

## PURSUING A BETTER WORLD THROUGH MUSIC: THE ART, THE HEART AND THE NEW START OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN AMERICA

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### ABSTRACT

*Reflecting from presidential proclamation of African-American Music Appreciation Month in 2016, it was clearly seen from the glorious event that the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America was very proud of his heritage as an African American in the U.S. This appreciation can be traced from the history of African American which has come a long way, at least it has been 240 years since the American Declaration of Independence day in 1776. Barack Obama proclaimed his pride by revealing the heart of American identity through African American music. The most important thing that this paper wants to proclaim is an understanding about Africans who were taken into slavery in the Americas were by no means members of a primitive society. Their music delivers great treasure with various styles, such as spirituals, ragtime, the blues, jazz, rhythm and blues, gospel, soul and hip hop. Being a victim of racial discrimination, poverty, and other challenges, this music testifies to the resilience of African and Caribbean musical origins and a developed creativity from time to time of African Americans as individuals, families, and communities. The music tells us a great story of American history in the heart of Africans' descendants who are now Americans. As Obama said that the music accompanies them in their daily lives, and it has rung out at turning points in their history and demonstrated how their achievements as a culture go hand-in-hand with their progress as a Nation.*

Keywords: African American, music, American Studies, American culture.

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### Introduction

Our world is lived by various races, ethnics, religions, and nations but this reality is often to be such an agony for many people who have been experiencing inequality based on those differences. Inequality matters because it slows down the pace at which a society can reduce poverty. It slows down especially in economic growth. Moreover, at the level of everyday life, it undermines people's sense of self-worth and agency, and is associated with despair, depression and substance abuse (The MGD Achievement Fund, 2017). Most of societies in every region of the world, there are vast numbers of people who suffer from being left out of the social and economic development of their country. African Americans are one of them and being blacks in the United States of America has taken a long and perpetuating history which cannot be disregarded, whether or not it is completely accepted, by the other races in the US, especially by white Americans.

With the long history of racism over blacks Americans from slavery to current achievement gap, it seems difficult to see the justice upon a minority group like black Americans. They have been struggling and fighting over human rights, civil rights, equality in education and etc. It is said by Terrance Hamm in the Huffington Post that black American's fight for civil rights still isn't over up to this moment (Hamm, 2014). Hamm said that there were some news headlines frequently report on police officials killing unarmed blacks who only seemed dangerous enough to die, which showed how the American legal justice system has been ruling unfairly, even to this day.

Jarvis Tyner believed that it was the history of struggle for freedom that has made great advances over the centuries, thus the history of African American people is a history of struggle (Tyner, 2014). The world already know about the 300-year struggle against the most oppressive and cruel system of chattel slavery, waged by the slaves themselves with a predominantly white abolitionist movement, slavery was overthrown; the struggle succeeded. Tyner said that the African-American people's struggle for freedom was then – and remains today – central in the fight for democracy and progress:

From the struggles against slavery to today's struggle against structural racism and for democracy for all, the African-American people continue to play a strategic role in the fight for progress.

Because U.S. racism and capitalism are solidly linked, the fight against racism and for equality has always also had great revolutionary potential.

That centrality of the struggle of the African-American people is rooted in a culture of struggle and resistance that made it possible to survive the horrors of human bondage and 90 years of Jim Crow: extreme poverty, genocidal racist violence and economic terror.

A culture of struggle has been forged in the hard fights against slavery and Jim Crow and the refusal of black people to accept the indignities and insults they were expected to endure.

This culture of struggle is indelibly etched on the basic progressive and democratic political consciousness and basic character of the African Americans (Tyner, 2014).

Despite all the perpetuating struggles of African Americans for many centuries, there were actually some developments from time to time brought by the African Americans' communities themselves. From the liberating acts of slavery up to the first presidency held by an African American has shown the world how far they have come along the way. The 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, Barack Obama, drew impressive crowds with his appearances in both the primaries and the general election (History.com Contributors, 2017).

The importance of music in African Americans is also supported by Obama in his presidential proclamation at African American appreciation month in 2016 where he made a noteworthy speech on the nation's heritage: the African American music. In his proclamation, he was clear that music was one of the turning points in American history and African American music has been exemplifying the creative spirit at the heart of American identity and is among the most innovative and powerful art the world has ever known (The White House, 2016)

Obama showed his appreciation towards music as it accompanies the society in their daily lives, and it has rung out at turning points in their history and demonstrated how their achievements as a culture go hand-in-hand with their progress as a Nation. He honored the artists who, through music, bring Americans together, show the society a true reflection of African Americans, and inspire all American citizens to reach for the harmony that lies beyond their toughest struggles. Through this proclamation, he conveyed that songs by African-American musicians span the breadth of the human experience and resonate in every corner of their Nation. The proclamation further reads:

...animating our bodies, stimulating our imaginations, and nourishing our souls. In the ways they transform real stories about real people into art, these artists speak to universal human emotion and the restlessness that stirs within us all. African-American music helps us imagine a better world, and it offers hope that we will get there together.

This month, we celebrate the music that reminds us that our growth as a Nation and as people is reflected in our capacity to create great works of art. Let us recognize the performers behind this incredible music, which has compelled us to stand up -- to dance, to express our faith through song, to march against injustice, and to defend our country's enduring promise of freedom and opportunity for all.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 2016 as African-American Music Appreciation Month. I call upon public officials, educators, and all the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate activities and programs that raise awareness and foster appreciation of music that is composed, arranged, or performed by African Americans.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirty-first day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand sixteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fortieth (The White House, 2016).

From a painful background of African Americans in the United States of America, this research intends to deliver the achievements of African Americans in this world to make it a better one for all of us. There are more than blessings in disguise that has come from African Americans' music, but also as meanings providing the real key to understanding their niche in the lives of many (Donald F. Roberts, 2003).

Just like Obama has mentioned above, "African American music helps us imagine a better world," this research also proposes a better world for all by revealing the impacts of African American music to the United States of America which had a rough start to build a great nation with various races, ethnics, religions and many diversities in one place.

Having seen the development of music by African Americans in the US in recent years has inspired me to look back to American history where the term ragtime was at first a music of limited use among American Midwestern blacks but by the turn of the twentieth century, the ragtime became a national popularity (Hitchcock, 1988). African American music still has a great influence nowadays and this fact was seen at the 2017 Grammy Awards on 12 February, when a world-famous white celebrity, Adele, told the audience the truth about who actually deserved the Grammy award. The artist who Adele told the audience to was Beyonce, an African American artist.

Beyonce's music has influenced the world's perspective and made Adele speak up against the given award to her. Adele's reason of admitting that Beyonce deserved the award, had a great fact behind it. Michael Coel made an article about it and he said, "Because of the deranged voting process of the Grammys, she would not be joining the ranks of the mere 10 black artists who have won album of the year since the award was created in 1959. Only 10. And none in the last decade at all" (Coel, 2017).

Adele bringing it up at the 2017 Grammy Awards has led us to see how far music brings out the best in our society, especially in this case; the African Americans. If it had not been for Adele's speech, as a African American screenwriter and producer, Michaela Coel said that she would not have realized the fact that the world somehow still underestimated people's ability and talents based on their skin colors. The Grammy Awards delivers a great example of how music may become a wonderful tool to value our lives better and Adele as a former working-class Londoner, shattered the taboo of race and class with a display of solidarity. Furthermore, music also contributes a great significance to unite the society and see others fairly through the beauty of music in us. The world may not yet admit the African Americans' rights properly, but it did get better. Thus, African American music offers more to create our world in a better perspective.

This paper is later divided into nine major sections, starting with introduction, problem statement, methodology, literature review, theoretical framework, a research finding: "Music for the Voice of Freedom, Equality, and Human Rights," conclusion, and finally references.

### **Problem Statements**

This paper emphasizes the history of African American music in the United States of America as seeing them as the multiple expression of faith, hope and struggle in the pursuit of survival, equality and liberation. Then, music gradually works out to make

African Americans feel better about themselves as they put their souls in it. (Price III, Emmet G., Kernodle, & Horace J. Maxile, 2011).

The better world vision has been delivering despite some others painful truth about their history, it is not easy to be a minority for century despite the civil rights achievements through all these years.

Thus, the paper investigates and analyze how far and powerful the impacts of music in African Americans that are able to lift their spirit up and take them to a better place in America.

### **Methodology**

The method to gather data for this paper undertakes the Qualitative Method data collection, where the researcher is an instrument of data collection who gathers words or pictures, analyzes them inductively, focuses on the meaning of participants, and describes a process that is expressive and persuasive in language (Creswell, 1998). John W. Creswell reiterates that qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.

### **Literature Review**

*Lift Every Voice* by Burton W. Peretti (2009) provides a brief overview of the complex history of African American music. It cannot devote much space to any particular important style, musician, event, or musical work that deserves extended treatment. The content of this book delivers the broad currents of the music's history into the history of African Americans and the United States. The significance of music is seen from the era of slavery when many plantation owners recognized that Sunday recreation helped slaves to be better workers during the rest of the week. Some owners even made sure that a fiddler or banjoist was included in the workforce, and helped to provide them with instruments (Peretti, 2009). Then, *Lift Every Voice* supports African American music historically and assists this paper narratively.

Another literature that completes this paper is entitled *Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration in African American Music/Culture* by Christopher Small. Small (1998) talks not only about how music is defined as a matter of the mere cultural survival of black people, but also about how the music has brought them into a better life.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) counter-story method was used in this study to discuss the experiences of African Americans who acknowledge the impacts of music in assisting a better life for them. Decuir & Dixson, (2004) and Delgado & Stefancic (2000) indicates that counter-story telling helps to tell the story of African Americans who uses music to communicating and conducting their lives in better perspectives. CRT focuses directly on the effects of race and racism, while simultaneously addressing the hegemonic system of White supremacy on the "meritocratic" system (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

This study examines African Americans and other races in the US and how they deal with the music development throughout the years. The issue of racism fills up the music for centuries and develops their challenges into a brighter perspective. In this paper, the researcher will discuss the racism in music and gradually lead African Americans to go through it better with music as their cultural expression and later to be their identity and representation in American society.

One more study to analyze this paper is an ethnomusicology with African American paradigm where it is believed to be related with fieldworkers just like black slaves. As Helen Myers wrote, "In fieldwork we unveil the human face of ethnomusicology," and "Fieldwork is the most personal task required of the ethnomusicologist" (Myers, 1992). Most ethnomusicological discussions of the transmission of tradition attempt to document and interpret the manner in which music is communicated over time within a particular setting, giving attention to both the interpersonal dynamics and communication technologies of these processes (Shelemay, 2008).

Ethnomusicology may be described as a holistic investigation of music in its cultural contexts (Hood, 1969). Combining aspects of folklore, psychology, cultural anthropology, linguistics, comparative musicology, music theory, and history (McCollum & Hebert, 2014), ethnomusicology has adopted perspectives from a multitude of disciplines. (Pegg, 2001). Thus in this paper, the researcher tries to investigate the music in African American perspective with perpetuating racism issues in the US.

A musicology from France namely Marcel Dubois, concluded his own definition about ethnomusicology:

Ethnomusicology tries to put back the realities of African music in the socio-cultural context, placing the music into American mind, the activities and structures of a human group and clarifies the mutual influence between one another; and ethnomusicology compares these facts with one another via a number of groups of individuals who have similar or different levels of cultural and technical environment (Merriam, Krader, & List, 1995).

From Dubois his definition of ethnomusicology, this paper relates the facts of American society and history to the study of African American music and how the music gives back to their community through their mind, activities and society. This life asset later is interpreted as a better life for them and the whole world symbolically

### **Black Music in American History**

To start a story of African Americans' music in the US, we might want to take a look back in the era of slavery where their African roots and values entered the New World. Slaves who came to America were the horrible result of slave trade and

European colonialism. Then their rich identities and cultures acquired a new adaptation to the dislocation and despair inflicted by the slavery.

Black music has been told to bear witness to the horrors of slavery, the first years of emancipation, the burden of segregation and second-class citizenship, the striving for civil rights, and efforts of the black middle class to pursue prosperity and security (Peretti, 2009). It was more than pain for African Americans, their experience has made a great scar for life. Then, the lyrical cries of black street vendors in the eighteenth-century Philadelphia to the infectious dance rhythms of the Motown sound declared African American involvement in the nation's music, helping to create a sound now have experienced in the US (Brooks, 2003).

African Americans inherited a variety of ethnic groups with a long story of distinct and cultivated musical traditions, some were able to bring musical instruments with them or build new ones in the new country (Brooks, 2003). One of the musical instruments was the "banja" or "banshaw," now known as the banjo, just like the world-famous painting "The Banjo Lesson," by Henry Ossawa Tanner, 1893.



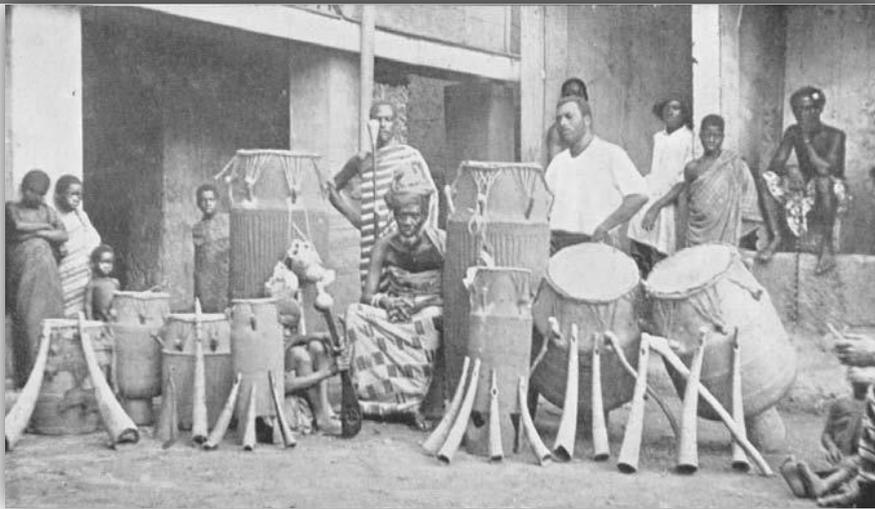
**Figure 1:**  
"The Banjo Lesson," by Henry Ossawa Tanner, 1893.  
Oil on canvas, 49" × 35½". Hampton University Museum.

The banjo and other musical instruments were mostly made from whatever materials they could gather and find. The music had brought more life than they ever had in the New World. A burgeoning slave trade saw Africans captured and captured and brought to America in bondage, separated from their relations and sold, leaving individuals with no point of familiarity: forced into slavery, on a new continent, without kin or social contacts (Sullivan, 2001). From "African-American Music as Rebellion: From Slavesong to Hip-hop" by Megan Sullivan, she said that out of the desolation came the unfortunate liberty for Africans to develop a new culture from their abrupt change of situation and remnants of their old lives carried in their minds and bodies with them to the New World.

Sullivan (2001) believed that subsequent generations of Africans gradually became African-Americans as a rich culture infused with music developed under the harsh conditions of slavery. Then Sullivan (2001) continued her opinion that African Americans created a distinctive music that sank its roots deeply into their American experience and drew it from it an amazing evolution of sound that has penetrated that racist fabric and pervaded the entirety of American culture.

Music became a way to remain connected to their African heritage while protesting the bleak conditions African Americans faced throughout history. Musical protest took on assorted forms and functions as Blacks strove to advance their social station while simultaneously retaining their cultural heritage (Sullivan, 2001)

Peretti (2009) mentioned in his research that African Americans have found that music was central to whatever social life and free time that masters permitted slaves to enjoy. We can only imagine how difficult it was for the slaves to escape from the horrible incidents in their daily lives, yet music provided a new world as a window for them to hope and enjoy their leisure times which were limited and rare.



**Figure 2:** An ensemble of traditional West African musical instruments, photographed in the early 1900s. Source: General Research and Reference Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden foundations.

As the slavery went on, “enslaved people were chattel and property under the law, but even judges and legislators were compelled to admit that they were human, possessed of free will, and were accorded a right to the provisions of life,” Peretti (2009) wrote. Thus, Peretti concluded that when whites observed slaves creating, feeling, and communing, they were confronted with the ambiguity surrounding the slave—a “thing” with a will, a subdued being who had the potential to act. This ambiguity made whites confused and uneasy (Peretti, 2009).

As same as each aspect of slave life, music too, came under the regulation. The drumming act by slaves was convinced by whites that it was a code to spread calls to insurrection over long distances which was considered as a rebellion act. Whites could not afford to lose slaves because of the plantation work field. That fear of the whites then led them to create law against drums. Since drums were banned by law, slaves used bones, wood, patten’ Juba (hands on the hips and thighs), and the heavy treading of their feet to supply the hypnotic rhythm. As in revival meetings, some participants were overcome with the spirit and fell unconscious. More than any other musical expression in slavery, the ring shout revealed the powerful, often latent survival of the African foundations of slave music and rituals.

Even as laws and social institutions strove to bind human beings as property and deprive them of a social existence, music helped them to re-create semblances of their ancestral communities and to retain their fundamental cultural rituals. In slave quarters and in the cities, music was at the center of black identity. After the Civil War, African Americans sought to take advantage of freedom, and their music achieved a new national prominence. Dangers and oppression persisted, but great change occurred, and the future would never again seem without promise (Peretti, 2009).

African-Americans frequently used music to counter the dehumanization as the slave owners in the United States subjugating their slaves physically, mentally, and spiritually through brutality and demeaning acts, music was used to boost morale and toughen themselves psychology (Sullivan, 2001). Sullivan emphasized slaves’ expression with an example of the humiliation slaves had to endure was the forced eating of juba (or jibba, jiba), a stew containing a week’s leftovers from the plantation-owner’s house, at times poured into an animal feeding trough for consumption (2001: 22).

Against the debasement of eating juba, African Americans made songs to protest their situation:

Juba this and Juba that  
Juba killed a yella’ cat  
Get over double trouble, Juba . . .  
Juba up, Juba down,  
Juba all around the town.  
Juba for Ma, Juba for Pa.  
Juba for your brother-in-law.

The sense of unity was conveyed by mentioning the pervasiveness of the problem that they were in the pain all together. It was their common experience which was being lifted up, thus slaves might be wide awake to see the reality and provoked the sense of rebelling.

Sullivan added more about these subversive messages that proclaimed support, unity and revolt, and even directions to the Underground Railroad:

Deep river, my home is over Jordan,  
Deep river, Lawd, I wan’ to cross  
over into camp ground.

Professor Lemuel Berry offers another interpretation, suggesting that the lyrics defiantly express escape to the North (“home” and “camp ground”) by crossing over the Ohio River (“Jordan”) (Ellison, 1989). The African American theme of spirituality came from their striving towards freedom from slavery, whether it was inspired by Christianity or not. Sullivan expanded her explanation by saying that The Christianity values might be represented through Biblical themes analogy and the condition of slavery, such as using Promised Land to indicate the northern nonslave states or Emancipation, and by paralleling the Jews’ bondage in Egypt to their own plight. They even acquired menacing currents, as in “Go Down, Moses”:

Go down, Moses.  
Way down in Egypt land  
Tell ol’ Pharaoh  
To let my people go!  
Thus spoke the Lord, bold Moses said,  
Let my people go.  
If not I’ll smite your firstborn dead.  
Let my people go (McAdoo, 1961).

The spirit of emancipation came from the power of music to bind people together and gather power from their numbers, with the potential to direct that united energy towards a common goal (Sullivan, 2001).

After the American Civil War ended with its Fugitive Slave Act, the music developed into the modern genres of blues and ragtime in the late of 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to the improvisation of a little song about a popular racehorse had led American music history to ragtime: “I-za gwine tuh Little Rock, Tuh put mah money on-a Proctuh Knott.” The extra syllables were the key additions, creating a vivid syncopation in the tune. “That sounds so ragged,” a witness supposedly said, and, the journalist proclaimed, “the name ‘ragtime’ was born.”

Ragtime was one of genres in African American music among plenty other genres which is still continuing to influence American music even though it was rooted the African origin. The other genres show us how this evolution of African American culture and expression illustrate the American culture which is consisted of a complex of cultural subdivisions.

The most controversial yet phenomenal African American music was expressed in the mid to late 1960s where it raised black experience and/or raise consciousness through cultural awareness; jazz. Young jazz musicians articulated the unity and racial solidarity of civil rights struggle in the US and let the society to see the African American community to cite their contribution to the political struggle. However, this kind of art had two sides: first, the artistic standards historically have been set by the larger white community and these most often had been antithetical to the experiences of black people. Second, many black artists had adopted the view that art should be separated from politics. That is, art should not be conceived of as an ideological weapon (Pinkney, 1978).

#### **Obama and Billie Holiday as the Representation of the Nation Heritage: Music for Freedom, Equality, and Identity**

Being the first African American president of the United States, Barack Obama has been seen as the great value of black achievement in pursuing an equality. During his administration, President Barack Obama has worked to improve the lives of all Americans, including African Americans, by providing economic and educational opportunities, improving healthcare coverage, working to ensure that the criminal justice system is applied fairly to all citizens, and championing workforce development to ensure we continue to develop and retain the strongest, most productive workforce in the world (Brown, 2016).

From the beginning of Obama’s administration, he had started an annual event White House Musical Event to celebrate the music that has helped shape America. For Obama, music has been a way to connect with people as he has been the first president to be so open about his musical taste (Müser, 2017). Obama, though, didn’t only hand musicians of color a microphone, he gave them a voice during an important historical moment.

During his presidency, the struggles of minorities in modern America grew arguably more visible. The deaths of Trayvon Martin, Alton Sterling and Philando Castile highlighted the tension between blacks and police, along with the rise of Black Lives Matter (Andrews, 2012).

In one of his annual White House Musical Events, Obama said that although the music performed during Friday’s taping of the musical show “is rooted in the African-American experience, it’s not just black music. It’s an essential part of the American experience” (Fernandez, 2016).

On May 28, 2010, President Obama issued historic proclamation for African American Music Month. Obama’s presidential proclamation said:

Music can tell a story, assuage our sorrows, provide blessing and redemption, and express a soul’s sublime and powerful beauty. It inspires us daily, giving voice to the human spirit. For many, including the African-American community, music unites individuals through a shared heritage. During African-American Music Appreciation Month, we celebrate the extraordinary legacy of African-American singers, composers, and musicians, as well as their indelible contributions to our Nation and our world.

Obama declared his pride of being an African American and found his identity related to others through music and the annual event was made to celebrate how far they have come along the way in the United States of America. He continued his proclamation that throughout American history, African-American music has conveyed the hopes and

hardships of a people who have struggled, persevered and overcome. Through centuries of injustice, music comforted slaves, fueled a cultural renaissance, and sustained a movement for equality. As in today, from the shores of Africa and the islands of the Caribbean to the jazz clubs of New Orleans and the music halls of Detroit, African-American music reflects the rich sounds of many experiences, cultures, and locales.

Furthermore, he added that African American styles of music have helped provide a common soundtrack for people of diverse cultures and backgrounds, and have joined Americans together not just on the dance floor, but also in our churches, in our public spaces, and in our homes.

In other words, African American music has helped us to finally see and enjoy the better world for all of us. From telling stories through music, communicating and delivering black legacy to the world, proclaiming the black pride, and etc., there were so many events influenced by African American music up to this moment.



**Figure 3:**

President Obama joins in singing “Sweet Home Chicago” during a concert in the East Room of the White House on Feb. 21, 2012. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

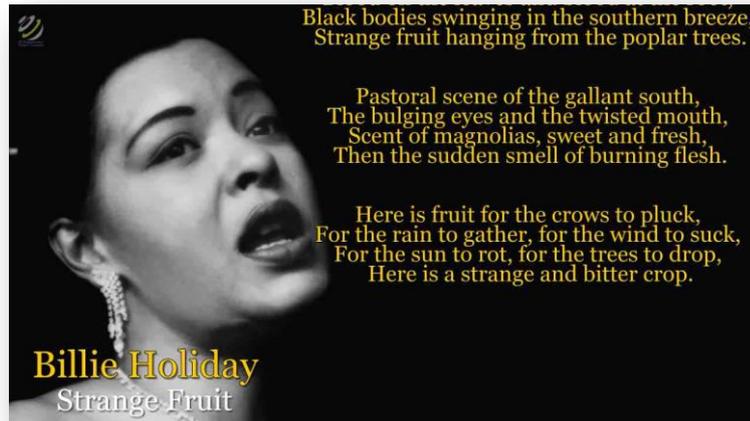
Obama’s personal taste of music can be seen through his memoir entitled “Dreams from My Father (1995)” which showed his admiration towards Billie Holiday’s song whose “willingness to endure.” In the memoir, Obama proclaimed his new ability to recognize an African American music by saying, “Her voice sounded different to me now. Beneath the layers of hurt, beneath the ragged laughter, I heard a willingness to endure. Endure-and make music that wasn’t there before” (Obama, 1995).

Billie Holiday was one of the African American singers who sang the painful truth of black people in the US. She sang some songs related and intended for African Americans but they turned out to be masterpieces. One of the song was “Strange Fruit” which delivered a horrifying Southern lynching in the US. The song had helped the Civil Rights Movements’ spirit, as if the song haunted both black and white communities and fed the anti-lynching campaign.

**Figure 3:**

The lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith, August 7, 1930





**Figure 4:**

"Strange Fruit" is a song performed most famously by Billie Holiday, who first sang and recorded it in 1939.

Throughout her life, Billie Holiday had been undergone many unfortunate events. From being blamed for the death of one's grandmother when six year old, to be raped at the age of ten, to be locked in a room with the body of a dead girl as a punishment when only twelve, and to spend some years as both a call girl and street prostitute is not the ideal training for a singer. However, Billie Holiday finally found her love of music and her ambition drove her to perform and succeed. Music let her tell the pain she had and made it into an art, which was actually influencing American society to face the truth of racism towards African Americans implicitly.

This is one of the proofs that music may heal the pain that the singer endure through his or her personal life, just like most African Americans in the US who let music to be an escape or their muse in pursuing a better life. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, black music songs were said to be coded messages of subversion against slaveholders, or that signaled escape. Yet, somehow in the present time, African Americans still feel underestimated and undervalued in the US. The reality of African American story then sometimes is documented through songs and let the society to listen to their stories musically.

Listening to songs seems to be easier than seeing the reality and admit it. African American music is a great part of American history and Obama was wise enough to celebrate it in his youth and continue to embrace it in the White House. His appreciation of African American music has made the society realize about how to accept our past, but move on to a better life ahead.

### **Conclusion**

African American music is one of the vital value in American history since it delivered a part of shameful American history and the great spirit of emancipation which later on leads them into a democracy. The music was sincere as it spoke the African Americans' real nature. They made musical instruments from raw materials to entertain themselves and create game and play songs during slavery era.

From slavery the fieldwork songs were created to boost up their moods or simply to survive the day. From fieldwork song which was a given music-cultural practice brought them together and resulted in the common sense of undivided faith. They started to believe that they shared the same discrimination and dehumanization in the new nation.

The new nation then led the establishment of the first autonomous black churches which came from the discrimination by white Methodists encouraged black parishioners in Philadelphia, New York, and Baltimore to create their own churches, which became the nucleus of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) denomination. Music then, united them in the same faith under Christianity.

African American music has probably made a deeper impression on American life than any other class of songs. The previous statement of John Tasker Howard suits this paper's discussion because African American music through its minstrel songs, then by way of ragtime, and later through the blues and jazz, the Negroid manner has permeated American popular music.

Through many phases of African Americans' life, music has brought them into great faith and spiritual journey. Music also leads them to inspire others with their truth, pain, suffering, struggles, blessing, and finally the concept of freedom. It was difficult for them to see world better with all the dehumanization in slavery, segregation in the Civil Rights Era, and long-term discrimination up to nowadays. By the end of the day, we can now see the better future of African Americans in the US. Yes, there are still some more struggles that they need to pursue, yet they have accomplished so much with Barack Obama as the living proof. The 44<sup>th</sup> President of the US was a proud African American and he had proven the world a better dream, more than the myth of American Dream.

To conclude, African American music has been expressing a specific function, social context, and historical period and mirroring four centuries of cultural evolutions and social change. As if it translates their history, positions, dreams and desires, it also unites the African Americans from time to time to go through the struggles together and documents their identity and view. It is

an African American music, not African anymore since it was created and developed in the US so that they deserve to be admitted as a huge part of American society.

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