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“Charleston, Goddam”: An Editorial Introduction to ACT 14.2

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Brent C. Talbot, *Associate Editor*

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“Charleston, Goddam”: An Editorial Introduction to ACT 14.2

Brent C. Talbot, Associate Editor

Abstract

In this editorial, I trace the events following the tragic and racist shootings that occurred at the A.M.E. church in Charleston, South Carolina on June 17, 2015. Drawing upon anti-racist scholars and musical activists, I make a case for getting political and for cultivating activism in our classrooms. I ask our field to critically reflect upon our participation in a system that advantages Whites. I suggest that one possibility to engage in dialogue around issues of race is to encourage an environment of musical creativity where—together with students—teachers study and write music that speaks to our times and addresses issues of social justice within our local communities and across the globe.

Keywords: *Social Justice, Racism, Critical Pedagogy, Anti-Racist Pedagogy, Activism*

[Simone \(1964\)](#)

*Alabama's gotten me so upset
Tennessee made me lose my rest
And everybody knows about
Mississippi, Goddam!*

[Common & Hathaway \(2015\)](#)

*Mississippi, Goddam
Ferguson, Goddam
Staten Island, Goddam
Baltimore, Goddam
America, dam.*

Charleston, Goddam! It was Wednesday night of the 27th MayDay Group Colloquium held in New Orleans, Louisiana when Dylann Roof, a 21-year-old White male, attended a bible study with thirteen other people at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. After sitting with the group for over an hour, Roof pulled a gun from his fanny pack and aimed it at 87-year old Susie Jackson, one of the attendees. Jackson's nephew, 26-year old Tywanza Sanders, tried to talk Roof down and asked him why he was attacking them. The

shooter responded, “I have to do it. You rape our women and you’re taking over our country. And you have to go.” Sanders dove in front of his aunt and was the first of nine to be shot (Borden, Horwitz, and Markon 2015).¹

How could this happen?

I struggled to process the horrifying events that had taken place, experiencing so many emotions while reading the news in my New Orleans hotel room. How could someone do this? Where does someone learn to embody that much hate? What can *I* do about this? I felt the wind was knocked out of me, like someone had punched me in the gut. Not being near a piano, I took to writing poetry. I had not written poetry since seventh grade English class, but it was this medium that called to me and allowed me to express my feelings. I wrote:

I am exhaustion.
I am shame.
I am weary.
I place blame.

I am distracted.
I am lame.
I am quiet.
I've been tamed.

I am angry.
I am pain.
I am senseless.
I am to blame.

It became clear to me after writing this poem, that what I was feeling was outrage. Outrage at Dylann Roof. Outrage at yet another tragic contribution to—what I can only imagine is—the fear, tension, and pain of living each day as a Black person in the United States. Outrage at racism, at ignorance, at the lies of the grand narratives of *the Land of the Free!*

The day after the shootings, many flags—including those at the South Carolina State House—were flown at half-staff; however, the Confederate battle flag² flying over the Confederate monument near the South Carolina State House was not. The symbolic violence represented by this flag—a symbol of racism—was not lost on me. It flew high above the other lowered flags as if supporting Dylann Roof’s actions.³ According to South Carolina law, however, alteration of the flag was prohibited without the consent of two-thirds of the state legislature.⁴ The flagpole also lacked a pulley system, meaning the flag could only be removed and not flown at half-staff. Calls were made to remove the Confederate battle flag from State House grounds and debates over the context of its symbolic nature were renewed by several prominent figures (Rogers 2015). News

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articles, memes, and various political posts hit the social media outlets, and on Saturday following the event, several thousand people gathered in front of the South Carolina State House to protest.

On my return flight from the colloquium, I began wondering what we can do as an organization. In what ways can we acknowledge these events? How can we develop greater dialogue at our colloquia or in our publications around these experiences? How can we draw upon *Action Ideal III*⁵ to guide ourselves and other music educators in addressing issues surrounding race? I came away after the colloquium feeling we needed to take an opportunity to renew our activism together, to acknowledge the many events of this past year, to join those on the front lines, and to demonstrate our “[belief in Action for Change](#).”

While familiarizing myself with the papers in this issue—many of which draw upon critical pedagogy and anti-racist literature—I realized I was sitting on an opportunity to develop such dialogue. As I began exploring the literature, however, I was soon confronted by my Whiteness⁶ and quickly discovered I had some more unpacking to do of my own White privilege.⁷ My positionality as a White-male scholar was just one example of privilege that needed consideration and acknowledgement. As Juliet Hess (2015) points out in our previous issue of ACT:

In situations where a person of color may be shut down for being ‘angry’ or ‘having an agenda,’ my own positionality is often read as ‘neutral,’ allowing me to start a discussion [about race and White privilege]—a terrible irony in the work of anti-racism. (68)

Awareness of privilege, understanding how and where it operates, and recognition of one’s positionality and participation in it requires consistent attention. With this in mind, I dove further into the literature, analyzed news articles, watched documentaries, listened to many protest songs, and engaged in countless discussions with colleagues and friends who all challenged my thinking in different ways. Through a reflective process, I began to discover my voice—one that could be situated within a long history of many outraged voices who have spoken and are speaking on such matters.

“Back to Life, Back to Reality” in the Confederate Flag Waving Northern US

On the Monday following my return from the colloquium in New Orleans, I went for a run through the beautiful battlefields of the national park in Gettysburg, PA where I live.⁸ Along my journey, I became hyper aware of the many Confederate battle flags flying from local homes, attached to people’s trucks and motorcycles, and displayed in business windows. It was also on this Monday, that South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley—flanked by elected officials of both parties—called for the flag to be removed by the state legislature, saying that: “While the flag was an integral part of our past, it does not represent our future” (Niquette 2015). Seeing the Confederate battle flag as I ran through the town upset me. How could I have just spent a week in Louisiana, the “Deep South,” and not once seen the Confederate battle flag, yet upon returning to Pennsylvania, a state in the North, I see it paraded all over town?

Wanting to take action, I photographed every Confederate battle flag I encountered in our community over the course of one week. I collected over forty photos of flags stuck in burger buns, hanging from houses, worn as t-shirts or hats, and flying off the back of pick-up trucks. I posted a collage of these photos to various forums online and attached a brief statement requesting that the Confederate battle flag be removed from our community and from public display across our nation. By requesting its removal, I was arguing for educating and holding people accountable for understanding that the flag stands as an historical symbol for White supremacy and state-sponsored racism—an ideal against which millions of Americans have fought and died. Like others, I suggested its appropriate place was in museums—like the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum—where we could learn about its history. I felt justified in making these claims because I frequently see the tension carried in the bodies of students, colleagues, and friends of color who live or who visit Gettysburg. Seeing these physical reactions affirms to me that the Confederate battle flag is indeed a weapon that continues to instill fear—an artifact of terror.⁹

As debate around the Confederate battle flag continued in the US media, people gathered on the town square in Gettysburg throughout the week to show their support for the flag. Similarly, in Charleston, citizens rallied at the State Capitol. On Friday,

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June 26, 2015, during his [eulogy](#) of Rev. Clementa Pinckney before 5,000 congregants at the College of Charleston, President Obama acknowledged that the shooting had catalyzed a broad movement to remove the flag from official public display, saying:

For too long, we were blind to the pain that the Confederate flag stirred in too many of our citizens . . . For many—Black and White—that flag was a reminder of systemic oppression and racial subjugation. We see that now. Removing the flag from this state’s capitol would not be an act of political correctness; it would not be an insult to the valor of Confederate soldiers. It would simply be an acknowledgment that the cause for which they fought—the cause of slavery—was wrong—the imposition of Jim Crow after the Civil War, the resistance to civil rights for all people was wrong. (Obama 2015)

This was a powerful moment in US history. A sitting US president¹⁰ said, “[T]he cause for which [the South] fought . . . was wrong.” Finally, a person of significant stature and political power had dared to speak out against systemic racism. This was surprising to many of us in the US because President Obama had not talked much on the issue of race since he was elected to office in 2008. It reminded me of the moment in the documentary about civil rights activist Nina Simone, titled *What Happened, Miss Simone?*, when comedian and activist Dick Gregory—speaking about Simone’s protest song, “Mississippi, Goddam”—said: “If you look at all the suffering Black folks went through, not one Black man would dare say ‘Mississippi, Goddam.’ We all wanted to say it. She said it” (Garbus 2015). Yes, Nina Simone fearlessly said it at a time when other public figures would not—and as the documentary so perfectly illustrates—she also paid a price for speaking out.¹¹ The song was banned in several states and multiple shows were cancelled. The immediate White-backlash was intense, however, in 1965 she found solace with the marchers in Selma, performing the song to tens of thousands.

“Mississippi, Goddam” was a reaction to the news reports following the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing in 1963, which killed four young Black girls who had just concluded a bible study. The event was the catalyst that ultimately encouraged the performer to risk the lucrative security of her career in order to pursue activism—the medium at the forefront of this activism was her music. Where is that type of risk-taking now? To say what he did about the South, President Obama surely took a

political risk in alienating a large population of voters for the Democratic party, but it was certainly done by first assessing the polling data. Where have all the *real* risk-takers gone?

“This Flag Comes Down Today”

Bree Newsome, a 30-year-old African American woman from North Carolina, was watching the President’s speech as she prepared to remove the Confederate battle flag from the grounds of the State Capitol the next day. On Saturday, June 27 at 5:30 AM Newsome shimmied up the 30-foot pole to unhook and bring down the Confederate battle flag. She was assisted by a team of activists, including Jimmy Tyson, a 30-year-old White man from North Carolina who accompanied and spotted her while she was on the pole.

After being released from jail, Newsome published a [statement](#) the following Tuesday, saying:

Earlier this week I gathered with a small group of concerned citizens, both Black and White, who represented various walks of life, spiritual beliefs, gender identities and sexual orientations . . . We discussed it and decided to remove the flag immediately, both as an act of civil disobedience and as a demonstration of the power people have when we work together. Achieving this would require many roles, including someone who must volunteer to scale the pole and remove the flag. It was decided that this role should go to a Black woman and that a White man should be the one to help her over the fence as a sign that our alliance transcended both racial and gender divides. We made this decision because for us, this is not simply about a flag, but rather it is about abolishing the spirit of hatred and oppression in all its forms. (Taylor 2015)

Her fearless actions and eloquent words resonated strongly with the current activist movement in the US:

For far too long, white supremacy has dominated the politics of America resulting in the creation of racist laws and cultural practices designed to subjugate non-Whites . . . And the emblem of the Confederacy, the stars and bars, in all its manifestations, has long been the most recognizable banner of this political ideology. It’s the banner of racial intimidation and fear whose popularity experiences an uptick whenever black Americans appear to be making gains economically and politically in this country. (Taylor 2015)

Not even an hour later after Newsome removed it, the Confederate battle flag was ordered to be put back up. The officers who were on duty and charged to do this task were Black. Newsome pointed out the symbolic significance of this in an [interview](#) on *DemocracyNow!*, saying:

And I mean that's a powerful statement as well. [A] Black person who works for the state was required to put this flag up because of a law that was put into place by a racist legislator in the 1960s to oppose integration. (Goodman 2015)

On July 6–9, 2015, the South Carolina Senate debated whether to remove the Confederate battle flag from display outside the South Carolina State House. There was concern that the actions of Bree Newsome and her small group of “concerned citizens” would cause a backlash in the state legislature. On July 9th, however, following 13 hours of debate, the House approved the bill to remove the flag by a two-thirds majority (94–20). Governor Nikki Haley signed the bill that same day and on July 10th the Confederate battle flag was taken down (Trueong 2015).

The Need for an Informed and Engaged Population

So what does this all mean and why am I writing about a series of news reports many people could have collected and read on their own? First, the discourses¹² circulating around events like the Charleston shootings inevitably shape individuals' and communities' beliefs, identities, and praxes. Engagement with these discourses creates normative associations with various beliefs and ultimately leads to a performativity of those beliefs.¹³ It is my hope that music teachers will choose to engage with the discourse associated with these events in order to better understand ourselves as individuals and as communities in relation to others.¹⁴ Secondly, I am experiencing more and more that students (and people in general) are *not* reading news beyond mere headlines or summarizing (and often distorted and marketed) versions distributed through social media. It is my desire that forums in music education, such as this one, may provide greater context surrounding important historical and cultural events, not only as a situated record that can be accessed later, but also as a way to support

engagement in meaningful and informed dialogue with students and colleagues about issues of oppression and social justice.¹⁵

We need to look no further than the experiences this past year in Ferguson, Missouri; Staten Island, New York; Baltimore, Maryland; and Charleston, South Carolina to realize we are experiencing a renewed moment in civil rights for the United States. The oppressed are speaking out and demonstrating their frustrations, but are we listening? Or are we distracted by the mechanisms of control—the multitude of myth generators and entertainment—used and controlled by the oppressors?

In 1964, activist and playwright, Lorraine Hansberry, gave a beautiful speech, entitled [“The Black Revolution and the White Backlash,”](#) at a town hall forum in New York City sponsored by The Association of Artists for Freedom. She spoke about her frustrations of working hard as an artist to communicate to the world the struggle for freedom, only to be ignored or systemically silenced¹⁶:

[S]ince 1619, Negroes have tried every method of communication, of transformation of their situation from petition to the vote, everything. We've tried it all. There isn't anything that hasn't been exhausted . . . The problem is we have to find some way with these dialogues to show and to encourage the white liberal to stop being a liberal and become an American radical. . . . [W]hen that becomes true, some of the really eloquent things that were said before about the basic fabric of our society, which after all, is the thing which must be changed, you know, to really solve the problem, you know. The basic organization of American society is the thing that has Negroes in the situation that they are in and never let us lose sight of it. (Hansberry 1964)

In this speech, Hansberry is speaking about systemic racism¹⁷ when she says that the thing that must be changed is the “very fabric of our society.” She explicates that we cannot wait for change to occur by the hands of others, but instead must work tirelessly to change the consciousness of the oppressed and the oppressor; that the ideas, beliefs, thinking, and laws that govern our societies have many people—regardless of position or identity—enacting the legacies of a past created in the image of those who do not necessarily represent the ideas, beliefs, and identities of our present. Hansberry (see also Bradley 2006, 2007; Howard 2006; Marx 2006) reminds us that a way out of this mess is to enter into dialogue, reflection, and action with each other. One of the big

hurdles in engaging in dialogue as praxis, however, is convincing sympathizers (who Hansberry, in the above passage, labels liberals) to act and join the struggle for a more equal and just society—for their resistance to participation is an act of oppression itself. For the humanization of all people requires that those of us in the position of advantage—who often are unaware of our participation in a system of oppression—must willingly give up some of the advantages afforded us since birth.¹⁸

To change the conditions in which we live and work, we—as musicians, teachers, and teacher educators—must engage with an anti-racist pedagogy (Dei 2000, 2003; Bradley 2006, 2007; Hess 2015)¹⁹—one that as Rebollo-Gill and Moras (2006) point out, contains “introspective assessments of our own social locations as educators” (391). This type of work confronts the culture of domination through a two-stage process. Freire (2006) explains:

In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation. In both stages, it is always through action in depth that the culture of domination is culturally confronted. In the first stage this confrontation occurs through the change in the way the oppressed perceive the world of oppression; in the second stage, through the expulsion of the myths created and developed in the old order, which like specters haunt the new structure emerging from the revolutionary transformation. (54–5)

Myths—the very things we often unknowingly perpetuate in our own scholarship and teaching—silence the voices of the oppressed. How many of us are guilty of conducting research in the ivory tower with populations under the guise of “access?” What does having “access” really mean? To me—and I am certainly guilty of this—it is complacency (and more often laziness) with continued participation in a system that all too often restricts who we see, who we hear, and from whom we can learn. What does having “access” *really* do but perpetuate and reflect what is familiar, known, and safe, blinding us from seeing those who do not have full access to the system.

We need to do research outside our familiar systems instead of navel-gazing at our privileged selves. We need to get out and hear and write about the stories of

musicians, students, teachers, and teacher educators who are less easy to access, who are not easily classified under the myths of such discursive labels as: “k-12 music teacher,” “ensemble director,” “pre-service teacher,” “student teacher,” etc. So often we research the populations in front of us, the ones we know, the ones we teach, that we perpetuate the same stories and myths, allowing us to ignore the fuller picture. If we actually looked deeper, we would find our profession and the practices, resources and tools we employ contribute to a system of oppression and marginalization of so many identities, practices, repertoire, and ways of musicking.

As Freire (2006) says, “To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity” (47). As music teachers, we have the power to create new situations, even when we may feel the pressures to conform to the dominating practices of our spaces for learning. We cannot, however, as Hansberry warns, stand idly by and wait for change to occur, but instead must develop—as a community of learners—a culture of critical reflection and action that will lead to challenging systematically oppressive and racist forms of education.

Cultivating Activism in Our Music Classrooms

One important contribution to any movement of activism is the development of greater awareness of the stories, music, and scholarship of those whose voices have been systemically silenced or forgotten. Another is through engagement with educational projects that are carried out in the world, with the world, and with each other.²⁰ To begin, we must—with our students and colleagues—critically question “our understandings of society, schooling and pedagogy” (Smyth 2011). We can then use our skills as learners and researchers to explore topics and events occurring in our local communities and across the nation. Continually throughout this process, we must also reflect upon and inform ourselves about the heroes and heroines of our past and present.²¹

Nina Simone and Bree Newsome provide two powerful examples of activists from the past and present who share similar discourse and who use music to express their

ideas. The events described at the onset of this editorial are written to contextualize the work of both these heroines. From this type of contextualization, teachers and students can dialogue and explore together the what, why, and how questions needed to address change in our communities. This can occur through a variety of creative educational projects (e.g., writing protest music) that connect and support modern day struggles with those of the past.

Nina Simone

*I'll tell you what freedom is to me:
NO FEAR! I mean really, no fear.²²*

*[I want lyrics] that will make black
children all over the world feel good
about themselves forever.²³*

Bree Newsome

*I refuse to be ruled by fear. How can
America be free and be ruled by fear?
How can anyone be?²⁴*

*I did it for all the fierce black women on
the front lines of the movement and for all
the little black girls who are watching us.*

Nina Simone's activism is reflected throughout the modern-day civil rights movement. Her words continue to inspire a new generation of activists. Simone said once in a 1970 interview, "I choose to reflect the times and the situations in which I find myself. How can you be an artist and not reflect the times?"²⁵ Nina Simone reflected the struggles of her times by writing "Mississippi, Goddam" following the church bombings in Montgomery, Alabama that occurred September 15, 1963. Fifty-one years later, following the protests in Ferguson, Missouri, Bree Newsome reflected the struggles of her times by writing "StayStrong: A Love Song to Freedom Fighters." It is in this piece that one clearly sees the inspiration Newsome draws from Nina Simone's music and interviews.

Excerpt from a song by Bree Newsome titled,
[Stay Strong: A Love Song to Freedom Fighters](#)

*Weighing heavy on my mind
Tryna find that word to define how I feel
Cause every time I recline
Something goes down to remind me
the dream ain't real²⁶
And it's jolting to me
to realize all the lies²⁷
it's insulting to me*

But that's the burden of the young, black and gifted²⁸
tryna stay lifted
in a world that keeps us stunted
just cause we pigmented
They say go be exceptional
and professional
but them khakis can't fix
what is institutional²⁹
*So we say f*** it*
Cause we ain't got no time for a summit
They tryna wipe us out
cause they don't want no real republic
and when we broach the subject
they try to deflect
Drag a name through the mud
they ain't got no respect
and yet³⁰
you want me to respect authority
It don't make you right just cause you majority
Y'all be quoting King while you pushing a button
to drop some bombs on some babies
like you ain't doing nothing
that's why you aint got no jurisdiction with me
can't handcuff knowledge, so Ms. Bree stay free
I went through college, in the hood I be
spreading love to my brothers and my sister I keep³¹

In her memoir (1991), *I Put A Spell on You*, Nina Simone wrote, “The protest years were over not just for me but for a whole generation and in music, just like in politics, many of the greatest talents were dead or in exile and their place was filled by third-rate imitators” (135). The importance of these statements cannot be overlooked. Nina Simone was at the heart of a social and cultural movement to change the conditions of Black people in the US and across the globe. She provided a strong example for what it means to take risks as a musician, as an artist, as a teacher, as a learner. We are all responsible for continually renewing the civil rights movement in order to improve the conditions in which we live. Nina Simone and Bree Newsome risked much by speaking out. How much are we willing to risk as music teachers operating in a mostly White profession? How willing are we to use music to speak out against injustices in our communities, in our nation, in our world?

In his eulogy for Rev. Pinckney, President Obama (2015) charged the nation not to become complacent, not to move on to the next distraction, but to keep our attention on this moment, to deal with the “truths about the prejudice that still infects our society.” He said:

To settle for symbolic gestures without following up with the hard work of more lasting change—that’s how we lose our way again. It would be a refutation of the forgiveness expressed by those [Charleston, SC] families if we merely slipped into old habits, whereby those who disagree with us are not merely wrong but bad; where we shout instead of listen; where we barricade ourselves behind preconceived notions or well-practiced cynicism.

Newsome (2014) echoed this:

I encourage everyone to understand the history, recognize the problems of the present and take action to show the world that the status quo is not acceptable. The last few days have confirmed to me that people understand the importance of action and are ready to take such action. Whether the topic is trending nationally or it’s an issue affecting our local communities, those of us who are conscious must do what is right in this moment. And we must do it without fear. New eras require new models of leadership. This is a multi-leader movement. I believe that. I stand by that. I am because we are. I am one of many . . . I see no greater moral cause than liberation, equality and justice for all God’s people. What better reason to risk your own freedom than to fight for the freedom of others?

So let us cultivate a climate of activism in our field. Let us seize this moment to renew our commitment to civil rights so that events like those that occurred in Charleston, SC never happen again.³² Let us—as our Action Ideal III states—be “agents of social change who are locally and globally bound.” Let us “create, sustain, and contribute to reshaping musics, ways of knowing music, and spaces where musicing takes places.” Let us be music educators who—along with students—work “to provide equitable, diverse, and inclusive music learning practices.”

One possibility for music teachers to work towards this action ideal is to encourage an environment of musical creativity where we study and write music that speaks to our times and addresses issues of social justice within our local communities and across the globe. In this way, we can heed Nina Simone and “choose to reflect the

times and the situations in which [we] find [ourselves]” and ask, “How can [we] be [artists] and not reflect the times?” Yet perhaps a more important question for us might be: How can we be music teachers and not reflect the times?

This Issue

In this issue we offer five articles that challenge us to incorporate concepts found in anti-racist and critical pedagogies. **Michelle Rampal**, for example, calls on all “music educators of all races to have earnest conversations and [to] take a stance against racism and oppression.” She encourages “practicing music educators and students to join scholars in questioning if the traditional trappings of our pedagogical heritage are truly meeting the needs of all students.” She uses an anti-racist pedagogy as a way for teachers to consider how various aspects of their practice may impact opportunities for people of color. In doing so, Rampal argues, “music educators can assume a powerful role in shaping school culture, providing a space to explore the intersections of culture, power, and identity.”

Using an anti-racist lens, **Juliet Hess**, explores a composition she wrote five years ago about the state of indigenous music in the academy, along with an accompanying research paper. In this work within a work, she reflects on her “firmly binary thinking” and the “changes that have occurred in [her] thinking since that time.” Through this experiment, Hess challenges us to rethink “whose knowledge is valued” in the academy. She suggests that like other disciplines have done, perhaps music education might consider hiring a specialist in an outside field, e.g. African and Caribbean Studies, who would work within the School of Music to focus not only on music, but also on issues of equity, race, and contextual histories. She writes about the helpful nature of distancing oneself from one’s work in order to see how change is possible over time.

In an autoethnographic article, **Daniel J. Shevock** examines his teaching praxis as he attempted to integrate Freirean pedagogy into a university-level small ensemble jazz class. He learned that “this type of pedagogy is difficult to implement in a musical performance ensemble, and that Freirean pedagogy requires continued reflective

praxis.” Shevock points out that a crucial component of any music course that incorporates a Freirean approach would be to draw upon the interests and perspectives of the students and to co-construct knowledge together. One suggestion he offers towards this goal is to co-construct the syllabus with the students in a performance ensemble. Shevock acknowledges some limitations of incorporating Freirean pedagogy into a performance ensemble, but overall felt that the attempt itself enhanced the confidence and ability of the students as they were engaged in various forms of dialogue and were challenged to take more ownership of their learning.

Otto Muller connects John Cage’s use of chance techniques to relinquish control in his practice as a composer to Freirean pedagogical techniques that facilitate shared learning and experimentation. He suggests that the “tenets of Critical Pedagogy, as laid out by Paulo Freire in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, offer insights into the structures and strategies implicit in John Cage’s work as an educator.” Muller draws upon a survey of accounts by former students of Cage, as well as Cage’s writings on education to show that Cage’s approach to both classroom and individualized teaching was characterized by the principles of co-intentional dialogue, praxis, holistic engagement, and an awareness of education as a moral and political act. Muller shows how their work “models and makes visible a dynamic engagement with postcolonial complexities and contingencies.” As Giroux (1993) points out, what makes their work important is “that it does not stand still. It is not a text for but against cultural monumentalism, one that offers itself up to different readings, audiences, and contexts.”

Rohan Sagar and David Hebert take us to Guyana—a multi-ethnic and postcolonial nation in Latin America. Their article examines the diverse social and cultural heritages of colonial and post-colonial Guyana and proposes how local music traditions and their representation could potentially work within a structured music curriculum. They suggest that, “historical music genres representative of all ethnic groups provide insights into the collective heritage of a diverse nation.” They consider evidence of adaptation that includes cognizance of diversity, creolization, cross-fertilization and awareness of socio-economic congruencies within the three major ethnic groups (Indigenous, African, and East Indian) found in Guyana. Their research

attempts to do three things “locate within these musics socially thematic ideas and cultural values, establish a nexus between performances of traditional music and harmonious relationships supporting empathy, and validate the data based on strategies of historical ethnomusicology.” They offer their research as a potential study that could also be explored in other Caribbean, Central and South American societies.

Finally, this issue offers a review essay by **Roberta Lamb** of *El Sistema: Orchestrating Venezuela’s Youth* by Geoffrey Baker. As she notes in the review, her interest in Baker’s book was sparked by the development of an El Sistema program in Kingston, Ontario, where she works as a music education professor. Even though ACT has not previously published book reviews, it is clear in our submission guidelines that we “welcome . . . critiques of publications relevant to music education . . .” of this nature. This particular review interests ACT due to the increasingly international appeal of El Sistema, a music education program that aims to promote social justice—a core ideal of the MayDay Group. Consequently, a forthcoming issue of ACT, guest edited by Geoffrey Baker, will include a collection of articles from international scholars who critically examine El Sistema.

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Notes

¹ The dead included: 54-year-old Cynthia Marie Graham Hurd, manager for the Charleston County Public Library system; 87-year-old Susie Jackson; 70-year-old Ethel Lee Lance, the church's sexton; 49-year-old Depayne Middleton-Doctor, an admissions coordinator at Southern Wesleyan University, 41-year-old Clementa C. Pinckney, the church's pastor and a South Carolina state senator; 26-year-old Tywanza Sanders; 74-year-old Daniel Simmons, a pastor at Greater Zion A.M.E. Church in Awendaw, SC; 45-year-old Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, a high school speech therapist and track coach; and 59-year-old Myra Thompson, a bible study teacher (Phelps 2015).

² The Confederate battle flag was used by the army of Northern Virginia during the United States Civil War (1861–1865). It is the symbol most often used to represent the eleven Southern states that seceded from the Union in 1860 and 1861 over interests to maintain slavery and to extend it into the Western territories. Many who display the flag today, claim to as an expression supporting states rights or Southern culture. Displaying the Confederate battle flag has always been controversial due to the flag's historical associations with slavery, racism, and white supremacy movements.

³ This brought to mind Bourdieu's (1991) notion of symbolic power: "A symbolic power is a power which presupposes recognition, that is, misrecognition of the violence that is exercised through it" (209).

⁴ South Carolina began flying the flag over the dome of the Capitol in Columbia in 1961 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Civil War. Other Southern states held similar events, including Mississippi, which incorporated the Confederate battle flag into its state flag altogether. However, instead of removing the flag from the State Capitol after the anniversary, South Carolina legislators voted to keep flying it as the struggle to end discrimination against blacks was gaining attention across the country. In 2000, the Confederate battle flag was removed from the dome as part of a compromise reached with Democratic black lawmakers and placed on the grounds, unable to be removed or lowered without two-thirds vote.

⁵ III. As agents of social change who are locally and globally bound, we create, sustain, and contribute to reshaping musics, ways of knowing music, and spaces where musicing takes place. Thus, music educators must always strive to provide equitable, diverse, and inclusive music learning practices.

Musical cultures are human-driven, living processes, not merely sets of works or established practices. Musical activity develops out of an emergent synergy of change and tradition within human contexts and communities of practice. Thus, we need to foster the capacity for change in our musical and educational traditions.

- a. How can music educators address social issues surrounding equality and privilege that stem from identity constructions such as socioeconomic status, ability, race, sexual orientation, age, gender, sex, ethnicity, and religion, etc.?
- b. How can we work towards increased accessibility and equity in music curricula for all learners?
- c. How can we create continuously developing, socially responsive, and sustainable partnerships for musical activity within our local communities?
- d. How can engagement with these local partnerships develop increased sensitivity and awareness in ourselves as globally bound musicians?

⁶ Whiteness is a social construction, an ideology tied to social status. W.E.B. Dubois, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Ruth Frankenberg, and Theodore Allen are some of the early contributors of a body of literature that addresses Whiteness. A central tenet of this concept is a discursive formation and construction of history through the lens of racial superiority, where the voices of White authors, artists, musicians, and historians construct the narrative by which we live as a society.

⁷ Peggy McIntosh (2004) describes White privilege as “the invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks.” She explains, “As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something which puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage” (178).

⁸ This park surrounds the town of Gettysburg, PA and is a place millions of visitors come to learn about one of the most significant battles of the American Civil War, a three-day battle (July 1-3, 1863) that claimed over 53,000 lives.

⁹ bell hooks’s speaks of such terror in her (1992) article “Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination.” She says, “To name that whiteness in the black imagination is often a representation of terror: one must face a palimpsest of written histories that erase and deny, that reinvent the past to make the present vision of racial harmony and pluralism more plausible. To bear the burden of memory one must willingly journey to places long uninhabited, searching the debris of history for traces of the unforgettable, all knowledge of which has been suppressed” (342).

¹⁰ Also made powerful because he is the first Black president of the US.

¹¹ In his 1903 book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. DuBois articulates the challenges of speaking out as a Black person in the United States. He introduces two important concepts that address this concern: “Double-consciousness,” which he defines in Chapter 1 as a sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity;” and the metaphorical “veil” that reflects the color line and differences in economic, political, and social opportunities between Blacks and Whites. DuBois argues that this veil is worn by all African Americans and shapes their world view in both positive and negative ways.

¹² Language, symbols, and signs used in a particular place and time to enact certain meanings.

¹³ In *Oh That Magic Feeling! Multicultural Human Subjectivity, Community, and Fascism’s Footprints*, Deb Bradley (2009) beautifully articulates how significant moments, occurring within singular contexts, may be performative to the development of community. She draws on Michel Foucault’s notion of the subject as the product of discourse (language, symbols, and signs used in a particular place and time to enact certain meanings) to question: “[If] subjects are formed through discourse, what effect do multiple, conflicting discourses, or discourses that argue against unitary subjects, have on the way individuals [or groups] view themselves? . . . Multicultural human subjectivity acknowledges the multiple understandings through which we may ‘perform ourselves’ in response to discourses of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, and so forth” (59).

¹⁴ As Bradley (2009) points out, “These understandings may lead to more open attitudes towards others, or conversely, may contribute to a hardened sense of boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (closed attitudes)” (60).

¹⁵ See Gloria Ladson-Billings (1996) work, “Your Blues Ain’t Mine” and (2008) “Waiting for the Call” for a helpful discussion on keeping issues of race and racism at the forefront of our work.

¹⁶ Something Gloria Ladson-Billings also discusses in her (2000) chapter *Racialized Discourses and Ethnic Epistemologies* in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd edition).

¹⁷ Systemic racism is a sociological theory for understanding the role of race and racism in United States society. For more, check out Joe Feagin’s book *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, & future Reparations*, where he uses historical evidence and demographic statistics to create a theory that asserts that racism is at the center of the creation of the United States. He argues that the legal recognition of slavery in our early

years is a cornerstone of the creation of a racist social system in which resources and rights are unjustly given to White people, and unjustly denied Black people. Though it may look different today, systemic racism is composed of intersecting, overlapping, and codependent racist institutions, policies, practices, ideas, and behaviors that have not been fully dismantled from the founding of our system.

¹⁸ Howard (2006) suggests that one way to take on racism is to first find out what is white society's identity, adding that whites must participate three ways to help solve this problem: The first step involves "acknowledging the reality of white racism in its individual, institutional, and cultural manifestations." Then, educators must abandon racism and engage "in active resistance to its many forms." And lastly, teachers must develop "a positive, non-racist, and authentic connection to White racial and cultural identity" (92). See also, Giroux's (1997) work *Rewriting the Discourse of Racial Identity: Towards a Pedagogy and Politics of Whiteness*.

¹⁹ As George Dei (2000) points out "an action-oriented educational strategy for institutional, systemic change to address racism and interlocking systems of social oppression. It is a critical discourse of race and racism in society that challenges the continuance of racializing social groups for differential and unequal treatment. Anti-racism explicitly names the issues of race and social difference as issues of power and equity, rather than as matters of cultural and ethnic variety" (27). See Juliet Hess's (2015) fantastic outline of an anti-racist theoretical framework for music education in the previous issue of ACT.

²⁰ As Freire (2006) states, "Knowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (72).

²¹ As Nina Simone said in an interview in 1997, "There's no excuse for the young people not knowing who the heroes and heroines are or were" (Powell, 1997).

²² [Watch](#) the Peter Rodis 1970 documentary. *Nina Simone: An historical perspective*.

²³ I borrow this quote from Claudia Roth Pierpont's article on Simone in *The New Yorker* August 11, 2014.

²⁴ Check out Bree Newsome's thoughts in [Blue Nation Review](#), June 29.

²⁵ This interview can be found on the DVD in her boxset, *To be free: The Nina Simone story*.

²⁶ This is a reference to the unrealized "dream" of equality that Martin Luther King Jr. spoke about in his "I Have a Dream" speech delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial August 28, 1963.

²⁷ This is a reference to “Mississippi, Goddam” when Nina Simone says: “Oh, but this whole country is full of lies. You're all gonna die and die like flies. I don't trust you any more. You keep on saying, ‘Go slow! Go slow!’”

²⁸ This is a reference to Nina Simone’s powerful 1969 song, “To Be Young, Gifted, and Black,” which was a tribute to her late friend, activist and playwright, Lorraine Hansberry.

²⁹ In “Mississippi, Goddam” Simone addresses similar issues of being told that advancement and opportunity would be obtained by acting a particular way. She says: “Yes, you lied to me all these years. You told me to wash and clean my ears; And talk real fine just like a lady; And you'd stop calling me Sister Sadie.”

³⁰ This tactic of deflection is also reflected in “Mississippi, Goddam” when Simone sings: “Picket lines, school boy cots, they try to say it's a communist plot” which is a reference to the blacklisting threats of McCarthyism that systematically silenced and imprisoned hundreds of Black artists under the legal-ese of being “threats to national security.”

³¹ This is a reference to Nina Simone’s song “Ain’t Got No!” when she sings, “I've got life, I've got my freedom, I've got life, I'm gonna keep it.”

³² See Adorno’s article “Education After Auschwitz” for a strong argument against being complacent and carrying on with business as usual. “Knowledge of these mechanisms is necessary, as knowledge of the stereotypical defense mechanisms that block such a consciousness” (203).