turned away from a [whites only](#) motel in [Louisiana](#). Cooke felt compelled to write a song that spoke to his and the struggle of those around him, and he recorded the song for its first release on his final album, *Ain't That Good News*.

**Blowin' In The Wind** is a song written by [Bob Dylan](#) in 1962 and released on his album *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* in 1963. Although it has been described as a [protest song](#), it poses a series of [rhetorical questions](#) about peace, war and freedom. The refrain "The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind" has been described as "impenetrably ambiguous: either the answer is so obvious it is right in your face, or the answer is as intangible as the wind"

**The Internationale** ([French](#): "*L'Internationale*") is a widely sung [left-wing anthem](#). It has been one of the most recognizable and popular songs of the [socialist](#) movement since the late 19th century, "This is the final struggle / Let us group together and tomorrow / The Internationale / Will be the human race."). It is often sung with the left hand raised in a [clenched fist salute](#) and is sometimes followed (in English-speaking places) with a chant of "[The workers united will never be defeated](#)"