

Jews, Music, and the Civil Rights Movement – Chat Log

Introductions

Harriet Shalat: Is anyone else signed up?

Harriet Shalat: NYC

Etta King: My name is Etta King. I am the Education Program Manager at JWA. We are based in Brookline, MA.

Harriet Shalat: I'm a retired reference librarian and a virtual volunteer with JWA. I update and add to info in the Encyclopedia and TWiH.

Harriet Shalat: I worked with Ellen...

Henry Neuwirth: you can't hear me?

Harriet Shalat: Yes, Frances Wisebart Jacobs and Bea Arthur. Did you know Bea served in WWII?

Marilyn Heiss: Hi all. Joining you from San Francisco

Lawrence Szenes-Strauss: Hi everyone. Just joined, and working on the setup as everyone else, I think.

Lawrence Szenes-Strauss: I'm a cantor working in Vancouver, BC.

Harriet Shalat: Frances was active in Denver in the 1800s and helped found what became the United Way.

Ellie Gettinger: Milwaukee

Henry Neuwirth: neither of those strategies are working for me.

Miriam Cantor-Stone: Hi everyone! I'm Miriam Cantor-Stone, the Education Assistant @ JWA!

Lawrence Szenes-Strauss: Another way to prevent an echo from your device is to wear earphones. That way your microphone can't hear your speaker.

Miriam Cantor-Stone: Good tip, Lawrence. Thanks!

Rachel Kasten: Hi everyone! Joining from Cincinnati, OH

Alison Westermann: Hello all - I'm here from El Paso, TX

Alison Westermann: Yup, it's small though

Miriam Cantor-Stone: Welcome, Alison! I'm originally from Houston, so it's great to see another Texan here!

Alison Westermann: better!

Rachel Kasten: I am the Assistant Director of Education & Youth Programs at Wise Temple, so a combination of formal and informal education programs.

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: Greetings, all! I'm here from outside Albany, New York.

Miriam Cantor-Stone: Welcome, Leah!

Marilyn Heiss: Hey Leah--great to see you!

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: Family Worship Coordinator at Congregation Gates of Heaven in Schenectady, NY

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: Hi, Marilyn!!! Hope all is well by you :)

Alison Westermann: Hi Leah & Rachel - go NewCAJE!

What do you already know about Freedom Summer?

Ellie Gettinger: It was 1964

Alison Westermann: Little bits & pieces, mostly nothing ;)

Ellie Gettinger: People went south to help register voters

Marilyn Heiss: Lots of young people went down to the south to help register voters

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: 60-70% of the buses coming down from the north were Jewish

Tamar Cytryn: very dangerous

Tamar Cytryn: busses were attacked

Harriet Shalat: I lived thru it, but was busy in college then.

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: Specific meetings between women in the north with women in the south

Miriam Cantor-Stone: <http://jwa.org/teach/profdev/webinars/freedom2013>

Marilyn Heiss: There's an example of one of the tests that were given online. It was posted in one of the lesson plans of Living Legacy. I used it in a class and it was very effective

Marilyn Heiss: Showed the kids how the discrimination was happening.

Miriam Cantor-Stone: The link I just posted is for the recording of the first Freedom Summer program, here's the link to register for the next one: https://jwa.adobeconnect.com/e7achljm5c8/event/event_info.html

Miriam Cantor-Stone: That's great, Marilyn, thanks for sharing your teaching experience!

Harriet Shalat: Andrew Goodman was a student at Queens College. His mom was an activist until her recent death.

Alison Westermann: That was an incredible photo

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: Link to the Recording of previous session? Where can we find it?

Miriam Cantor-Stone: <http://jwa.org/teach/profdev/webinars/freedom2013>

Next we read Heather Booth's letter to her brother Jon about her experiences and feelings during Freedom Summer.

Alison Westermann: I love the line about the religious quality of the singing

Ellie Gettinger: I love that she is showing the generational rift

Alison Westermann: That's universal

Marilyn Heiss: The link between singing "we shall overcome" and prayer is great

Lawrence Szenes-Strauss: Interesting that she sees a major value of the songs as being outside their words or explicit meaning. We might describe the experience today as meditative.

Alison Westermann: Good point, Lawrence

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: Stress on the idea of "youth has organized to fight

hatred and ignorance" contrasted with Booth's parents' concern for their child affecting their view on the Project as a whole. How great was the generational divide?

Marilyn Heiss: Also, the marking of the difference kinds of fear

Lawrence Szenes-Strauss: Building on that, how much of it was a generational divide, and how much was it a divide between young people worried about their cause and parents worried primarily about their children.

Ellie Gettinger: that's a great point, Lawrence

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: There's a great document from Living the Legacy 'To Chicky, love Dad' that talks about the support groups that were available to parents whose children had chosen to go South. I wonder how great the generational divide was in terms of the students from the North vs. the volunteers from the South?

How is the feeling you get when feeling in a group similar to and/or different from the feeling you get when you sing alone? What does it mean to you know that this letter was written by someone who is Jewish? Does it change the way you feel about the letter? When we are worshipping together as a congregation and we chant the V'ahavta together, is that group "singing"? How is it similar or different from other group singing?

Alison Westermann: Hope

Ellie Gettinger: Connector

Marilyn Heiss: helps conquer fears

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: Music is grounding and providing a connection to core principles, her reasons for her choices

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: It's interesting to see the Holocaust as a motivating factor in terms of the parallel process of opening addressing the Holocaust in Jewish American life at that time.

Alison Westermann: Huh, never made that connection before

Alison Westermann: No, I think I knew she was Jewish before we read the letter

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: The letter is multidenominational. It is not necessarily Jewish but is absolutely anchored in some type of core faith/principles

Alison Westermann: Reminds me of our JEDLAB conversations lately, eh, Leah?

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: Indeed:)

Alison Westermann: Singing on my own - personal, maybe prayer-like or to practice a song

Tamar Cytryn: singing in a group gives a sense of communal purpose

Alison Westermann: Singing in a group - performance, prayer in a worship service

Marilyn Heiss: There's a different energy when singing in a group--you can choose to really sing loud bolstered by the group, but also can be quieter and

link to singings of others.

Alison Westermann: Yes, what Marilyn said - linking your own voice to others

Alison Westermann: We're all connected

Marilyn Heiss: That's also how I often deal with the Shema--sometimes I want to "hear" myself, sometimes just hear others

Alison Westermann: That's a beautiful way to put it

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: I love the tie to the Shema. Hearing vs. being heard vs. being part of the whole.

Alison Westermann: Listening exercise - sing "We Shall Overcome" and listen for a) your own voice, b) your neighbor's voice, c) the voice of someone across the room

Etta King: Love that Alison!

Marilyn Heiss: Nice, Alison

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: Why, hello, lesson plan for tomorrow :) Thanks, Allison!

Alison Westermann: Thanks! I'm going to try it tomorrow with my 3rd grade students :) I teach in a Catholic school

Alison Westermann: You're welcome :)

Lawrence Szenes-Strauss: A lot of synagogue singing, being in Hebrew, isn't accessible to many congregants in terms of text comprehension, but those same people will often feel very strongly about it and describe it as the most important part of their synagogue experience. I think there's a connection between that phenomenon and Heather Booth's description of civil rights music transcending its own words.

Alison Westermann: we sang that today already (pre-K 3yos)

Marilyn Heiss: Very true, Lawrence

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: Lawrence - even though Booth understood the words? Are you talking about a feeling that transcends the words?

Lawrence Szenes-Strauss: For the most part, yes. Booth understands the words, but I think we've all sung songs in English without paying attention to what we were singing. Sometimes it's about the collective experience and not the poetry.

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: Agreed. Thanks for the clarification.

Then we listened to Betty Fikes' 1963 recording of "This Little Light of Mine." Etta asked what kind of feelings do you get from this song? Why do you think this song makes you feel this way? How would you describe the relationship between the words and the music? What else about the song affects the way you respond to it?

Alison Westermann: I recognize that recording!

Miriam Cantor-Stone: Anybody else dancing at their desks?? :)

Etta King: It's a good one. From the Smithsonian.

Alison Westermann: Oh yeah, dancing

Etta King: Miriam is dancing at her computer too!

Miriam Cantor-Stone: Guilty! :)

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: This is so rooted in gospel singing/tradition

Marilyn Heiss: What a great group moment :)

Alison Westermann: that's what our job is - explore the lyrics

Alison Westermann: Makes me think of preschool

Tamar Cytryn: strength

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: Repetitive. Low threshold for participation.

Marilyn Heiss: Centering on "light" which is something we can relate to on different levels

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: A pattern

Harriet Shalat: Simple lyrics; anyone can join in

Lawrence Szenes-Strauss: Repetition doesn't just make it easy to participate. In rhetoric, repetition is used for emphasis and building steam.

Lawrence Szenes-Strauss: "We will fight them on the beaches, we will fight them on the landing grounds, etc."

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: Non-violent power and solidarity

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: An interesting question: where are there incidents where the music from Freedom Summer travel back north and into the Jewish musical tradition?

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: *were

Ellie Gettinger: that sounds like a great dissertation

Alison Westermann: Hm, let's do a new album, Leah!

Etta King: I would love to guest on that album, Leah and Alison!

Etta then introduced Henry Neuwirth to talk about the power of music in organizing and social justice work. He mentioned several of his influences, such as Pete Seeger and protest songs like "This Little Light of Mine." He also gave advice on how to write a protest song as a group activity.

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: Clearwater!!!!

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: Croton on Harmon, NY

Harriet Shalat: Croton-on Hudson, I think...

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: That, too :)

Etta King: for more info on Pete Seeger:

<http://www.peteseegermusic.com/>

Lawrence Szenes-Strauss: "My feet were praying."

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: Croton Harmon is the train station

Etta King: Yes, praying with your feet.

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: Abraham Joshua Heschel

Etta King: Key devices include: Chorus with a central metaphor (This little light) with verses that talked about what is at stake, details, and specifics

Etta King: You can use any two chords, but if you know G,C, and D on the

guitar, you can play a protest song.

Etta King: Step 1: Think of a Metaphor

Etta King: Step 2: Think of things that make you angry (or things that you want to change)

Etta King: Think about what you are passionate about. Frame it in a way that is about everyone in the room or in the community.

Alison Westermann: I have to go, my next class is coming up

Alison Westermann: Bye!

The Lino Board was used to provide a space for participants to try writing their own protest song – add yours!

Miriam Cantor-Stone:

<http://linoit.com/users/jwaeducation/canvases/Freedom%20Song%20Lyrics>

Tamar Cytryn: thank you

Leah Wolff-Pellingra: Thank you, Etta!

Lawrence Szenes-Strauss: Thanks!

Miriam Cantor-Stone: Thanks for coming, everyone!

Harriet Shalat: Thanks.

Etta King: Thank you all for coming! We hope to see you again in the future!