

Arelia Langhorne
Feb. 2, 2012

Soul Food

I have chosen "Soul Food" for the title of my first SPHEX Paper. I like to eat and I like music. We eat to nourish the body. The arts do for my soul what food does for my body. I am also a child of the protest movement. So when I started thinking about what I would share with you, I couldn't help but think about things that had given me strength to pursue my life's journey.

I want to begin with a picture of President Barack Obama at Mrs. Wilkes' place on Jones Street in Savannah, Georgia. The President is having lunch. He is eating soul food. He has fried chicken wings and is serving his plate from bowls of beans, sweet potatoes, greens, and macaroni & cheese. A newspaper account of lunch also shows pulled barbecue pork, blueberry pudding, banana pudding and corn bread on the menu. The President had sweet tea and asked for hot sauce. This soul food may have increased his cholesterol. He enjoyed his lunch. Not only did he enjoy the food, he enjoyed the opportunity to have lunch, at a table of ten, with strangers, except the Mayor of Savannah, Otis Johnson. Mrs. Wilkes' place is a restaurant where they have tables of ten, they put the food out in the bowls so you can serve yourself. And most of the time you don't come in there with a party of ten. You may come one, two, three, four; well, when you sit down, you're going to sit down at a table with a group of people you don't know. Sharing a meal gives you an opportunity to get to know a little something about the folk with whom you're eating. This scenario is what happens locally when you go to The Ellington. People come in to enjoy the music. There are no reservations. You take a seat at a long table of eight. When you get up to dance you'll want to ask the strangers at your table to let others know the seat is taken. This gives an opportunity for local folk, and folk who travel from Roanoke and Charlottesville to enjoy the music, meet some strangers and learn just a little about them while they enjoy the music for the evening.

In a Lynchburg News and Advance article, March 2010, our Mayor, Joan Foster expressed

surprise and disappointment the City had tied for the 7th fattest city among 187 cities. We know that our first lady, Michelle Obama, has the fight against obesity as one of her projects to encourage children and adults to exercise and eat more fresh foods and vegetables. She started a vegetable garden at the White House and advocate^s against fast food deserts. I will not be serving any soul food tonight, but I do want us to remember as I go to the heart of my paper, those with whom we have shared meals, whether in celebration or in comfort, family, friends, business colleagues, tailgating parties, reunions, meals following the memorial or celebration of life with family and friends of those whom we have traveled this life.

Also I am not used to standing up for talking an hour. And it is rare that a court will give you that much time to argue your side of a case. The President's Health Care law challenge got that much time. Most of time you get thirty minutes with ten minutes for rebuttal. Twenty minutes is about all folk can take for a speech. In any event, I've been told this is supposed to be some intellectual exercise and the sharing of some things for which we have a passion, discovering things we may not have known about something that would be of interest to you.

The title is "Soul Food" the message is food for the soul. The story is the history of the Civil Rights anthem, "We Shall Overcome." This is February; it is black history month. Take a look at the copyright version of "We Shall Overcome." This protest song takes us through slavery, gospel music, spirituals, and a hymn with different words by Charles Albert Tindley.

This is the history of a song from slavery, to gospel music spirituals and a hymn by Charles Abbott Tindley, to the labor movement, to the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, to the 1960 a cappella group at Shaw University, through the Civil Rights Movement, to the Vietnam War Protest and Peace Movement, to 9/11 and the playing of Bruce Springstein's tribute of the song in an Album to Pete Seeger every hour on the hour by NBC, to the use of the song "We Shall

Overcome” all over the world to bring about change and a more just world. “We Shall Overcome” is food for the soul. We are going to look at the history for the words, the melody and the beat. The slave song, “No More Auction Block for Me”, “ Many Thousands Gone,” includes such lyrics as:

No more auction block for me.
No more auction block fir me
Many Thousands Gone
No more peck of corn for me,
No more driver’s lash for me,
No more pint of salt for me,
No more hundred lash for me,
No more mistress call for me,
No more children stole from me,
No more slavery chains for me,
No more auction block for me.

The simple verse and the repetitive refrain “No more, no more, no more auction block for me, many thousand gone, ” was a song you didn’t need to write the words down; you didn’t need a musical score. It changed depending on who was singing it. The words changed, the beats changed, the lyrics changed.

On the other hand, the Charles Albert Tindley hymn, “I’ll Overcome Someday,” is a published piece of music with notes. It was sung as a congregational hymn. One verse for example is:

This world is one great battlefield,
with forces all arrayed,
If in my heart I do not yield,
I’ll overcome some day.

with the repetition of “I’ll overcome some day, if in my heart I do not yield, I’ll overcome some day.”

In addition to Tindley’s Hymn “I’ll Overcome Someday” musicologists have analyzed the spiritual “I’ll be alright.” Scholars opinion “I’ll be alright” comes from the slave song “No more

action block for me". But "I'll be Alright" is a spiritual song , "I'll be alright, I'll be alright, I'll be alright someday, down in my heart, I do believe, I'll be alright someday." "I'll be Alright," included verses like, "I'll wear a crown and I'll be like him" giving it a Christian focus. There was tension between spiritual music and slave music; field songs and freedom songs.

Charles Tindley wrote the hymn "I'll Overcome Some Day" in 1901. He was a self taught man, born a freeman in 1851. He taught himself to read and write music. He was a preacher with a huge church in Philadelphia. It's amazing when you look back at his church. Tindley was a janitor in the church. Became the pastor of the church when it had 130 members. The congregation grew and moved to another building becoming a Methodist Episcopal Church with the capacity for 900 members. Before his death in 1933, the congregation became a multi-racial congregation of over 10,000. I didn't have time to go research to see if this church still exists and how many member it has today. The young graduate assistant looked it up on the internet. Today it is Tindley Temple United Methodist Church. This was quite an accomplishment ^{for} from a black man who lived from 1851 to 1933. ~~And even though on this historical journey we will learn about the copyright of the song.~~

When Lynchburg celebrated Martin Luther King's birthday, the program published a few verses from "We Shall Overcome" and Charles Tindley is identified as the author. *The copyright is with others*

Who could have predicted that "No More Auction block for me, many thousands gone, "I'll be alright," and "I'll Overcome Some Day" would lead to the song "We Shall Overcome."

Who can remember when you first heard it, when you see it on a program, church bulletin What do you think about What does it remind you of and are you going to participate and ^{sing} ~~sign~~? This song changed this nation and its history of civil rights. ^{What} what does it mean to you?

Benediction Hymn "Lord Dismiss Us with Thy blessing". "O Sanctissima"

The prayer of the Sicilian slave

In February 1909 the United Mine Workers Journal published a letter on the front page

which said, "Last year at a strike we opened every meeting with a prayer and singing the good old song 'We will Overcome.'" This is said to be the first printed reference to the song being used outside of a church setting. The Alabama union was one organization but it had two Chairmen, a black Chairman and a white Chairman. They had meeting with everyone in the same room. Black people on one side, white people on the other, ~~because we know that~~ in Alabama in the early 1900's separate was considered equal and ^{the} law wouldn't let them sit together and we may not know what melody the miners sang or what words they used, but we know that the song "We Will Overcome" is a song that helped them with their strikes and was used in their meetings and on the picket line.

Getting to the heart of the matter, in 1945 at the American Tobacco Company in Charleston, South Carolina, the workers went on strike for higher pay and integration of the factory floor. They were being paid 10 cents an hour and their demand was for 30 cents an hour. The company offered them 15 cents an hour, but no offer on integration of the factory floor. When they walked the picket line, they sang the labor song "We Will Overcome." Stuart Stott's research says that a labor organizer named Delphine Brown sang the song fast and added the words "we will earn our rights someday." Another singer, who more historians now know her name, Lucille Simmons, sang it slow in what is known as the long-meter style with every word drawn out. It is written that people said when they saw Lucille coming, they said Lucille is going to sing that song slower than anyone ever sang it before.

Some historians report Zilphia Horton, of the Highlander Folk School, heard Lucille Simmons singing the song in Charleston, South Carolina. Others write that in 1946, after the American Tobacco Company strike, that strikers came to the Highlander Folk Center in Tennessee and taught "We Will Overcome" to Zilphia Horton. She in turn used and taught the

song thereafter in workshops with union workers. When the Center shifted from union activity at Highlander to Civil Rights activity, she taught it to early civil rights workers. Zilphia Horton died in 1956.

The Highlander Folk School was organized in 1932 by Don West and Myles Horton. It was in Monteagle, Tennessee. At Highlander people learned about unions; how to hold elections, strike tactics, and how to recruit new members. People usually came for a week at a time for the workshops. Group singing was an integral part in organizing and keeping the spirits of the strikers high.

In my opinion that Pete Seeger made the song famous, Zilphia Horton sang the song for Pete Seeger in 1946 in New York. Pete is a 92 year old folk singer. He took the song with him on the road. ~~He recorded it in Carnegie Hall.~~ ¹⁹⁶³ He sung it all over the world. It is featured in tributes to Pete by Artist such as Bruce Springstein. Last Fall Seeger went to New York City and he sang the song "We Shall Overcome" with the Occupy Wall Street crowd. Pete was born in 1919.

Going back to the labor movement, the first publication reference to the song outside of the Church Hymnal was in 1909 in the Alabama United Mine Workers Journal. The first recording of the song was in 1950, by Joe Glazer, a union organizer, who included it as "We Will Overcome." on an album called "Eight New Songs for Labor." Joe Glazer's book, "Labor's Troubadour," published in 2001 says he was teaching the song all over the south to textile workers in saw mill towns. He says he was teaching the song to white people who probably were all strict segregationist and as far as they were concerned this was a union song and had absolutely nothing to do with civil rights. In the 1950's only a small group of activists and organizers knew "We Will Overcome." The change from "We Will Overcome" to "We Shall Overcome" is attributed to Pete Seeger, although some say that other workers at the Highlander

School may have changed it. At this point, Pete says he doesn't care who gets credit for it, but he liked **shall** because it gave more emphases than **will**. We shall is a definite, we shall overcome. The movement went from "I'll Overcome Some Day," the Tindley version, to we ~~which~~ made it a group thing.

I may have asked when did you first hear the song. Conversion from a labor union song to the civil rights anthem probably began in 1957 when the Highlander Folk School Celebrated its 25 anniversary. Rosa Parks returned to the school and brought with her the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Abernathy. The first time that Martin Luther King, Jr. heard the song was when Pete Seeger sang it in 1957 at the Highlander Folk Schools 25th Anniversary. Why was Rosa Parks there? On December 1, 1955 Parks refused to give up her seat. She wasn't the first person to give up her seat, but she became the symbol of the Montgomery Bus boycott. We now know the change her refusal to get up. I did not know that the summer before she refused to give up her seat she had attended the Highlander Folk School workshop for social justice and non-violent protest. One of her sponsors was Clifford and Virginia Durr. Rosa Parks had worked briefly at Maxwell Air Force Base, a federally owned ^{bess} ~~area~~ where racial segregation has ~~not~~ been outlawed. In 1948 President Harry Truman issued Executive Order #9981, which integrated the military forces and facilities of the United States of America. Many attribute the integration of the military and its facilities to the work of the Tuskegee Airmen in escorting the bombers to Germany in WW II. They did such a good job escorting the bombers. The bombers reached their targets and we were on the winning side of the war. Some say Truman was moved to recognize this.

The Durr's were a young white couple that Rosa Parks worked for as a house keeper and a seamstress. They sponsored her going to the Highlander Folk School Workshop for workers

rights and racial equality in the Summer of 1955. Clifford Durr and Edgar Nixon, President of the local NAACP, were the ones who posted ^{nail} bond for Parks after a night in Jail. She was already sitting behind a sign that said "Colored". The indignity of it all to be ordered to move or stand up was inhumane.

The Highlander Folk school has a history all of its own. When I was researching the history of "We Shall Overcome" I ran across a thesis done by a student for her bachelor's degree about simply the attacks on the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee. One night after a weekend Civil Rights workshop at Highlander, the local Grundy County police raided the place. They cut the electricity off and left the people sitting in the dark. They rand-sacked the place. Pulling out draws and throwing cloths on the floor. To keep up their morale, the staff and the guess at the Highlander began to sing, "We Shall Overcome." The police told them to be quiet, or could they sing quieter. The staff and protestors sang louder. The police were disturbed by the courage of the activist and the power of the song. When the police left, everyone there had experienced the power of the song to help in dangerous times. I ran across two versions of how the words 'we are not afraid' came to be in the song. Some say it was that night at Highlander that a young woman started singing, 'we are not afraid today' as the police held them in the dark and rand-sacked the place. Others say that Pete Seeger said that the young people taught the old people who had reached the point of compromise and consensus building just trying to get along that we are not afraid and not afraid someday, but we are not afraid today.

Anytime you are trying to accomplish significant overdue change it is not uncommon for the establishment and powers to be to accuse you of being a socialist, and communist. The incidence just described where they didn't find anything, well they kept coming and planting things. They planted and found some moonshine, it was in a dry County and that was enough

and forfeit the property.

to shut them down. The FBI and the state of Tenn accused one of the staff members of being Chairman of the Communist party in North Carolina and the state of Tenn revoked the charter of the Highlander Folk School in 1961. Eventually the school was re-established in Knoxville, Tenn and today is the Highlander Education and Research Center in New Market, Tenn.

Myles Horton was a founding Director of Highlander and was it's director from 1932-1969.

We got Rosa Parks back at the 25th Anniversary of the Highlander Folk School, and we got Pete Seeger singing "We Shall Overcome", and we got Martin Luther King, Jr. hearing it for the first time at Highlander. Stuart Stoot's history of the song and the introduction of the song to Martin Luther King, Jr. says the song stuck with him and King told his driver, "There is something about that song that really sticks with me," he was humming it and tapping his feet on the way to his next engagement. On a personal note, the Lyrics "deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall overcome some day" resonates with me in terms of the progress that has been made and the challenges we continue to face. When I become passionate about a cause the words "deep in my heart I do believe we shall overcome sees me through."



The kind of attacks made on the Highlander Folk School ^{was} also made on individuals. Martin Luther King, Jr. was also accused of being a communist. J Edgar Hoover had all kinds of crape, tapes, and surveillance trying to break the man. Many opinion that in the sermon delivered prior to being murdered that when ~~he~~ ^{King} said I'm not fearing any man he was talking about Hoover. I may not get there with you but I've been to the mountaintop and I've seen that we as a people will get there. Many asked what did ~~he~~ ^{Martin} see when he went to the mountaintop? Did he see Barack Obama as President, did he hear Stevie Wonder ^{sing} Happy Birthday to you? Did he see his Birthday becoming a National Holiday? Did he see his image

on the National Mall? Did he see the inhumanity in our immigration policies? Did he see the significant disproportionate number of black men in our prison population and unemployed? Did he see Sterling's lost boys who are left without significant role models? Missing in the home.

Moving on with the history of the song, Guy Carawan, a young folk singer in Los Angeles, learned "We Shall Overcome" from another singer, Frank Hamilton, who learned it from Highlander fund raisers traveling in California in 1954. Frank added guitar chords and sang it slowly like Lucille with a strong steady rhythm to give it a more soulful feeling. Frank Hamilton said, he wanted it to be more like gospel music. In 1959 Guy Carawan first went to visit the Highlander Folk School. He didn't go there looking for a job, but he found a job there as the Music Director. As such, the song that had been taken from the labor movement and taught at Highlander had gone out with its fund raisers and had moved from a labor song to a civil rights song had basically gone full circle when it came back to Highlander in 1959 with Guy Carawan. This is critical because it is Guy Carawan, who in 1960, took it to the student non-violent co-ordinating committee (SNCC) at Shaw University. A few of the organizers who had attended a workshop at Highlander asked Guy to sing "We Shall Overcome." He picked up his guitar and started singing. A group of young black men who were use to singing a cappella, told him to "Lay that guitar down. We can do this song better." That is Guy telling the story. The group started to sing the song and without any instruction everybody in the room stood, reached for each other, took their right hand and crossed it over their left, and began to move together. The power of the song filled the room. Guy Carawan recalled the feeling, "They just heard that song and knew it was theirs. It expressed exactly what they felt."

Pete Seeger took the song with him in his heart on every continent and sung it. Pete recorded the song in Carnegie Hall in 1963. He often introduced it by saying in his foreign

travels, “this is a song which has accomplished a revolution in our country, I hope it can do the same for you.”

The history from 1960 forward of “We Shall Overcome”

After the song was introduced at the organizing meeting for the Student Non-Violence Co-ordinating Committee, that’s when it began its Civil Rights journey and popularity. Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagan, founder of the a cappella group Sweet Honey in the Rock, was present at Shaw University when the song was introduced by Guy and the a cappella group took it over and people just automatically crossed and held hands in a circle like we do and know today.

In 1961 in Albany, Georgia, Reagan was one of the activist singing it as part of a campaign for integration. She said somehow the music released a kind of power and required a level of concentrated energy that I didn’t know I had. The 1961 Freedom Rides followed. Black and white students got on the busses to go across state lines. The segregationist stopped the buses, beat the riders, and tires were being slashed. Crowds blocked the bus door, and angry crowds throwing fire bombs through windows with passenger trapped inside. The riders had to exit through the emergency door just before the bus exploded. Bernard Lafayette tells the story about the riders disembarking a terminal with few federal Marshalls and there was something about the singing of the song “We Shall Overcome.”, the song in that bus terminal was a prayer, it was a song of hope that we would survive and even as a group if we didn’t survive, then as a people we would overcome.

The song was instrumental in the 1963 March on Washington, for jobs and Freedom when the 22 year old folk singer Joan Baez took the microphone and lead the crowd in the song, “We Shall Overcome.”

It was instrumental in freedom summer of 1964 and in the Selma to Montgomery March

for voting rights in 1965. The Selma to Montgomery March for voting rights was bloody Sunday. Lyndon Banes Johnson was moved to bring before the Congress of the United States the Voting Rights Act of 1965. His now famous words, "It is the effort of American Negroes to secure for themselves the blessings of American life. Their cause must be our cause too because it's not just Negroes, but all of us who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice and we too shall overcome."

From the civil rights movement in the late 1950's and 1960's to the war in Vietnam it is interesting when you look at the history and you look at Joan Baez being 22 and singing it at the March on Washington for Civil Right. She took the song "We Shall Overcome" and made it a song for peace in protest against the war in Vietnam.

Migrant farmers sang "We Shall Overcome" in Spanish when they went on strike.

In India, "We Shall Overcome" was re-titled "One Day the Sun Will Rise." It has made it's way around the world in North Korea and in Beirut. In 1989 Chinese students demanding greater freedom in their country facing the government's tanks in Beijing's Tiananmen square, wore t-shirts that said We Shall Overcome.

Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu described "We Shall Overcome" as not about eliminating an enemy, but about winning over a friend. Robert Kennedy in 1966 in South Africa stood on the roof of his care and led crowds in singing "We Shall Overcome."

In Grant Park, when Barack Obama was elected president, in referring to a 106 year old black woman who had voted for him said, "she was there for the busses in Montgomery, the hoses in Birmingham, the bridge in Selma and a preacher from Atlanta who told the people "We Shall Overcome. The crowd responded, "Yes we can."

Pete Seeger took out a defensive copyright on the advice of his publisher in 1960.

The song "We Shall Overcome" is copywriter by Zelphia Horton, Fank Hamilton, Guy Carawan, and Pete Seeger. It was revised in 1963 to include in its copyright, "Inspired by African-American Gospel Singing, members of the Food & Tobacco Workers Union, Charleston, South Carolina, and the southern Civil Rights Movement. All funds collected from the copyright go to the Highlander Folk Center for the purpose of giving grants to organizations that continue to fight for racial justice. This has been the story of the power of a song.

The verses of We Shall Overcome sung at the end of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday breakfast January 16, 2012 giving credit to the Rev, Charles A Tindley as the author included three verses We Shall Overcome, We'll walk hand in hand, and We shall live in peace.

SOUL FOOD

Arelia Langhorne



“We Shall Overcome”

We Shall Overcome

Arranged by [illegible]

Copyright © [illegible]

Method & Lyrics by [illegible]

Music notation for voice and piano.

Lyrics:

1. We are not afraid, we are not daunted,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.
We are not weary, we are not tired,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.

2. We are not downcast, we are not discouraged,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.
We are not lonely, we are not forsaken,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.

3. We are not sad, we are not gloomy,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.
We are not sad, we are not gloomy,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.

4. We are not sad, we are not gloomy,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.
We are not sad, we are not gloomy,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.

5. We are not sad, we are not gloomy,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.
We are not sad, we are not gloomy,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.

6. We are not sad, we are not gloomy,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.
We are not sad, we are not gloomy,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.

7. We are not sad, we are not gloomy,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.
We are not sad, we are not gloomy,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.

8. We are not sad, we are not gloomy,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.
We are not sad, we are not gloomy,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.

9. We are not sad, we are not gloomy,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.
We are not sad, we are not gloomy,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.

10. We are not sad, we are not gloomy,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.
We are not sad, we are not gloomy,
The Lord is with us, we shall overcome.

Charles Albert Tindley

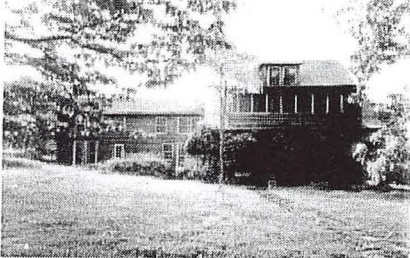


Myles & Zilphia Horton



Highlander Folk School

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AMHILANEN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER



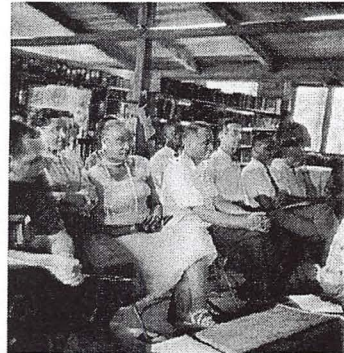
Highlander Folk School Main Building, Monteagle, TN.

Strikes



Highlander Folk School's 25th Anniversary

Rosa Parks at the Anniversary



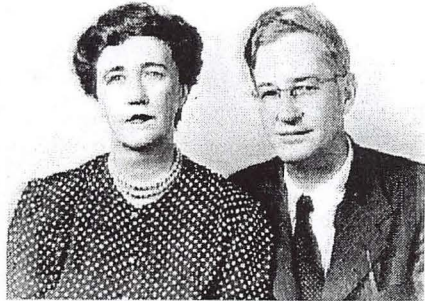
Rosa Parks at the Anniversary



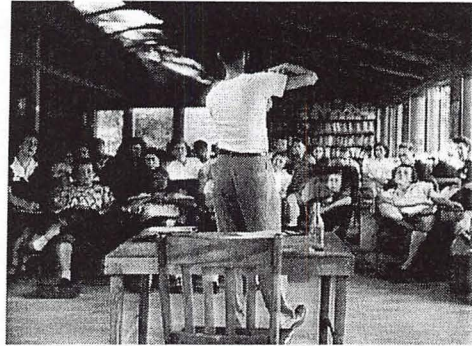
Rosa Parks on the Bus in Montgomery



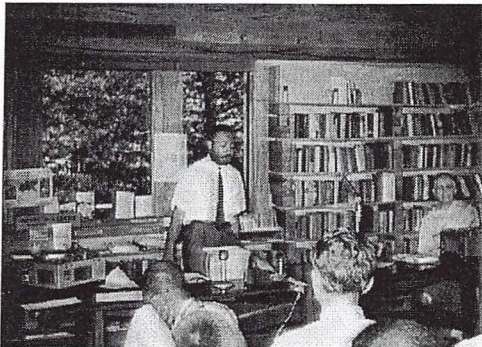
Clifford & Virginia Durr



Highlander Folk School



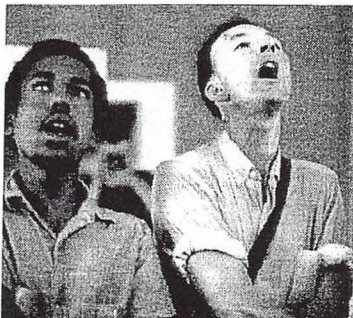
Dr. M. L. King, Jr. at the Anniversary



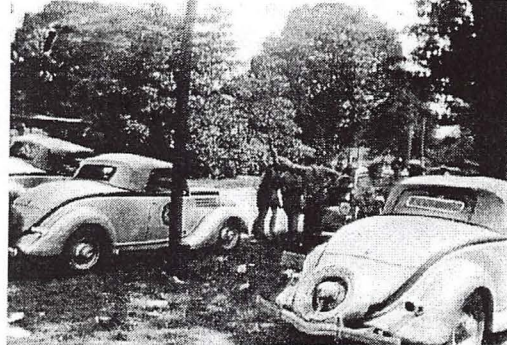
Pete Seeger at the Anniversary



Pete Seeger Singing "We Shall Overcome"



Police at Highlanders Folk School



Guy Carawan



Shaw University



Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagan



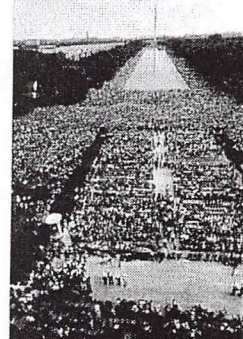
The Freedom Rides (1961)



The Freedom Rides (1961)



March on Washington (1963)



Joan Baez at the March on Washington



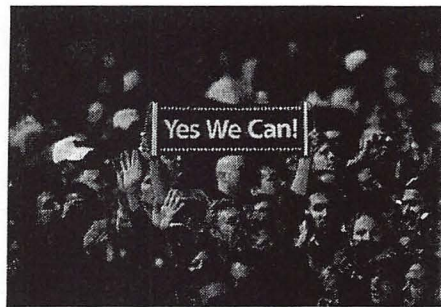
Lyndon B. Johnson Signs the 1965 Act



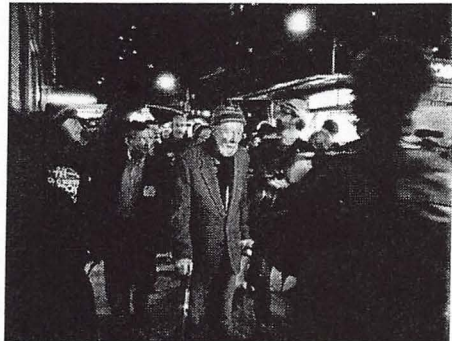
Barack Obama at Grant Park (2008)



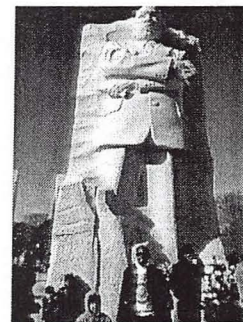
Grant Park (2008)



Pete Seeger at Occupy Walstreet



Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial & my 5 year old grandson Steve



“We Shall Overcome”