

2001

# Children's Song-Makers as Messengers of Hope: Participatory Research with Implications for Teacher Educators

Peter J. Baird

*University of San Francisco*, [peterbaird2010@gmail.com](mailto:peterbaird2010@gmail.com)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/diss>

 Part of the [Education Commons](#), and the [Music Education Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Baird, Peter J., "Children's Song-Makers as Messengers of Hope: Participatory Research with Implications for Teacher Educators" (2001). *Doctoral Dissertations*. 124.

<https://repository.usfca.edu/diss/124>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, Capstones and Projects at USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. For more information, please contact [repository@usfca.edu](mailto:repository@usfca.edu).

The author of this dissertation has agreed to make available  
to the University community and the public a copy of this dissertation project.

Unauthorized reproduction of any portion of this dissertation is prohibited.

The quality of this reproduction is  
contingent upon the quality of the original copy submitted.



University of San Francisco  
Gleeson Library/Geschke Center  
2130 Fulton Street  
San Francisco, CA 94117-1080 USA

The University of San Francisco

**CHILDREN'S SONG-MAKERS AS MESSENGERS OF HOPE:  
PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH  
WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS**

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education

International and Multicultural Education Program

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

By  
Peter J. Baird

San Francisco  
May 2001

LID  
4881  
S16588  
B33462

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Peter Bailey                      June 14, 2001  
Candidate                                      Date

Dissertation Committee

Alan Lee Anderson                      June 14, 2001  
Chairperson                                      Date

Dennis E. Collins, SJ                      June 14, 2001  
SRK

Susan Katz                      June 14, 2001

Nancy Jean Smith                      April 27, 01

## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my father, Dr. Paul Jesse Baird, and to the faith of my mother, Charlotte Newell Baird. They planted the first songs that continue to grow within me.

## Acknowledgments

This dissertation was written for the children and adults who love to sing for social justice. My deepest appreciation goes to the nine “Messengers of Hope” who have shared their life-time musical and political experiences through this project: Jacki Breger, Francisco Herrera, Ella Jenkins, David Heitler-Klevans, Bonnie Lockhart, Ruth Pelham, Suni Paz, Pete Seeger, and Barb Tilsen. This is their story.

This effort would not have been possible without the academic mentors of my Dissertation Committee: Dr. Nancy Jean Smith, who brought me to the wellspring of hope at IME’s doctoral program at U.S.F. , my *maestra* and advisor, Dr. Alma Flor Ada, who guided me through this research with her example and love , and Father Denis Collins, SJ. and Dr. Susan Katz, who encouraged my writing and scholarship.

I thank Olivia Gallardo, Joyce Brown and the Title VII Bilingual Fellowship Program in Washington DC, which made it all financially possible.

I thank the classmates who helped make this an experience of a lifetime: Dick Keiss, Edgar Lampkin, Rosa Gabriela Hernandez, Afriye Quamina and Jon Bendich. Huge thanks go to Zoe Horner, Tessa Martinez, Olga Talamante and Pat Brown, who housed and sometimes fed several of us every other weekend for three years!

I thank my students, fellow teachers, administrators and staff at Fairsite School and Galt Elementary School District who gave me their blessings, and to Dr. Harold Murai and fellow faculty at CSUS’ Bilingual Multicultural Education Department who welcomed me and made it possible for me to finish the writing process.

My heartfelt thanks go to my sister and editor extraordinaire, Susan Baird Kanaan. And most of all, I am proud and thankful for my wife and expert proofreader, Joy Bonds-Baird, my son Benjamin and daughter Lillian, who have each encouraged me in their own way and kept our family strong at every step of the journey.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<b>CHAPTER I: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM</b>	
Background and Need for the Study.....	1
Messengers of Hope .....	3
Singing and Schooling .....	4
Backlash Politics, Backlash Pedagogy.....	6
Get America Singing . . . Again! .....	8
Statement of the Problem.....	10
Purpose of the Study.....	12
Research Questions.....	13
Theoretical Framework.....	13
Scope and Delimitations of the Study.....	14
Significance of the Study.....	15
<b>CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</b>	
Introduction.....	17
Transformative Education.....	17
Moral Development: The Age of Conscience .....	21
Music and Singing Education for Children.....	25
Folk Music in School Curriculum .....	27
Tanglewood Symposium .....	29
Cultural Wars and Arts Education .....	29

Folk Music and Songs for Social Justice.....	34
Anti-Bias Clarifications .....	37
The Folk Music Revivals .....	38
Passing the Legacy to Children .....	42
From Classroom to Campfires .....	46
Latin America’s Movement of “The New Song”.....	50

**CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

Introduction and Overview.....	53
Research Design: Participatory Research.....	54
Siding With the Poor .....	55
Voice and Empowerment .....	56
The Dialogue .....	58
The Research Process .....	58
Recovering Popular Knowledge .....	59
Description of the Participants’ Community.....	60
Research Setting.....	62
Research Questions and Questions to Guide the Dialogues.....	63
Data Collection.....	67
Data Analysis.....	69
Researcher’s Background and Entry to the Community.....	70

**CHAPTER IV: Portraits of the Participants**

Pete Seeger.....	75
Ella Jenkins.....	79



Suni Paz.....	83
Bonnie Lockhart.....	87
Jacki Breger.....	90
Ruth Pelham.....	93
Barb Tilsen.....	96
Francisco Herrera.....	99
David Heitler-Klevans.....	103
<b>CHAPTER V: Findings from the Dialogues.....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Research Question #1: How do you define social justice     and its implications for song-making with children?.....</b>	<b>107</b>
The Struggle Against Systematic Dehumanization .....	108
Equal Opportunity/Overcoming Discrimination .....	109
Fairness and Sharing .....	111
Look to the Songs .....	112
Summary.....	113
<b>Research Question #2: What are the social justice issues     that you feel are especially important for children     to address through song-making?.....</b>	<b>114</b>
Fair Wages for Children’s Teachers and Caregivers .....	114
Acceptance of Self and Others.....	115
Acceptance of Others & Overcoming Biases .....	116
Multiculturalism and Civil Rights .....	117
The Folk Process and Changing Things .....	119
Messengers of Hope .....	120

Peacemaking .....	122
Summary.....	123
<b>Research Question #3: How have you used your gifts of music singing, song-writing, and performing to carry this message of social justice to children? .....</b>	<b>123</b>
Communication, Love and Respect for Children .....	124
Song Leading and Singing Along .....	125
Start Simply & Add Rhythm .....	127
Humor, Games and Play .....	129
Storytelling .....	130
Songwriting .....	132
Performing .....	134
Summary.....	136
<b>Research Question #4: What are the pitfalls of doing transformative song-making?.....</b>	<b>136</b>
To Preach or Not to Preach? .....	137
Being the Adult .....	141
Commercial Career vs. Vocation .....	142
“Doubting That We Make A Difference”.....	144
Summary.....	145
<b>Research Question #5: What are some of the essential songs that foster a commitment to social justice?.....</b>	<b>146</b>
The African American Essence .....	146
Characteristics of Essential Songs for Social Justice .....	147
Summary.....	157

Research Question #6: What are the factors that impede the singing voices of children in schools and society today?.....	157
The Consumer Society: Challenges to Song-Makers .....	158
Shutting Music Out of Schools .....	161
Impediments to Children’s Voices .....	162
Summary.....	172
Research Question #7: How can musicians, educators, and parents today more effectively involve children in the process of singing and imagining a more just world?.....	172
Social Action and Rethinking Education .....	172
Parents and Music in the Home .....	174
Helping Schools Sing Out.....	177
Solidarity and Outreach for the Children’s Music Network .....	188
Summary.....	190
Summing Up the Praxis for Hope.....	191

**CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Summary.....	194
Conclusions.....	196
“The Choir” .....	197
Solo Voices.....	197
The Art & Craft of Song-Making.....	198
Dramatic Tensions in Song-Makers’ Lives.....	199
Recommendations for Action.....	200
Parents and Wider Community .....	200

Elementary and Preschools .....	201
Teacher Education .....	204
Children’s Music Organizations .....	205
Recommendations for Further Study .....	206
Reflections on the Findings.....	208
Participants’ Reflections on the Process.....	209
Researcher’s Reflections on the Process.....	210
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>213</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>220</b>
A. Protection of Human Subjects .....	221
B. IRBPHS Approval .....	225
C. Collage of Participants: The Choir.....	226
D. More Than “I Have A Dream” .....	227
E. Songs From the Civil Rights Movement.....	229
F. “It’s Music Time: Tips for Teachers” .....	230
G. Community Music Time Goals and Values.....	234

## CHAPTER I

### THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

#### Background and Need for the Study

Songs and music-making are as old as human culture. They grow naturally from all the cultural branches of our family tree. Likewise, the important role of musicians and song-leaders trespasses boundaries of geography, culture and time. The Hebrew King David of the Old Testament took lyre in hand to sing Psalms of praise to his God. Quechua Indians in the Inca Empire of the 15th Century sang as they went about their collective labors. Peasants in 16th Century Spain sang “*De Colores*” at harvest time, just as children today throughout Spain, Latin America, and the United States continue to sing it with each approaching Spring. *Griot* singing storytellers of West Africa, bards of the European Middle Ages, balladeers of the Argentine pampas, Navaho singers of healing chants, and performers of Mexico’s ever popular *corrido* all have used songs to interpret their world and pass on its essence to the next generation.

Many of these traditions of song and music have made their way to the hybrid nation we now call the United States, along with many kinds of music and song leaders. The English and Irish brought their religious hymns and folk ballads, the Welch miners their choral singing, the Africans their rich oral and polyrhythmic traditions, and the Spanish the *guitarra* that evolved from the complex Moorish origins of their own complex history. These colonial and immigrant song traditions were to overlay, intertwine, and more often displace

the traditions of indigenous people of the Americas who had also used songs in their religious culture for thousands of years.

Songs and song leaders in the United States, like their counterparts around the globe, are central to the task of nurturing the young, of bestowing to them the most valued stories and lessons of our forbearers. Among the most important and overlooked lessons today is how countless people in the U.S. have struggled against enormous odds to create a more just, democratic and peaceful society. Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* (1997) powerfully chronicles how the ancestors of many modern day Americans fought for independence, rebelled against slavery and worked for its abolition. They championed women's right to vote, risked life and livelihood to establish unions and the eight-hour day, and stood up to corporate trusts. They marched for Civil Rights and equal opportunity, resisted broken Indian treaties and rallied against interventionist wars.

Today, people across the nation and throughout the world continue as part of their daily lives to actively organize against poverty, environmental degradation, persecution of homosexuals, and globalization of corporate power. They continue to work for grassroots issues like better schools, universal health care and peace through greater multicultural and international understanding. Their story is rarely told, and even more infrequent is its telling from a "people's" perspective.

### Messengers of Hope

Yet this legacy and ongoing commitment to social justice are authentically reflected in many songs and stories that have been passed down and recreated by song-makers who are the focus of this study. These men and women have been called “messengers” by singer and songwriter Suni Paz. As the research progressed, they became “messengers of hope,” providing the metaphor and guiding focus of this study. Through songs like “We Shall Overcome” and the stories behind the Civil Rights Movement’s anthem of hope, the song-makers of this study open to children a largely ignored part of the American and world experience, fostering in them a love of justice and a desire to become agents of peaceful change in their own lives.

In the whimsical words of “prophet singer” Woody Guthrie (1970), crafter of some of the most enduring children’s songs still heard today, songs have a magical power to heal and cure the soul. As he wrote in the 1940’s:

I ask you, Mr. President, please let everybody everywhere sing all night long. Love songs, work songs, new hope songs. This will cure every soul in our jail, asylum, and sick in our hospital, too. Try it and see. I know. I’m a prophet singer (p. 28).

Hope, in this sense, is what Brazilian educator Paulo Freire calls, in *Pedagogy of Hope* (1997), “an ontological need,” like eating and breathing (p. 8). “Hopelessness,” he goes on to say, “is but hope that has lost its bearings, and has become a distortion of that ontological need.” But for the optimistic ideas of Paulo Freire to become *An Educational Philosophy for our time* (Collins, 2000) and an effective means for progressive educators to “transform the world,” Freire warns that hope “demands an anchoring in practice” (p. 9). The practice this

study addressed is that of progressive song-makers as being “messengers of hope” for and with children in today’s schools.

### Singing and Schooling

Campbell and Scott-Kassner (1995) have written eloquently of the way music comes naturally to children in all settings, including in school. Children learn from songs in the home, in the community, in their place of worship and at school. These teachers/authors argue that music is one of life’s essential experiences for children, critical to their intellectual, emotional, physical, social and spiritual development. Their work builds upon and supports the educational theories developed by Howard Gardner (1993) and clearly articulated by Handy (1994, 1996) that “musical/rhythmic intelligence” is one of seven “multiple intelligences” possessed in varied degrees by all humans.

The central importance of music and song in children’s educational life is also heard in the words and music of Alma Flor Ada and Suni Paz (1990) and reiterated in the text of Ada & Campoy (1998):

**Music is one of the most important cultural elements: there is no culture that does not have music, just as there is no culture without language. Two of the major strengths of the human spirit come together in song --- words and music. For this reason it is highly imperative that schools recognize the value of songs and utilize them adequately in childhood education (p. 7).**

Campbell and Scott-Kassner (1995) trace the gradual history by which the teaching of music, including folk music and its socially relevant themes, came to be a central part of American public education, especially through the advocacy of John Dewey and his child-centered curriculum for a humanistic education.



In recent years, however, the “back to basics” movement and similar trends in the standards and accountability movements, have emphasized reading and math deficiencies in American youth, providing philosophical encouragement for drastic budget cuts and the gradual elimination of music and the arts from many of our schools. These cuts occurred during the general economic recession and the prevalence of conservative policies the 1980’s and 1990’s. In the words of these authors:

Music and the arts have been marginalized by many in American schools and society, and viewed as less central for development than linguistic and mathematical knowledge and skills....Music is basic because it is a critical component of American and international societies, and a repository of historical traditions and contemporary ideas. Music deserves a rightful place at the core of a preschool through elementary school curriculum. All children have equal rights to: knowledge of their cultural heritage, including music; the development of their aural, artistic-expressive, and musical sensibilities; and to familiarity with music beyond commercially available and currently popular (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 1995, p.5).

In Sacramento City Unified School District, for example, music instruction is now available at just 13 of 61 elementary schools, and present there only because of special activism and fundraising by parent groups. Vocal music is no longer even offered at middle schools (A Complete Education, 2000). On a national level, the National Commission on Music Education reported that schools in the U.S. average only one teacher for every 500 students (Handy, 1996). This puts enormous pressure on classroom teachers to incorporate music and arts into their lessons. But a recent survey of 7,000 teachers indicates that fewer than 4% of teachers feel confident enough to lead even simple singing in their classrooms (Handy, 1996).

### Backlash Politics, Backlash Pedagogy

Many educators, parents and children's musicians who work in the school system today see this trend with alarm. Author and education critic Alfie Kohn (1999) and leading reformers from the Rethinking Schools movement (Levine et al., 1995) lay the blame for this narrowing of the American school mind to what they call the "Tougher Standards Movement," as well as to the serious cuts in social services to poorer communities that occurred in the past two decades. Amid the loss of so many kinds of valuable programs such as school libraries, nurses and counselors, music too was slashed. The external arguments seem to be that with school plants deteriorating, singing with children was a low priority. With legislatures, such as in California, requiring "accountability" through higher math and reading scores on standardized tests, then threatening to take over districts that do not improve fast enough, school administrators are pushing teachers, and teachers are pushing students to focus almost exclusively on raising test scores.

This trend is especially true in the so-called "low performing schools," which often have high numbers of children who are English Learners (EL) and/or children from poor families, as well as a greater percentage of teachers without credentials or sufficient training. UCLA Professor of Education Kris Gutiérrez and colleagues (Gutiérrez et al., 2000) link current educational reforms to voter initiatives in California that have formed "a pattern of assault against the largely immigrant, non-English speaking Latino speaking sector and resulted in the passage of three consecutive and related propositions: 187, 209, and 227" (p. 7).

These researchers label the political initiatives of this campaign as “backlash politics” against the political gains of racial and linguistic minorities in past decades. They likewise explain many current educational reforms as “backlash pedagogy” against multiculturalism, the growing number of immigrant Latinos and Asians in public schools, and the growing political and cultural clout of the former “minority” communities.

What can teachers do with their students, and with each other, to overcome decades of under funding and current backlash policies? Herb Kohl (1998) echoes Freire in stating that the answer is found in keeping a practical hope alive for children and educators:

Providing hope to young people is the major challenge of teaching. Through engaging the minds and imaginations of children, teachers can help children develop the strength, pride, and sensitivity they need to engage the world, and not to despair when things seem stacked against them. Even though hope is not sufficient to provide a good life or even guarantee survival, it is a necessity. However, to teach hope you yourself must be hopeful, must believe that all children have a right to learn and can indeed learn (p. 9-10).

But what is the curriculum of hope, many teachers may ask? What are the resources that can help them offer optimism and comfort to children who are being put at great risk in many schools? Ada and Campoy (1998) respond that songs, like literature and poetry, are one of the simplest and most effective means of helping children connect themselves to culture and literacy. This is especially true for language minority students, they explain, for whom songs can be both an affirmation of their home culture and a connection to the dominant English speaking culture of U.S. schools and society:

Songs are, above all, one mode of finding your place in the culture. For those children that are trying to develop an identity --- especially if their identity is threatened because they live in an environment that does not recognize the worth of their culture and their mother tongue --- songs can be one of the most pleasing means to create for them a sense of having roots and belonging, of solidarity with others who sing the same songs.

For children that learn a foreign language, or a second language, songs can also be a vehicle to develop an affinity with the culture represented by that language (p. 9).

### Get America Singing . . . Again!

There are recent signs, in fact, that a growing number of people across the United States are reappraising the positive role the music education can play in the lives of youth. Two Hollywood movies --- *Mr. Holland's Opus* and *Music of the Heart* --- have dramatized real-life instances in which music teachers and parents were able to fight against budget cuts and indifferent school boards to keep their music programs alive. Spurred on by workshops and publications like those of Shirley Handy (1994, 1996) about the "The Singing-Reading Connection" and pushed by the activist Music Educators National Conference (MENC), local school boards and national educational forums are talking about and doing something about returning music education to its rightful place in U.S. schools.

Many are referring to the nine National Content Standards in Music, developed and published by MENC (1994), with age-appropriate expectations for children from preschool to 12<sup>th</sup> grade:

- Standard 1: Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Standard 2: Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Standard 3: Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments

- Standard 4: Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines
- Standard 5: Reading and notating music
- Standard 6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
- Standard 7: Evaluating music and music performances
- Standard 8: Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts
- Standard 9: Understanding music in relation to history and culture

Evidence of this trend can be seen in the words of Bill Ivey, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, before the National Association of Music Education in March, 2000:

I believe the arts, and an education in the arts, form the lynchpin of our democracy. Within the arts are embedded many of our most treasured democratic values --- freedom of expression, openness, equality, tolerance, cooperation, and justice.... It's the arts that equip our children with the skills necessary to speak, interpret, and create in this new language of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.... The Arts Education Partnership, a consortium of more than one hundred national organizations, including MENC, has advanced this concept in "Arts Literacy for a Changing America." This report outlines the four C's of arts education – communication, culture, cognition and creativity (Ivey, 2000).

Just as importantly, local school boards, like the one in Sacramento, are beginning to respond to the loss of music programs referred to earlier by promising to boost local school-based music and arts instruction (A Complete Education, 2000). They are following a pattern set by the 52 elementary schools in neighboring San Juan Unified School District, north of Sacramento, where the number of elementary school bands grew from seven to 45 in seven years, and the number of elementary school choirs rocketed from six to 49 (Crump, 2001).

Meanwhile, in January of 2001 the California Department of Education adopted standards for comprehensive arts-education programs in all grade levels, offering at least the expectation for a renewal of arts education statewide (Crump, 2001).

On a related front, MENC (1996) has joined forces with other pro-singing organizations to launch the Get America Singing . . . Again! Campaign with two main goals: to establish a common song repertoire that people of all ages can sing, and to promote community singing. With Pete Seeger as their Honorary National Chair and a collection of 43 songs in their songbook --- including "Amazing Grace," "*De Colores*," and "This Little Light of Mine," --- the Campaign makes the case for why songs for social justice belong in children's and adult's lives:

Think of how you can be a positive agent for change; see how singing can add so much to life together on this planet. People will bless you for including them in the power of active music making through singing (p. 6).

It is in response to the aforementioned challenges to humanistic education, as well as the indications of hopeful activism, that this research has been directed.

### Statement of the Problem

Current research on music education and song-making in elementary public schools across the nation has revealed that music is becoming an increasingly limited part of the curriculum, especially the use of songs that voice concern about social and personal justice. Song-making involves the practice of singing, song-leading, song-writing, song interpretation and all uses of songs. Researchers and music educators have documented some of the causes for this

decline in elementary school music: the reduction in funding for music teachers, the exclusion of music from teacher education programs, the labeling of music as a “frill” not essential to the core curriculum, the narrowing of the curriculum due to pressure from high-stakes standardized tests and the devaluing in our society of social justice education for children (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 1995). As a result, the socialization of children through music and song, once an important domain of the school, is increasingly being left to the control of radio, television, computers, the Internet and the music industry.

Absent from much of this research is the voice of the singers and songwriters who keep alive the tradition of singing with children. This study has engaged in dialogues with children’s musicians on these issues in order to advance the national dialogue. The Participatory Research model was used to explore how teachers can be more effective in teaching to the whole child through transformative song-making --- a fun and culturally relevant form of critical pedagogy--- and how parents and activists can support song-making for social justice in our schools. The experiences and reflections of children’s musicians have been about praxis, an exploration of the possible based on the affirmation of hope and the power of song in children’s lives.

Over the years this relatively small number of individual musicians have provided a special genre of multicultural and uplifting songs for children. Today they continue to bring their message of hope through school visits, Artists in Residence programs, concerts and music recordings. They inspire a wider group

of activist teachers, parents and community members to bring this kind of music back into the center of school life in the United States.

The educational and wider community has not had the opportunity to hear how these children's musicians define social justice, nor how they use their gifts of music and song to bring this message to children. From them, teachers can learn more the kind of songs that foster a commitment to social justice in their students. Educators can learn a great deal from what these children's musicians have to say about factors that impede the singing voices of children in school and society today. And society in general can benefit from the perspectives of leading children's song-makers on how educators and parents can involve children in the process of singing and imagining a more just world.

#### Purpose of the Study

In this participatory study, nine leading musicians who have contributed substantially to the practice of song-making with children for social justice engaged in reflective dialogue to understand the common themes of how they carry their message to children. Specifically, the study investigated the musicians' critical reflections on how they define their music, how they share it with children, and what songs are especially effective in raising social consciousness with children. It asked them which factors are causing the decline in children's singing in elementary and pre-schools in the U.S., and what can be done in the future to foster greater self-expression and social commitment through transformative song-making.



### Research Questions

Seven questions were asked and answered in this study:

1. How do children's musicians define social justice?
2. What are the social justice issues that children's musicians feel are especially important for children to address through song-making?
3. How do these song-makers use their gifts of singing, songwriting, storytelling and performing to help children come to a greater understanding of these issues?
4. What are the pitfalls of doing transformative song-making with children?
5. What are some of the essential songs that foster human solidarity and a commitment to social justice with children?
6. What are the factors that impede the singing voices of children in schools and society today?
7. How can musicians, educators, and parents more effectively transform schools to involve children in the process of singing and imagining a more just world?

### Theoretical Framework

This study is principally defined and investigated from three fields of educational theory. The first is transformative education, as defined by the writings of Paulo Freire (1970, 1997), Alma Flor Ada (Ada & Beutel, 1993, Ada & Campoy 1998, Ada & Campoy, 2000), Herbert Kohl (1995, 1998), and Maxine Greene (1995, 1998), with a focus on its applications to teaching for social justice. To this definition of transformative education have been added concepts of moral

education from Robert Coles (1997), who sees the elementary school years as being “the age of conscience” (p. 98) and crucial to the development of children’s sense of personal justice. The second field is arts and music education as reflected in the works of educational philosophers John Dewey (1897, 1946,) and Maxine Greene (1995, 1998), childhood music educators and researchers Patricia Campbell and Carol Scott-Kassner (1995), and Shirley Handy (1994, 1996). This study also draws upon the study of folk music, as defined by Robert Cantwell (1996), Bonnie Lockhart (1998), Pete Seeger (1972, 1985, 1993) and others. This area of study helps reveal the roots of transformative song-making in folk music and songs of social protest, as exemplified by the members, activities and publications of the Children’s Music Network.

#### Scope and Delimitations of the Study

Due to the in-depth nature of the participatory research methodology being used, the scope of this study was narrowed in four significant ways. First of all, from within the field of children’s music, only singing was addressed, leaving out a rich experience of instrumental music. Secondly, the focus was on pre-school and elementary age children, even though the need for song-making is just as great during the middle and high school years. A third delimitation is that only nine children’s musicians were selected for dialogues from among the many dozens who would make a significant contribution to this body of knowledge. It is hoped that others, along with this researcher, will take up this task in the future. Finally, the dialogues reflected upon here did not include the voices of all

the music and classroom teachers who are leading the way in our schools today, nor of the children themselves who are the reason for this research. Their vibrant voices will be the subjects of future research beyond this dissertation.

### Significance of the Study

This interdisciplinary study, which focuses on song-making for social justice among elementary school children, adds a unique body of data to the fields of music education, transformative education as defined earlier, and especially teacher education. In particular, it amplifies the authentic voices of leading children's musicians of our day for members of these fields of education. The give-and-take process of the dialogues between researcher and musician-participants, as well as the coming together of the participants' ideas and analysis, provides information and insights that may prove useful to members of each of these fields.

Specifically, this research can be used to inspire classroom teachers to integrate more multicultural and socially conscious songs into all their teaching, as part of an overall arts education program. It can encourage music teachers to emphasize singing, choose their songs more deliberately for social justice themes, and to be more mindful to the cultural, linguistic and academic needs of their diverse students. It can urge school administrators to (1) build inclusive school communities through regular school-wide sing-alongs (2) support teachers by including song-leading as part of their teacher in-service trainings (3) bring artists and musicians into schools for assemblies and as artists in residence, and

(4) work with local schools boards and parents groups to restore and elevate music and arts programs in schools. In addition, this research can support those musicians and parents who are actively working to engage children in songs that are meaningful to their lives. Of primary importance, this research can remind U.S. schools of education that are training the teachers and administrators of tomorrow that transformative song-making is part of the core curriculum and that song-making is one of their most powerful pedagogical tools. Finally, it can remind parents that singing with children is a joy that begins at home and in the community.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

*Let us sing a new song not with our lips but with our lives.*

Saint Augustine

#### Introduction

This review of the literature explores how transformative song-making can nurture a social justice consciousness in children by looking at the literature in three general areas: (1) transformative education, (2) art and music education, and (3) folk and socially conscious children's music. These three areas form the legs of a theoretical music stand, upon which the dialogues with children's musicians are supported and whose generative themes analyzed.

#### Transformative Education

The study of song-making connected to social justice education is rooted in the history and experience of public education in the United States. Public schooling was part of the unique American experiment begun in the "post revolutionary moment when public education was considered essential to the development of an American democracy" (Kohl, 1995, p.126). Just as essential has been the movement of people through American history to expand democracy --- to identify and overcome the deficiencies of this democracy, especially towards women, African-Americans, Native Americans, and other ethnic minorities.

The most influential proponent for this expansion of democracy was American philosopher and educator John Dewey, who criticized class stratification and its formation of impoverished immigrant workers and powerful industrial giants in the period in which he lived (Dewey, 1897). According to Kohl (1995), Dewey questioned how “children can be educated so that industry and progress serve the growth of all people rather than merely profit a few,” (p. 146) --- a question that is just as valid today.

Spurred by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s and 70’s, activist teachers, parents, and students brought forth a blossoming of practice and theory in education to combat social inequalities and expand democracy for all (Perry & Fraser, 1993). These currents related to social justice and racial equality include multiculturalism, anti-bias curriculum, critical pedagogy and critical theory. While it is not the intention of this review of the literature to detail these theories and pedagogies, a helpful synthesis of these key theories has been developed by Alma Flor Ada and Isabel Campoy (in press) that the authors call transformative education:

One way to describe transformative education is an integrated synthesis of a rich spectrum of theoretical principals from various disciplines ....[W]e are not only describing an intellectual point of view, but also a social stand on issues concerning equity, inclusion, justice and peace, a stand born from a deep and unconditional respect for all human beings and all forms of life (p. 35) .

Transformative education can be described as the riverbanks through which flow the following complex and interrelated currents of educational philosophy, summarized below:

### TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

THEORY	KEY IDEA	MAJOR THEORISTS
CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY	Human beings are beings of knowledge.	Lev Vygotsky Jean Piaget
FEMINIST/WOMANIST THEORY	Human beings are beings of love and caring.	Mary Poplin bell hooks
AESTHETICS	Human beings are intrinsically drawn to beauty.	Maxine Greene
CRITICAL THEORY	Human beings are the sole constructors of social reality. As such, we are responsible for participating in its ongoing creation.	Herbert Marcuse Theodor Adorno Jurgen Habermas
MULTICULTURALISM	The Earth is diverse by its very nature. Human beings are as diverse as the reality of this planet.	Sonia Nieto Catherine Walsh
ANTI-BIAS EDUCATION	To become fully human we must unlearn prejudice and bias and become each other's allies.	bell hooks Ricki Sherover- Marcuse
CRITICAL PEDAGOGY	Throughout the world, most forms of public education promote the domestication and colonization of the human mind in order to maintain the status quo.	Paulo Freire Alma Flor Ada
BILINGUAL EDUCATION	Language is one of the strongest elements in our self-definition, as well as one of the key elements of a culture.	Jim Cummins Tove Skutnabb - Kangas

Source: Ada & Campoy (in press)

Transformative education linked to expanding democracy forms the theoretical basis for this study and gives meaning to the term *transformative song-making*. At the heart of this process is Freire's concept of "conscientization," which Maxine Greene (1998) explains as the highest calling for teachers --- to lead their students from an awareness of human suffering and injustices to a sense of agency or collective action as part of their democratic education. Expanding on this idea, Greene writes:

[T]eaching for social justice is teaching for the sake of arousing the kinds of vivid, reflective, experiential responses that might move students to come together in serious efforts to understand what social justice actually means and what it might demand. That means teaching to the end of arousing a consciousness of membership, active and participant membership in a society of unfulfilled promises --- teaching for what Paulo Freire used to call "conscientization" (1970), heightened social consciousness, a wide-awakeness that might make injustice unendurable (p. xxx-xxxi).

According to Greene, the teacher plays a crucial role in this awakening process and nurturing agency. She points to the need to "empower young people to criticize the emphasis on efficiency and efficacy as primary values---instead of justice and equality" (p.xxxi). This means helping students move beyond what Michelle Fine (1991) describes as "the muting of students and their communities" (p.32) to critiquing discrimination and oppression in society that is commonly considered natural.

Kohl (1998) focuses the issue even more by pointing to the bottom-line mentality of our increasingly globalized capitalist world system:

The problem is that many people do not believe that justice is worth fighting for. Sadly this applies as much to children as it does to adults.... At this moment in our history, there are many sanctions for the idea that self-interest overrides communal sanity and compassion. The enemy of teaching for social justice is "The Real World," which is characterized as



hard, competitive, and unrelenting in its pursuit of personal gain and perpetuation of bias and institutional and economic inequalities (p. 285).

How, then, can the “sense of injustice” be deepened in a world seemingly hardening itself to not care? Dewey (1946), writing in a period of history not unlike our own, pointed to the role of art and the artist to help society move from a “superficial and trivial plane” to a deeper level (p. 183):

The function of art has always been to break through the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness. Common things---a flower, a gleam of moonlight, the song of a bird, not things rare and remote, are means with which deeper levels of life are touched so that they spring up as desire and thought ....Artists have always been the real purveyors of the news, for it is not the outward happening in itself which is new, but the kindling by it of emotion, perception, appreciation (p.183-184).

Through art, including what this study describes as transformative song-making, teachers for social justice can help nurture what Greene (1998) calls a sense of hope and meaning “so that the young may be awakened to the joy of working for transformation in the smallest places, so that they may become healers and change their worlds” (p.xlv).

### Moral Development: The Age of Conscience

*A good song can only do good, and I am proud of the songs I've sung.*

-Pete Seeger (1972, p. 47), before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1961.

Another field of education that can be added to the synthesis of transformative education for the purpose of this study is education for moral development. Its contribution lies in the connection between personal justice and a child's commitment to do good in the world --- to social justice.

From the time of Plato in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C., the molding of character in the young has been a dominant theme in schooling:

You know that the beginning is the most important part of any work, especially in the case of a young and tender thing; for that is the time at which character is being formed and the desired impression is more readily taken (Plato, *Republic*, in Bennett, 1993).

Relying on the theories of early childhood development by Piaget (1995) and reflecting their roots in humanistic tradition, contemporary educators (Derman-Sparks, 1989, York, 1991) have asserted that children pass through a series of distinct stages in which they construct reality and identity through their own experience with the world, including developing what may be called morals, character building or virtues, as well as attitudes and bias towards others. This is the reason that Louise Derman-Sparks and the A.B.C. Task Force from the National Association for the Education of Young Children put together their *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children* in 1989. While the curriculum ideas suggesting music and song-making activities are surprisingly weak, many other excellent concepts and resources are shared. Explaining how activism can be nurtured with young children, for example, the authors write:

Children learning to take action against unfair behaviors that occur in their lives is at the heart of anti-bias education. Without this component, the curriculum loses its vitality and power. For children to feel good and confident about themselves, they need to be able to say, "That's not fair," or "I don't like that," if they are the target of prejudice or discrimination. For children to develop empathy and respect for diversity, they need to be able to say, "I don't like what you are doing" to a child who is abusing another child. If we teach children to recognize injustice, then we must also teach them that people can create positive change by working together. Young people have an impressive capacity for learning how to be activists if adults provide activities that are relevant and developmentally appropriate (p. 77).

Child psychologist and author, Robert Coles (1997) has written eloquently about the moral development of children and how their conduct is shaped by how they are treated in home and in school. Building on the theme of developmental stages, Coles explains that, "A child is shaped at the very start of life by the values of certain adults" (p.63) who determine how well the child is loved and cared for.

According to the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) at Columbia University (2000), one in five children currently live in poverty in the United States, with another two in five who live in near poverty with a family income of less than \$26,000 per year. "*While the child poverty rate is highest for African American (37 percent) and Latino (34 percent) children,*" the NCCP documents, "*by international standards it is also exceptionally high for white children (11 percent)*" (NCCP, p. 1). Given this growing chasm between rich and poor families in the U.S., it is important to take seriously Coles' (1977) warning that "infants who are grossly neglected and ignored turn apathetic and retreat from a world they have already learned to find indifferent, if not threatening" (p.64).

Whether a child's experience is positive or negative, the foundation is laid for the next stage of moral development when a child's conscience is formed. Under the chapter heading "The Elementary School Years: The Age of Conscience," Coles (1997) writes about children in the focus period of this study:

In elementary school, maybe as never before or afterward, given favorable family and neighborhood circumstances, the child becomes an intensely moral creature, quite interested in figuring out the reasons of this world: how and why things work, but also, how and why he or she should behave in various situations. "This is the age of conscience," Anna Freud once observed, and she went further: "This is the age that a child's conscience is

built --- or isn't; it is the time when a child's character is built and consolidated, or isn't" (p.98).

Coles believes passionately that "these are years of magic, of the imagination stirred...years of lively searching on the part of children, whose parents and teachers are often hard put to keep up with them as ...they weigh the rights and wrongs of this life" (p. 98). And he affirms the importance of empathy and "moral imagination, fueled constantly by the willingness, the eagerness of children to put themselves in the shoes of others, to experience that way their life" (98-99).

On the one hand, children at this age are eager to take in and appreciate the richness and diversity of the world offered them in their homes, schools and other social settings. But on the other hand, early childhood education experts warn that children at age five and six, or younger, begin to learn the prejudices and biases of dominant society towards people of different class position, skin color, gender and sexual orientation (York, 1991) --- attitudes which Derman-Sparks (1989) calls "pre-prejudice" and which "should be addressed" by educators in their profession (p.23).

Music and song-making are an important part of this process for children. However, consciousness about music's appeal to children can be low, even among educators sensitive to moral development, anti-bias and multiculturalism. *Anti-Bias Curriculum* (Derman-Sparks, 1989) makes scant mention of singing with children. *Roots & Wings: Affirming Culture in Early Childhood Programs* (York, 1991) includes music or songs in only one of its 59 lesson plans.

Elementary and early childhood educators looking for lessons ideas on how to use music and songs with children can refer to three excellent books recently published:

- Pirtle, S. (1998) *Linking Up! Using music, movement, and language arts to promote caring, cooperation, and communication*
- Sapon-Shevin, M. (1999), *Because We Can Change the World: A Practical Guide to Building Cooperative, Inclusive Classroom Communities*
- Hopkins, S. (Ed.) (1999). *Hearing Everyone's Voice: Educating Young Children for Peace and Democratic Community*

### Music and Singing Education for Children

The second leg of our music stand for this study is a review of the literature related to the development of music education in American public schools, especially as it impacts the singing of children about issues of personal and social justice. This background lays a foundation for understanding the current state of children's singing in our schools, as well as introducing the role of folk music and socially conscious singing in the curriculum. It also sets the stage for what the study's participants have to say in Chapter V about an alternative conception of transformative song-making.

The history of music education in the United States has been linked to the development of public education and American culture in general. Thus it has reflected the struggles and debates about the limitations and expansion of

democracy, the role of art and popular culture in curriculum, and the value and nature of education itself. Not surprisingly, the history of music education and of programs in all the arts has been both uneven and volatile (Lehman, 1987). For music educator and music philosopher Bennett Reimer (1989), the,

fortunes of music education are precisely parallel with the curve of education as a whole but at an interval an inch or two below it. When things are good for education ...things are relatively good for music education also. When education goes in a slump, swinging downward to a low period, music education suffers a parallel slump (p. 215).

One of the central debates through the centuries and continuing today is the degree to which music/arts education is considered a basic subject or a frill, essential or expendable (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 1995). The Western tradition of schools and schooling from Greek and Roman times has considered the arts and music to be key ingredients to children's moral development, as we have already seen. These ideas were implemented for the privileged few throughout European history and were brought to the American colonies where two distinct models developed. In the slave-based economy of the South, European arts and culture were taught as part of the class and race privilege for the white Southern gentry, while African slaves were forbidden to read or write. In contrast, the mercantile New England looked toward educating more children with cultural knowledge in "common schools" (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 1995, p. 9).

Early promoters of music and public education in the U.S., including Horace Mann and Lowell Mason, laid the groundwork for a regular program of vocal training for children that began in the Boston elementary school of 1838. It included the following principles:

1. vocal music as the basis for all music education

2. a recognition of the limitations of the child's voice
3. the principal of experience before abstraction (Choksy, 1986, p. 9).

While the groundwork was laid for the inclusion of music education in public schools, it was the untiring advocacy of John Dewey (1859-1952) for "music, movement, and the arts in a child-centered curriculum [that] helped to stabilize music as part of the curriculum, even through the troubled economic and political times of the Depression and World War II" (Campell & Scott-Kassner, 1995, p. 10).

### Folk Music in School Curriculum

Another important debate that has been reflected in music education concerns the role of folk music in the school curriculum. Did folk music that comes from common people have a place in a school's art program? Singing schools that taught hymn singing were a common part of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Likewise, folk music "flourished during this period" according to Volk (in Vandenberg, 1991), "[b]ut music in education continued to be strictly academic" (p. 15).

Noted children's literature author and illustrator Ashley Bryan (1984) has commented that several European composers were more appreciative of the Black American spirituals than their white American counterparts of the time:

When the composer, Anton Dvorák came to America in 1892, he was so impressed by the distinctive character of the spirituals that he used their melodic inspiration in a number of his compositions. He asked: "What songs, then, belong to the American? What melody would stop him on the street if he were in a strange land and make the home-feeling well up within him? The most potent, as well as the most beautiful among them, according to my estimation, are certain of the so-called plantation melodies and slave songs" (p. ix).

The impetus for change in music education in the United States came from numerous innovations in the second half of the twentieth century, in particular the philosophies and practices of two other Europeans strongly attracted to folk music, Hungarian Zoltan Kodaly (1882-1967) and German composer Carl Orff (1895-1952). Campbell and Scott-Kassner (1995) describe in detail how Kodaly revolutionized music education by his emphasis on vocal music, rigorous ear training and great appreciation for folk songs from Europe and America. Orff also used folk songs and merged them with children's play, dance and dramatics.

By the 1930's and 1940's, a number of American folk music collectors began the meticulous collection and recording of folk music in the United States, most notably the remarkable father and son team of John and Alan Lomax. The Lomaxes often recorded in conjunction with the Library of Congress, compiling a collection that would have a lasting impact on U.S. and world music. American composer Aaron Copland, for example, took inspiration from the melodies of folk songs of the U.S. and turned them into larger compositions about the American cultural scene and evolving national identity. African American jazz influenced Copland's *Music for the Theater* (1925), Mexican music and rhythms helped shape *El salón México*, and cowboy songs inspired *Billy the Kid* (1938) and *Rodeo* (1942) (Copland, 1990). The evolution of the U.S. folk music movement will be discussed in the final section of this literature review, including how folk music became intertwined with labor and civil rights organizing, its considerable impact on American culture and schools in the 1940's, its revival in the 1960's, and its legacy for children's music today.



### Tanglewood Symposium

The emergence of the new and socially inspired forms of music, mentioned above, occurred as several professional gatherings of music educators met in the 1960's to discuss problems and goals for music education with children. Some of the issues raised by the Civil Rights and Anti-Vietnam war movements began to be reflected in these meetings, most notably at the Music Educators National Conference (MENC) Symposium at Tanglewood in 1967. Four of their eight declarations to improve music education were especially progressive and relevant to elementary school children:

1. Music serves best when its integrity as an art is maintained.
2. Music of all periods, styles, forms, and cultures belongs in the curriculum. The musical repertoire should be expanded to involve music of our time in its rich variety, including currently popular teenage music and avante-garde music, American folk music, and the music of other cultures.
3. Schools and colleges should provide adequate time for music programs ranging from preschool to adult or continuing education.
4. The music education profession must contribute its skills, proficiencies, and insights toward assisting in the solution of urgent social problems such as those in the inner city or other areas with culturally deprived individuals (Choksy, 1986, p. 17-18).

### Cultural Wars and Arts Education

A relatively new actor in the growing national debate on arts education --- the U.S. federal government --- entered the scene in a big way in the 1960's.

Responding to pressure from the social movements and growing strife in the cities, President Lyndon Johnson launched an ambitious set of federal programs known as the War on Poverty. In 1964 the Johnson Administration also established the National Council on the Arts and in 1965 formed the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) began to release more than \$300,000,000 into art related projects, most of this through competitive grants that the states applied for (Vandenberg, 1991). Congress also got involved in arts education by mandating its first art program in 1974 with grants of \$5,000 to \$10,000 awarded directly to schools.

These actions brought art education and its issues of multiculturalism and social relevancy to the center of an increasingly politicized national debate. Marshall (1998) has documented the ideological struggle over arts education in the United States over the past two decades in her dissertation, *Making Meaning: Transformative Art Education For Middle School*. Marshall describes “the cultural wars” (Peterson, 1995) as being fought on two main fronts. The first dealt with identity and cultural awareness:

This battle is often seen as a conflict between multiculturalism and the hegemony of a “common culture” rooted in the Anglo or Euro-American tradition (p. 17).

The second front was the impact of the arts on moral education:

The arts enter this debate for their message and purpose can be interpreted and used in ways that advance political agendas. The arts can embody set traditions and serve as inspiration for acceptable civilized behavior or they can present an occasion for examining and challenging the status quo (p. 33).

In *Habits of Mind, Struggling Over Values in America’s Classrooms*, Fine (1995) fills in the history of the three competing factions that since the beginning

of the twentieth century have wrestled over who controls culture in America and what moral education should be. She calls them the conservatives, moderate-conservatives, and progressives.

Using Fine's groupings as a guide, the conservatives gained the upper hand in determining national educational policy in 1980 with the election of Ronald Reagan to the Presidency. Reagan named fellow conservative Terrell Bell to head the newly created Department of Education. In that same year the Department commissioned the National Commission on Excellence in Education's (1983) influential *A Nation at Risk*, which argued in highly charged rhetoric for higher educational standards and a back-to-basics approach to increase U.S. competitiveness in the global markets:

The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people .... We have, in effect been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament (p. 5).

This trend gained momentum during the second term of President Reagan with his appointment of William Bennett to head the Department of Education. Bennett became the national spokesperson for the conservative agenda on education, whose central goal is described by O'Neill (1983) as "the preservation and transmission of established social patterns and traditions" (p. 11).

The progressives --- advocates of multiculturalism, critical pedagogy and other aspects of transformative education reviewed earlier --- share quite different assumptions about education in general, and about art and music education in particular. Maxine Greene's (1995) beliefs about art education build heavily upon

Dewey and Freire to see all art education as a form of seeing the possibilities of an expanded sense of democracy and social transformation.

I ...seek out ways in which the arts, in particular, can release imagination to open new perspectives, to identify alternatives.... Surely, education today must be conceived as a mode of opening the world to critical judgments by the young and to their imaginative projections and, in time, to their transformative actions (p. 18, 56).

The humanistic assumptions about children's music education and singing are reviewed in Campbell and Scott-Kassner (1995, p. 4-8), paraphrased here as:

- Music education is fundamental.
- All children are musical and are naturally drawn to music.
- Nearly all children can learn to sing.
- Children have a right to their musical and cultural heritage.
- Teachers have an obligation to teach multicultural music respectfully.
- Music is its own discipline.
- Music is also one of the most effective means of teaching literacy and academic content.

These progressive notions about music education suffered greatly throughout the 1980's and 1990's. According to Vandenberg (1991), "The 'Back to Basics' movement of the 1980's eroded music education programs and demanded their justification in academic terms" (p. 33). The loss was particularly acute in California, where two terms of conservative Governor Ronald Reagan and the passage of Proposition 13 had already decimated social spending, including deep cuts to elementary school music programs.

The loss of music specialists, who had been delivering the music instruction, meant that classroom teachers were required to take on this extra

responsibility. But numerous studies demonstrate that classroom teachers across the U.S. lack the confidence and training to integrate singing and music into their everyday teaching (Amen, 1982; Choksy, 1986; Goodman, 1985; Smith, 1986). While the Music Educators National Conference recommends 100 minutes of music teaching per week, Amen (1982), for example, found that the average elementary teacher spends less than 10 minutes per day, with even less time spent in the upper grades.

Vandenberg (1991) identifies six additional reasons that teachers exclude music from their curriculum:

1. Loss of music specialists, who were seen as partners to classroom teachers, “in a majority of programs”(p. 42).
2. Lack of their own music training during teacher education courses. In California, for example, since the Ryan Act of 1974, classroom teachers have not been required to take classes in the fine arts or how to teach classroom music. Programs tend to offer only one or two courses, which are often too theoretical, do not teach piano or guitar skills, and spend scant time on teaching singing, even though this is the most basic and common form of teaching music in the classroom (Stafford, 1987).
3. Lack of supervisory support and leadership. In California, for example, the number of fine arts consultants and supervisors dropped from 400 in 1967 to less than 30 in 1981 (Amen, 1982).
4. A dearth of information available regarding methods and techniques to teach classroom music or integrate it into the academic curriculum.

5. A narrow skills-acquisition focus of music methods courses, rather than music appreciation and cultural understanding.
6. Little or no music in the teachers' own family and school background.

In other words, we teach as we are taught. The current generations of teachers are disempowered to use song-making in their teaching because they themselves were denied it. Research seems to indicate that the following generations will have even less to build upon, less of their cultural heritage to inherit, leading Vandenberg (1991) to conclude that "the risk of losing fine arts participation from the culture is a distinct possibility" (p. 41).

While the preponderance of evidence from the field of music education seems to indicate that music and singing in elementary schools are in deep trouble, a wider view of transformative educational practices reveals a more hopeful alternative --- a vigorous minority of teachers, parents, music specialists and children's musicians who have not lost hope nor the imagination to involve themselves in transformative song-making.

The last leg of our journey through the literature of song-making, and the third leg of our metaphorical music stand, looks at the role of folk music, children's musicians, and socially uplifting songs in the lives of past and present-day elementary school children.

### Folk Music and Songs for Social Justice

Having highlighted the relevant literature from transformative education and music education, this review now briefly examines the origins and

development of songs and music that call forth a commitment to social justice in children. This all-important third leg of our music stand is part of the genre commonly known as folk music. It includes traditional and non-professional performers, but also what Seeger (1972) calls the “populizers” --- folklorists like himself who have taken the folk songs out of the collections and said, “Let’s give folk music back to the folks” (p. 12). Also included here is what Lockhart (1998) calls “the contemporary popular music” it inspires by many children’s musicians today (p. 21). This kind of music will also be referred to as “songs for social justice” (Network of Educators on the Americas, 1993) and what this study has called “transformative song-making.”

O’Brien (1995) defines folk music as that music which:

- comes primarily from the oral tradition
- is passed from one generation to the next
- is subject to change over time
- demonstrates qualities that are characteristic of a nation or ethnic group

(p. 24)

He contrasts this with what he calls “art music,” including classical music, which is generally developed and written by trained musicians and changes little over time. This distinction is far from rigid, O’Brien adds, noting that jazz has characteristics of both art and folk music. Folk music thus includes a huge variety of songs and musical expressions of our multicultural society, especially those that reflect the beliefs, customs and day-to-day life of common people.

For Howard Zinn (1997), this kind of music expresses “people’s history” because it is told from the often-dismissed perspective of those who are not part of

the intelligentsia, the rich or the powerful who write and interpret history. This is especially true of the genre of folk songs that tell the story of and by America's workers, the underclass, immigrants and racial minorities. To compile *Carry It On!: A History in Song and Pictures of America's Working Men and Women* (1985), for example, folk song leader Pete Seeger, along with Bob Reiser, selected and wrote about songs of Native Americans ("Seneca Boat Song"), immigrants ("No Irish Need Apply"), slaves ("Follow the Drinkin' Gourd" and "Oh Freedom"), farmers ("The Farmer is the One"), mine and mill workers ("Homestead Strike" and "Babies in the Mill"), labor organizers ("Joe Hill") feminists ("I'm Gonna Be an Engineer"), abolitionists ("Harriet Tubman") and single mothers ("Ballad of a Working Mother"). Seeger and Reiser (1985) also call this kind of music "people's music", not just folk music, and warn readers:

Beware! This is a book of history. With songs and pictures, we try to tell how the working people of this country --- women and men; old and young; people of various skin shades, various religions, languages, and national backgrounds --- have tried to better their own lives and work toward a world of peace, freedom, jobs, and justice for all (p. 9) .

A significant aspect of this portion of the literature review, then, is a "people's history" retelling of how folk music and the popular music it inspired came to be a significant part of contemporary children's music and especially songs for social justice. It is a powerful and largely unrecognized story among educators, but two caveats are in order. The first is that it is not within the scope of this study to tell a complete social history of folk music and its impact on children's song-making. The second clarification is that the telling of this story must be true to the critical theory that inspires transformative education; thus the



contradictions and shortcomings of folk music are just as important as its accomplishments in formulating a transformative pedagogy of song-making.

### Anti-Bias Clarifications

The place to begin this journey is with a brief summary of *“For Tomorrows That Sing”*: *Relating Multicultural Music to Anti-Bias Practice* by Bonnie Lockhart (1998). Lockhart is herself a children’s musician who has worked for many years with pre-school and elementary school children, focusing her work on how issues of race prejudice, identity and power can be revealed and explored through multicultural songs. Her study argues that traditional educators, as well as transformative and anti-bias educators, have thus far ignored folk music’s powerful pedagogical role with children, both in reclaiming essential memories from the past and transforming attitudes in the present.

In the words of Bernice Reagon (1985), African American singer/musician and cultural historian, it is the human voice that connects us to the sometimes-bitter memories of the past:

You see, Black congregational style singing has a memory bank that goes beyond your life span. It hooks you into the collective memory of your people. You feel and experience wounds and burdens you may have sworn you would never bear again. There are certain sounds you can make with your voice that like a computer, will bring up these collective memories (p. 22).

Part of the collective memory of folk music is the telling of the authentic story of slavery and racism in the United States through the real words and intonations of those most affected. This connection to a people’s historical perspective is crucial for those who suffered this degradation, but it also benefits those who did not. Folk music thus “builds bridges for people who do not share

that past or identity” (Lockhart, p. 23). In a classroom, mass meeting, or church, authentic voices of the past can help bridge the historic divides between white and black, immigrant and native born, weak and powerful --- what Cantwell (1996) calls the “impassable social frontiers” (p. 51).

Cantwell (1996), Leroi Jones (1963) and Alice Walker (1971) describe the way in which the culture of historically oppressed peoples in the U.S. has been appropriated by the majority culture. Cantwell’s *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival* (1996) documents Blackface minstrelsy, “the most popular entertainment of the nineteenth century,” in which white performers dressed in blackface to present African-American stories, songs and dances for white audiences” (p. 23). The minstrel show brought key elements of African-American culture into the mainstream of American culture, laying the groundwork for the later developments of blues, jazz and rock and roll --- America’s popular music (Schuller, 1977). But it did so by advancing a grotesque racial stereotype of African-Americans, distorting their culture, separating singers from their songs, and commercializing it all for a mass audience. This too is a legacy of folk and popular music in the U.S.

### The Folk Music Revivals

As explained earlier in the literature review of music education, folk music was a widespread phenomenon of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was as diverse as the experiences of its immigrant and native populations: bluegrass, spirituals, cowboy tunes and more. The first collections of songs sung by enslaved African Americans and antislavery songs were made by Abolitionist reformers in the northeast, who

along with the suffrage, settlement-house, and temperance movements, formed the basis of antislavery, pacifist and pluralistic ideas in that era (Cantwell, 1998). Spencer (1990) notes, “Antislavery songs were sung by children in schools of the Northern free states” (p. 45). In *Protest & Praise: Sacred Music of Black Religion*, Spencer (1990) traces the history of abolitionist song and its connections to the profound tradition of social justice songs within the Black church in America, as well as to the blues:

In telling the exodus story through the spirituals and the story of the spirituals through the exodus, I maintain that the spirituals were unquestionably the archetype of protest seen later in antislavery, social gospel, and civil rights hymnody. I also contend that early blues was a music of rebellion, namely, a radical affront to the hypocrisy of the church and the advocates of slavery (p. vii-viii).

In the twentieth century, a folk culture movement heavily influenced by African and Euro-American traditions was already in place, with not only the predominantly black vaudeville circuit featuring performers like Bessie Smith, but also numerous regional folk festivals with popular white singers such as the Carter Family and Jimmie Rogers. Meanwhile, the arrival of more recent European immigrants into urban ghettos stimulated both hybrid Jewish-Black jazz and a white “nativist” movement in folk art promoted by Henry Ford and the Rockefellers “to museumize the post industrial artisan economy” (Cantwell, 1996, p. 31).

Just as Europeans in the new century were examining folk music in Europe and the United States, a few key figures in the U.S. were also laying the groundwork for a Folk Revival. Charles Seeger and Ruth Crawford Seeger, parents of aforementioned Pete Seeger, were musicologists who became attracted

to American ethnic and folk music. The father and son team of John and Alan Lomax was also collecting and publishing the “blues and ballads of miners, sharecroppers, cowboys, and mill workers that informed the repertoires of so many folksingers of the thirties and beyond” (Lockhart, 1998, p. 33).

Things moved into high gear, recalls Alan Lomax, when the Roosevelt administration, faced with growing popular discontent after the Great Depression, took a strong interest in folksongs as an expression of a unifying American heritage:

Everybody in Washington was interested in folk music. The Roosevelts ...wanted to be identified with it as a democratic art ....they saw that the country lacked a feeling of unity; they saw that there were conflicts between various kinds of racial, regional, and class groups in this country. They hoped that the feeling of cultural unity that lies somehow in our big and crazy patchwork of folksong, would give Americans the feeling that they all belonged to the same kind of culture (Botkin, 1963, p.121).

John and Alan Lomax, aided by Ruth Crawford Seeger and others, were commissioned by the Roosevelt administration to travel the country making hundreds of hours of high-quality field recordings of American folk musicians of all kinds and preserve their voices in a national collection. These recordings are now found in the Smithsonian Institution’s Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage in Washington D.C., many recently re-released in CD format under the Smithsonian Folkways Recordings (2000) label.

Drawn by the siren songs of folk music and inspired by the political movements of their day, Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie and other talented young singers and musicians soaked up the folk tunes, wrote others in the same style, and began to perform as the Almanac Singers. They played at labor rallies and

strikes, invited folks to their Saturday afternoon “rent parties” in New York City to pay bills, and pioneered a form of group singing they called “hootenannies” (Seeger, 1972, p. 17). The Almanac Singers also met up with folk and blues musicians from the South like Leadbelly, Josh White and Sonny Terry who had recorded many folk songs for the Lomaxes. Their songs were an eclectic collection of American folk tunes like “Tom Dooley” and “Shenandoah”, Guthrie originals such as “This Land is Your Land,” “Pastures of Plenty,” and “Hard Traveling,” and songs from the Spanish Civil War and other parts of the world. Seeger and some thirty folksingers, choral directors and labor education officials met in 1945 to found People’s Songs, an organization dedicated to disseminating folk songs, that later changed its name to *Sing Out* and continues to this day (Cantwell, p.165).

Meanwhile, classical singers like African-Americans Paul Robeson and Marion Anderson brought folksongs and spirituals into the concert halls and progressive musicals. Earl Robinson’s *Ballad for Americans*, for example, featured the outspoken Robeson’s powerful singing voice to bring the folk song movement and its political issues to the theater stage. This period was known as the Popular Front; the American left, including the Communist Party, believed that folk musicians like the Almanac Singers and Paul Robeson were the best way to bring people together in common cause against the fascist threat worldwide (Cantwell, 1996).

Folk music also played a prominent role in labor organizing in the 1930’s, especially in the South. In 1932 Myles Horton, inspired in part by the Danish folk school movement, founded the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee as an adult education center for social change (Ayres, 1998). Highlander became the

education and cultural arm of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), with plays, singing and workshops designed to bring labor activists of all races together in common cause. Summarizing the autobiography of Myles Horton (1998) and the role that Highlander continues to play, William Ayres writes:

For many years Highlander was the only place in the South where white and African American citizens lived and worked together, something that was illegal in that strictly segregated society... The list of students [and visitors] at Highlander is a roll call of social activists: Rosa Parks, Eleanor Roosevelt, Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Martin Luther King Jr., Andrew Young, Fannie Lou Hamer (p. 153).

Many songs were born and raised at Highlander under the guidance of Zilphia Horton, Myles' wife and partner, but none more world famous than "We Shall Overcome." Pete Seeger (1972) tells the story of how this anthem of the Civil Right Movement became so well known that many children's musicians today use it in their children's programs:

In 1946 Zilphia Horton of the Highlander Folk School, helping to organize a tobacco workers' union, heard some Negro union members singing on a picket line. It was a cold winter day, and they were singing to keep their spirits up.

One of the old songs was "I Will Overcome" --- but they had made a significant change in the words to "We Will Overcome."

Zilphia added some extra verses, and it was occasionally sung as a union song then. In 1947 she taught it to me, and I sang it up north, adding still more verses which gave it a more general flavor (such as *We'll walk hand in hand*).

Guy Carawan took it south again in 1960 and sang it to the Negro college students who started the sit-in movement --- going into restaurants and refusing to leave until they were served. Within a few months the song in its new version spread through the South, and had many more verses added to it (p. 111-112).

### Passing the Legacy to Children

Indeed, the cultural influence of the American left had never been greater than in the 1940's, extending the influence of progressive folk music into popular,

commercial and even “one of the prime markets for folksong on record . . . the children’s market” (Cantwell, 1996 p. 175). Both Seeger and Guthrie recorded children’s songs for musical pioneer Moe Asch, whose Folkways Records and earlier labels would preserve the recordings of many the most important folk musicians of the day (Goldsmith, 1998). As with parents before and since, these folk musician’s children’s songs were first sung to their kids. Guthrie and his first wife, Marjorie Mazia Guthrie, made up the *Songs to Grow On* and *Work Songs to Grow On* as entertainment for “kids parties” for their daughter Cathy and her friends. They called the kids parties by many names: Hootenholler, Play Day, Kuttinup, Dance Around and many more. In his collection of writings, *Born to Win*, Guthrie (1965) writes about the real author of most of his children’s songs, his daughter Cathy:

She sang songs while she drew her pictures after her paste was all gone, and forced me to take down the words as she sang them. I’ve got several hundred of her songs already written down. I’ve sold two albums of phonograph records of kids tunes just by putting little tunes and guitar notes to her songs she sings. . . . and still I’ve not scratched the first crust of top dirt in her garden of the soul (p. 43).

Tragically, Cathy died in a fire at the age of four, leaving a grieving Guthrie (1970) to eulogize,:

“Let’s take faith in her four big happy years, and let’s keep on singing and dancing at our Hootenannies and at our nursery schools and in our studios, the way Cathy would like us to do. And let’s keep on marching and fighting, too” (p. 206).

Meanwhile, Pete Seeger was making up songs like “Sweepy, Sweepy, Sweepy” and “To Everyone In All the World” for his own children. Writing in his autobiographical songbook, *Where Have All the Flowers Gone*, Seeger (1993) admits:

I'm certainly not the first versifier inspired by small children. . . . Most of these children's songs here just popped out when I was playing with my kids back in the 1950's. At the time I could wander into the office of Moe Asch (Folkways Records) almost any time, on little or no notice. He'd prop up a mike in front of me, and I'd sing the latest songs I'd learned or made up. A half an hour later I'd be on my way. A few months later he might have included some of the songs in a new Folkways LP he was showing school teachers at some educational convention. The sales of these records were microscopic by any commercial standard. Hardly a single record store bothered to carry Folkways. But little by little we all grew and learned (p. 45, 53).

Ruth Crawford Seeger (1948) was one of the folklorists who, in addition to raising her own children with folk songs, actively visited schools and observed the song-making process. She had a great interest in how parents and teachers bring folk songs to children in home and schools to "give vitality, beauty, and power to their emotions, imaginations and experiences" (p. 9). In 1948 she published her authoritative collection, *American Folksongs for Children in Home, Schools and Nursery School*, making her intentions clear by adding the subtitle, *A Book for Children, Parents and Teachers*. In the introduction, Seeger extolled the diversity, originality and indigenous American spirit of folk songs, as well as its multicultural origins. "Our children have a right to be brought up with it," she argued (p. 21), adding:

It gives early experience of democratic attitudes and values .... This kind of music has crossed and recrossed many sorts of boundaries and is still crossing and recrossing them. It can give the children a glimpse of ways of life and thought different from our own .... It can be the window through which children look at themselves, their neighbors, their toys, thoughts (p. 22).

With official support from the White House, the publication of Crawford Seeger's authentic compendium of folk songs, games, dances and childhood play in circulation, and with folk musicians performing in schools and classrooms,



schools and expanding medium of radio and phonographs became a venue for folksongs and folksingers. Since 1938-39 in New York, CBS's School of the Air had been sponsoring a radio program by Alan Lomax, *Folk Music of America*, which sent Lomax and his guest singers into classrooms to teach folksongs. NBC followed with their own children and family oriented folk music program that was linked to performances and workshops in schools and libraries. The influential Music Educators National Conference (MENC) developed an "American Unity Through Music" program in the mid-1940's and urged teachers to include both American and Latin American folk music in their classes (Vandenberg, 1991).

This begins to explain how Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land," spirituals of the Black experience like "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" and many international songs such as "Tzena, Tzena" and "Wimoweh" began to become an important part of American music education. When "Goodnight Irene" by Pete Seeger and the rest of his new group, the Weavers, reached the top of the Pop Charts in 1950, it seemed that the connection between progressive folksingers and children's singing would continue unabated.

But folk music's confluence into mainstream popular culture was to end shortly after "Goodnight Irene" when the House on Un-American Activities (HUAC), and a Senate Committee led by Senator Joseph McCarthy, labeled Seeger and a host of other folk singers as "red communists" and Soviet sympathizers. The Cold War had arrived, "redbaiting" many progressive U.S. artists and forcing the progressive folksingers out of radio and television for nearly a decade (Cantwell, 1996).

Denisoff (1971) and Cantwell (1996) have discussed the degree to which the folksong movement was led by, or merely coexisted with, the “front” organizations of the Communist Party USA in those years. Whatever the determination, the Cold War and McCarthyism sent many social activists to jail or into hiding, and ended American education’s romance with the tainted folksingers, if not their songs. Seeger was blacklisted from the major media for not cooperating with HUAC, while others like Burl Ives did “name names” and continued a more sanitized career of singing folk songs for children on television.

### From Classrooms to Campfires

Lockhart (1998) shares the irony of what happened next to Seeger and those folksingers most committed to singing for social justice:

The retreat of the exiled folksingers was not, as the virulent anti-Communist campaign might have warned, into underground cadres and revolutionary party cells. Rather, folksingers brought their music into the world of children, families and youth. Having already won a place in the educational and family setting of post-war culture, folksingers banished from commercial performance were welcomed in many camps, nurseries, schools, and colleges (p. 36).

There, around campfires in Catskill summer camps, the radical folk musicians not only survived McCarthyism by earning a living with their music; they learned what Pete Seeger calls “cultural guerrilla tactics” (Cantwell, 1996, p. 272) through passing on to the young a sense of what social justice meant in their lives: supporting workers’ struggles, respecting people of all colors and creeds, resisting war and rightwing blacklisting, learning the value of folk versus commercial culture, singing and playing a folk instrument. If this sounds suspiciously close to our modern definition of multiculturalism, or Greene’s (1995)

definition of social justice education, Cantwell would argue that these were indeed the seeds planted in the hearts and minds of American youth during this crucial transition period of American cultural history --- the “counter-culture” in which many of those working for issues of social justice today were raised.

Cantwell’s (1996) central thesis is that the blacklisting of progressive folk music was painful but essential to rid it of left-wing baggage and commercial trappings ---“ dehistoricized yet replete with the past, deidiologized but inherently political” (p. 281) --- allowing it be passed on to a new generation of youth who would create the 1960’s youth movement/counterculture and the sixties folk revival that accompanied it. Cantwell’s interpretation is certainly debatable, but it is undeniable that this same generation of “folkies” would bring socially charged folk music back to the classroom as they themselves grew to adulthood.

Lockhart (1998) clarifies the connection between Seeger’s generation and today’s activist teachers and children’s song-makers by citing an interview with Ruth Pelham (1997), a founding member of the progressive Children’s Music Network (CMN) in the 1980’s, and a participant in this study. Pelham recalls her vivid memories of folk music at the Jewish Federation camp she attended in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s:

There was a tremendous amount of singing there. And the singing there totally captivated me. I was deeply exposed to folk music and political music and songs of the Civil Rights movement. I mean we listened to Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger songs, and learned Phil Ochs songs and Tom Paxton songs and songs of the Labor Movement.... [The counselors] had everybody singing along with them and that is one of the most joyous, powerful memories I have of camp.... We learned about things through those songs that I never learned about in school. About people. About feelings. About emotions. About viewpoints of life. And I cherish that because I don’t know where else I would have gotten that. (p.4).

Pelham and Lockhart, along with the several hundred members of the CMN and youth in general --- including this researcher --- were profoundly influenced not only by Guthrie, Seeger, Ochs, and Paxton, but by a long list of what Cantwell calls “folk song revivalists” in the period from the late 1950’s to the mid 1960’s who followed in their footsteps: the Kingston Trio, Odetta, Harry Belafonte, the New Lost City Ramblers, the trio of Peter, Paul and Mary, and of course, Joan Baez and Bob Dylan.

Cantwell details the way in which this new generation of folksingers, backed by Seeger and the *Sing Out!* legacy, captured the imagination of a generation of college students --- primarily white, Northern, and middle class --- who found in this music an alternative to post-war consumerism, anti-Communism, racism and stifling gender roles. In Seeger’s songs and stories they got the banjo-accompanied message of social justice, labor history, peace, and internationalism. From the wildly popular Joan Baez they got a dark skinned “Madonna”-like Mexican/American woman of pure soprano voice singing folk ballads, Negro spirituals and Dylan songs, infused with an activist commitment to Quaker-inspired non-violence, civil rights and anti-war demonstrations (Baez, 1987). And from Bob Dylan they experienced an authentic poetic voice of youthful protest, one not only in the best Woody Guthrie tradition, but also personally “anointed” by Guthrie before his death in 1967 (Cantwell, 1996).

According to cultural historian Denisoff (1971), the “revival of the new protester” resulted from the coming together of the new student movement in the North with the broad Civil Rights movement that had been building in the South, led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating

Committee (SNCC). Cantwell (1996) and Denisoff (1971) note several other important links between the folk revival and the Civil Rights Movement:

1. The work of aforementioned Myles and Zilphia Horton and the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee.
2. The prominent role of African-American spirituals in folk music of the Popular Front and Folk Revival, not only by the aforementioned Robeson and Smith, but through its links to the other expressions of Black music in America: blues, jazz, gospel and rock and roll.
3. The emergence of protest and folk-styled singing groups from the Black Civil Rights Movement itself, who sang their freedom songs in marches, at sit-ins and in jails throughout the South. Most notably among these was the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's (SNCC) teenage quartet, the Freedom Singers, led by civil-rights cultural worker Bernice Johnson Reagon --- now a leading Smithsonian historian, cultural spokesperson, and leader of the singing group, Sweet Honey and the Rock. According to Cantwell (1966), Johnson Reagon patterned the Freedom Singers on the Almanac Singers and "undertook a national collegiate tour, organized by [Seeger's wife] Toshi Seeger along Pete's established folksong circuit" (p. 301).

Building on these bridges across racial and class divides, many folk revival musicians, including Baez, Paxton and Seeger, went throughout the North and the South to sing their support for integration and civil rights, while Joan Baez made international news accompanying King on marches throughout the south and singing "Oh Freedom" and "We Shall Overcome" (Baez, 1987). Just as progressive

whites had joined Blacks in non-violent sit-ins in Nashville to integrate businesses, they came together at Highlander and throughout the Civil Rights Movement. This was the atmosphere in which the folk revival, Civil Rights, and later the Anti-War Movement and Anti-Imperialist Movement, shaped each other and influenced a new generation of activist musicians in the U.S. and abroad who were dedicated to children and the continued pursuit of social justice.

### Latin America's Movement of "The New Song"

While this study has focused on the interconnections between education and folk music in the United States, the movement to teach through songs that proclaim social justice and side with the poor is certainly a worldwide phenomenon. From Paris to Poland, Jamaica to Johannesburg, songs and song-makers have been part of liberation struggles and popular movements in their own countries since the 1960's. Their music has also leaped across borders, intermingling and contributing to a dynamic interdependence of culture.

Nowhere has this been more apparent than in Latin America, where a movement of activist folk and popular musicians associated with "*la nueva cancion*," "the new song movement," has supported revolutionary and transformative movements from the late 1960's onward. Hardly a country and style of music is not represented: Carlos Puebla, Pablo Milanés and Sylvio Rodríguez from Cuba; Mercedes Sosa and Atahualpa Yupanqui from Argentina; Daniel Viglietti from Uruguay, Oscar Chavez and the currently popular *Maná* band from Mexico; Carlos Mejía Godoy from Sandinista Nicaragua, and course, the great folklorists from Chile, Violeta Parra and Isabel Parra.

So many stories, but one can stand for all. Victor Jara was the singing voice of the popular movement that brought Chilean workers to power in the early 1970's through the election of President Salvador Allende. General Pinochet, with the assistance of the CIA, took over the government of Chile in September of 1973, bombing the palace, killing Allende, and then rounding up thousands of his socialist supporters, including Victor Jara (Seeger, 1993, p. 102). Pete Seeger (1993) wrote the following summary and eulogy of the singer's final moments to introduce Jara's last poem, "*Estadio Chile*," first sung by Seeger in concert in 1974:

Victor was singing for students at the university when the whole area was surrounded. All within were taken prisoner and marched to a large indoor soccer stadium, Estadio Chile. For three days it was a scene of horror. Torture, executions.

An officer thought he recognized Victor, pointed at him with a questioning look and motioning as if strumming a guitar. Victor nodded. He was seized, taken to the center of the stadium and told to put his hands on a table. While his friends watched in horror, rifle butts beat his hands to a bloody pulp.

"All right, sing for us now, you \_\_\_\_\_," shouted the officer. Victor staggered to his feet, faced the stands.

"Compañeros, let's sing for el comandante."

Waving his bloody stumps, he led them in the anthem of Salvador Allende's Popular Unity Party. Other prisoners hesitantly joined in.

RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT

The guards sprayed him and the stands with machine guns.

This last poem of his was smuggled out of Chile, in several different versions. This translation was given to me by a woman at a Chicago concert in 1974. A few minutes later I stuck the words on a mike stand and improvised a guitar accompaniment as I recited them (p. 102).

*!Canto qué mal me sales  
cuando tengo que cantar espanto!*

Oh you song, you come out so badly  
when I must sing the terror!

Victor Jara, "Estadio Chile" fragment (Seeger, 1993, p. 103)

Stepping back from this chilling scene of yesteryear, it is possible to see how the aforementioned experiences of transformative education, art and music

education, and folk-based children's music have come together to form a backdrop for the research dialogues with some of the key players in transformative song-making.



## Chapter III

### METHODOLOGY

To transform the world. To amplify the voices of those who are rendered voiceless by the dominant society. To inscribe with them their words and wisdom, creating written histories, and then to read the world with one another. To provide the stage where women and men, children, the elderly, and the disenfranchised minorities and communities become the protagonists in their own life stories. These are the intentions of Participatory Research (Ada and Beutel, 1993, p. 7).

#### Introduction and Overview

Having constructed our music stand from the three legs of the literature reviewed, next came the task of selecting a research methodology most appropriate to the task of addressing the research problem of this study: what can we learn from leading practitioners of transformative song-making about how to more effectively involve children in the process of singing to imagine and construct a more just world?

The methodology chosen for a study needs to lead the researcher, the participants, and the readers of the study along a path to acquire deep knowledge about the practice of transformative song-making. It must instruct and remind the participants in the study to take time to explore, to reflect upon the multiple meanings of this knowledge on a personal and a societal level. It must provide a guide of how to approach a new community, formulate questions, and engage in communication with participants that goes beyond the limitations of traditional research. It must require honesty to speak the word, arouse hope to believe that change is possible, and inspire courage to carry into action the personal and social

knowledge found on the journey. For these essential reasons, this study was conducted through the methodology of participatory research, described below.

### Research Design: Participatory Research

Participatory research is a form of social investigation first developed by Paulo Freire, who began working with peasants in northeastern Brazil in the 1950's. In 1970, then in exile, Freire published his revolutionary ideas and experiences in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and spent the rest of his life teaching, writing, and traveling the world to encourage a radical educational praxis. Ada and Beutel, in *Participatory Research as a Dialogue for Social Action* (1993), pay homage to Freire and credit Budd Hall's work in Africa in the 1970's, along with numerous academics, artists, and activists who became inspired by Freire and the social movements of the past three decades to adapt and apply participatory research. Foremost among these in the North Western Hemisphere are individuals at the International Adult Education Network in Toronto, Canada, Peter Park and colleagues at Amherst College, the International and Multicultural Education Department of the University of San Francisco, and Mary Poplin and colleagues at Claremont Graduate School of Education. All these researchers share the belief that "Participatory Research is a methodology that is evolving and it is refined each time it is used" (Ada & Beutel, 1993, p. 122).

The reason that so many people have become excited by participatory research is that its goal is nothing less than "to transform the world" (Ada & Beutel, 1993, p. 7). In the words of Peter Park (1989):

The explicit aim of participatory research is to bring about a more just society in which no classes of people suffer from the deprivation of the essentials of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, and health and in which all enjoy basic human freedoms and dignity (p. 1).

Given the theoretical framework of this study and the research problem it addresses, it is apparent, as Ada and Beutel (1993) describe, that, “Participatory Research is well-suited for educators committed to the form of education known as transformative education or critical pedagogy. It is a commitment to a way of learning and education for social action and justice” that is well suited to examining transformative song-making (p.10).

Using Freire (1970), Park (1989), Ada and Beutel (1993), and others as points of reference, the following pages will address some of the major components of participatory research and discuss how they apply to this study.

### Siding With the Poor

Park (1989) asserts that participatory research “chooses to work with the poor who are by definition oppressed and powerless” (p. 2). This study sought out the participation from children’s musicians who themselves are not the most oppressed sector of society, but who have taken the side of the poor and oppressed; hence they have little officially sanctioned power in determining economic, social or educational policies which govern our lives. Many of the participants have enjoyed considerable class and educational privilege, yet have chosen a vocation in which they can “give back” to the community and, as a result, forego some material success in their own lives. This study therefore utilized participatory research as a way of listening to their voices and amplify their reflections, making their voices even louder and comprehensible.

### Voice and Empowerment

Through giving voice, participatory research seeks a solution that is not paternalism --- what Park (1989) calls “a kind of benevolent despotism”(p. 2) --- but rather self-reliance, self-sufficiency, self-determination. This study looked for reflections from its participants on how teachers, parents, other song-makers, and children can make changes for themselves in educational systems that they have little control over. Voice, then, is closely linked to the idea of empowerment, described by Kieffer (1981) as having three main dimensions:

- a) development of a more positive and potent sense of self
- b) construction of more critical comprehension of the web of social and political relations which comprise one’s experienced environment, and
- c) cultivation of resources and strategies, or functional competence, for efficacious attainment of personal and collective socio-political goals.... We can say that individuals are “empowered” as they become able to participate in the dynamics of social relations with a personal sense of potency, critical political awareness, and practical strategic skills (p. 7).

While personal empowerment is necessary for those individuals involved in the process, the goal of empowerment is “being in-power politically to effect needed social change” (Park, 1989, p. 2). This study selected individual musicians who have moved beyond powerlessness to impact children with their hope-filled music.

Participatory research can be part of the process of personal empowerment and social change by providing a “framework in which people seeking to overcome oppressive situations can come to understand the social forces in operation and to gain collective strength in collective action” (Park, 1989, p. 3). Park (1989) calls this kind of research “learning by searching, or re-searching for knowledge”(p. 3).

Building on Habermas' critical theory of knowledge, Park describes three types of knowledge that are important to understand participatory research:

1. Instrumental knowledge, defined by its use in the natural sciences in the West and claimed to be "value-neutral" (p. 4)
2. Interactive knowledge, in which "we come to understand another person by merging our individual perspectives for the sake of understanding the other's actions and being" (p. 5)
3. Critical knowledge, "that comes from reflection and action" about urgent social problems and raises "questions about public policies at every level of society" (p. 7)

The knowledge with which this study is concerned is above all interactive and critical. The participants seek to share the world of children and music-making, searching for both personal empowerment in their practice and greater clarity about the social structures and policies that oppress, inhibit and restrict transformative song-making. In the case of many musicians who work in schools without teaching credentials, for example, this can mean not being valued as experts or able to impact school policies (Lockhart, 1998).

"By reflecting on these causes as being historically rooted in human actions" Park (1989) writes, people involved in participatory research "come to realize that things do not have to remain the way they are and that they can engage in actions to transform the reality" (p. 7). This is precisely the meaning of Paulo Freire's (1970) *concientización*, in which "to speak a true word is to transform the world" (p. 75). Thus, Park (1989) believes that "[p]artaking in participatory research is already a form of action which leads to new discoveries" (p. 8).

## The Dialogue

Park (1989) emphasizes the role of “people’s participation” in selecting the research design and then their inclusion in the actual research gathering, analysis and reporting (p. 11). But it is dialogue between researcher and participants that is the heart of this methodology:

If there is any one methodological feature that distinguishes participatory research from other social science research, it is dialogue, because it is through dialogue that people come together and participate in all crucial aspects of investigation and collective action. To dialogue means to talk as equal partners in an exchange of not only information but also of sentiments and values. Dialogue is a means of discovering the sharedness of a problem, the connectedness of the lives, and the common ground for action (p. 12).

Freire (1970) delves into the humanistic aspects of dialogue: “Founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence” (p. 79). These values create an atmosphere of hope and trust, and enable the participants to “listen deeply” to each other in a way that traditional research techniques cannot approach (Ada and Beutel, 1993, p. 88).

## The Research Process

Participatory research ideally begins with a problem that people in a particular community want to be resolved, giving them reason to participate. In the case of this study, the problem as stated is the lack of recognition in education and society in general for children’s singing in general, especially singing for social justice. Park (1989) indicates that the researcher is often the one to identify the problem, but that it must be a problem that is valid and needed. The participatory nature of this study determines the extent to which this is indeed true.

Ada and Beutel (1993) summarize the five aspects of participatory research in the model developed by Kieffer (1981):

1. Recruiting participants and developing entry into the community.
2. Collecting data and conducting dialogic interviews.
3. Analyzing the data; transcribing recorded dialogues into text and discussing that text with the participants. Searching for generative themes.
4. Reflecting on the emancipatory nature of the dialogues with the participants.
5. Constructing meaning through an integrative analysis (p. 51).

But is participatory research valid? Is it true? Can we trust it to be honest about the community involved in the research? Can research that takes the side of the poor and the oppressed also be considered valid? Park (1989) answers the criticisms about participatory research's lack of objectivity by asserting that traditional instrumental knowledge is not objective either, for it takes the side of the powerful and the status quo. "Validity of data" for Park, and for the purposes of this research, "depends on the subjects fully empathizing with the purpose of the study, thoroughly understanding the intent of the questions, and wanting to give the needed information the best way they know how" (p.13).

### Recovering Popular Knowledge

This kind of knowledge, acquired through dialogue with children's musicians committed to social justice, is popular knowledge, or "knowledge of the people" that has "not been codified or acknowledged by the dominant society" (Ada

and Beutel, 1993, p. 15). Thus, its collection and dissemination has a subversive potential that can serve to expand the limits of democracy.

What could be a more appropriate methodology for collecting “people’s music” and transformative songs for children, as reviewed in earlier pages, than participatory research and its grounding in popular knowledge? In summary, participatory research focuses on social justice, calls for dialogues and collective analysis of data, theorizes popular knowledge, encourages critical consciousness, and inspires love, hope and action. Park (1989) adds that,

participatory research is as much a process of recovery as of discovery . . . recovering people’s practical skills, communal sentiments, ancient lores, and collective wisdom that live on but are submerged in the inherited way of life (p. 8-9).

Contextualized in this manner, the songs and stories from participants in this study are “pockets of resistance....[that] persist in the lingering memories and practices of the people” (p. 18). Park explains:

Heroic deeds of native leaders, peasants, and workers fighting against outside invaders, landowners, and factory bosses live again in oral histories told in the intimacy of close encounters and in the pages of written history....These are not always romantic tales of victory for the weak, for the conflict has been an unevenly matched warfare. But no matter; there are lessons to be learned in witnessing the unbroken spirit of freedom rising up over and over again, defeating the gloom of defeat itself. Participatory research provides opportunities for people to learn these lessons through oral and written histories that they themselves tell and collect (p. 18).

### Description of the Participants’ Community

The nine participants who engaged in dialogues and participatory research are all adults who have spent years singing with children in schools, camps and other settings in the United States and abroad. They are not all exclusively



children's musicians, for many sing for adults as well. However, they were selected for this study because they consider children as an essential part of their work.

They are, for the most part, public figures who have published songs and songbooks, written articles and books, conducted published interviews, and made many musical recordings for children. For this reason, they can be considered to be leading voices within the larger community of persons who place a high value on singing with children. Most earn their living primarily by making music, while others complement it with other occupations. All consider music and song-making central to their lives.

Of prime importance to this study, all of these musicians were selected because they have a demonstrated interest in social justice issues and passing on this message to children. Because of this connection between children's music and social justice, eight of the nine participants are members and leaders of a progressive national advocacy organization called the Children's Music Network (CMN), as is the researcher. They attend regional and national CMN Gatherings, may read or publish songs and articles in the CMN *Pass It On!* magazine, and know each other and each other's work. While membership in any organization is not a prerequisite for this study, nor was this a case study of the CMN, connections and friendships among the participants and the researcher have made the participatory process more fruitful and enjoyable.

Other characteristics of the participants are:

- they are both women and men singers
- they are representative of various ethnicities within the United States: European American, African American, Jewish, and Latino.

- they come from several geographical regions of the U.S.: specifically, New York state, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Minnesota and California
- their ages range from the mid thirties to the early eighties
- they are all English speakers, though this is the second language for two individuals
- one is an immigrant from Argentina and another grew up along the California-Mexico border

Beyond the aforementioned general characteristics of the participants, each is a unique individual who has interpreted his or her experience to help form a collective understanding of transformative song-making with children. The methodology has sought to retain the uniqueness of each participant, while searching for overarching patterns or themes to arise.

### Research Setting

The dialogues that are central to this study were done in places convenient to the participants and researcher. Meetings occurred in homes and offices, at a bilingual teachers' conference, and many at the CMN Gatherings mentioned earlier. The national Annual Gathering of CMN in Warwick, New York, in October of 2000, proved to be an excellent opportunity to conduct the first dialogues with Pete Seeger and four others who eventually became participants. Due to the limitation of time and travel, the second dialogues, follow-up discussions, and final revisions took place in a variety of settings, including face-to face meetings, telephone conversations, regular mail, and especially electronic mail correspondence. Thanks, in part, to the miracle of modern communications, this

research was indeed a participatory process, as will be discussed in more detail below in the description of Data Collection.

### Research Questions and Questions to Guide the Dialogue

The following questions, in outline form, served as a framework for the first dialogues with participants. As expected, these seven questions were modified and improved through the process of the dialogues, but nonetheless served as an essential point of departure. These seven research questions, the focus of the Research Problem stated in Chapter I, are grouped below under the four phases of the Creative Education Process, as developed by Ada and Campoy (in press). Under each research question listed are questions to guide the research, i.e. more specific questions to help explore the larger issue.

#### *Questions to Establish the Portrait of the Participant:*

1. What is your background as a musician? A teacher? A social activist?
2. How have these roles intersected in your life?
3. Who are your musical heroes and heroines? How have they influenced you?
4. What drew you to the kind of music you do with children?
5. How did you come to work with children?
6. What are some of the biggest thrills from your career?
7. What have been the biggest challenges?
8. What are you most proud of?
9. What would you like people to know about you as a song-maker for children?

*DESCRIPTIVE PHASE: Naming or describing the issue*

**Research Question #1:** How do you define social justice?

- a. What is social justice in your life and experience?
- b. How do your commitments to social justice affect your work?

**Research Question #2:** What are the social justice issues that you feel are especially important for children to address through your song-making?

- a. Is the term “song-making” an appropriate one for your work? If not, how else would you describe what you do?
- b. What are some of the main connections between singing and teaching children about social justice?
- c. How do you begin to make the connections between music and social justice issues?
- d. What social justice issues have you found that children respond to best? Which issues are the most difficult to convey in songs? Why?
- e. How do you involve children in thinking about social justice issues?
- f. Is there any other issue in this area you would like to address?

*PERSONAL INTERPRETIVE PHASE: Relating the issue to personal experience*

**Research Question #3:** How have you used your gifts of music, singing, song-writing, and performing to carry this message about social justice to children?

- a. How did you first come to sing with children?
- b. What was it that drew you to working with children?
- c. What do you think are some of the most important things to remember when you work/play with children?
- d. How do you get kids to sing and respond to music?
- e. How do you convey the context and multiple meanings of a song?
- f. Do you involve children in songwriting, rewriting? How?
- g. What kinds of settings do you work in with children: classrooms, school-wide concerts, field trips?

- h. Can you describe the kids' ethnicity and social class? How does this effect what you can do with them?
- i. How have you changed your approach, your pedagogy, over the years?
- j. Is there any other issue in this area you feel we should address?

**Research Question #4:** What are the pitfalls of doing transformative song-making with children?

- a. How do you keep from "preaching" at children, or talking down to them?
- b. What has changed in your approach over the years?

**Research Question #5:** What are some of the essential songs that foster a commitment to social justice?

- a. What are your sources for songs? How do you choose which ones to try out with children?
- b. Can you give an example of how you use a song that helps children understand who they are, that honors their identity?
- c. ...that fosters empathy with those who are different than they in race, ethnicity, social class, or language?
- d. ... that teaches labor history/people's history and respect for working people?
- e. ... that raises questions about violence and war and speaks for the need for international peace and cooperation?
- f. ... that help children become more critical thinkers about modern society: the environment, corporations, the media, schools?
- g. Any other example that addresses a social justice issue?
- h. Is there a song you wish someone would write to speak to an issue children have raised with you?

*CRITICAL MULTICULTURAL PHASE: Critical Reflection*

**Research Question #6:** What are the factors that impede the singing voices of children in schools and society today?

- a. Are schools, public and private, doing a good job of teaching singing, music and the arts today? Explain why or why not?
- b. Compare the quantity and quality of singing of elementary school children today and in the past.
- c. Are you doing more or less singing in schools today than in past decades? Why?
- d. Are there restrictions placed upon how and what you can sing when you are invited to a school campus? Can you relate an example?
- e. Are classroom teachers sufficiently prepared to use songs and music in their classrooms, especially songs that teach about real life issues?
- f. How does your ethnicity affect your work with children in school today?
- g. How about bad examples from your experience, where your attempts yielded the opposite results, went over kids' heads, or reinforced stereotypes?
- h. What is the impact of the media and popular consumer culture on children, especially in their connections to meaningful songs?
- i. Talk about when and why you get discouraged about the state of our schools and the options for children.
- j. Is there anything you would like to add that restricts or inhibits what I have called transformative song-making?

*CREATIVE TRANSFORMATIVE PHASE: Awareness leading to action*

**Research Question #7:** How can musicians, educators, and parents today more effectively involve children in the process of singing and imagining a more just world?

- a. What can teachers do to bring more "critical" music into their classrooms and curriculum?

- b. What about recorded children's music today? What is the best? How can it be used most effectively? Are there pitfalls to using "canned music"?
- c. Do you see another folk revival in the future?
- d. What would you like to say to school administrators about these issues? To colleges and universities who prepare classroom teachers and music teachers? To parents?
- e. Beth Lomax Hawes told a CMN gathering in Petaluma that children are a lot smarter than we give them credit for, that they can extract good values from a lot of junk thrown at them. Do you agree?
- f. What are your inner resources to keep on singing?
- g. Describe your music support networks, including CMN if you are a member. How could they be more supportive?

#### Data Collection

Four pleasant surprises occurred during the research portion of this study: the addition of Jacki Breger, Ruth Pelham, Barb Tilsen and David Heitler-Klevans as invaluable participants. Originally, the research plan called for involving just five participants who represented ample musical experience, ethnic and cultural diversity, and several generations of activist song-makers: Pete Seeger, Ella Jenkins, Suni Paz, Bonnie Lockhart, and Francisco Herrera. But upon arriving in Warwick, New York for the CMN Gathering and dialogue with Pete Seeger, it became apparent that there were other children's musicians present who could deepen and broaden the study, especially with their experiences with children in and around their home cities of Los Angeles, Albany, Minneapolis, and Philadelphia. Using the same prepared research questions above, dialogues with the four were begun throughout the music conference and more were planned.

However, this time an unpleasant surprise --- a dying father --- cut short the dialogues and forced the researcher to return home to California two days early. As a result, not as much time was spent with the newer participants and their voices are not as strongly represented in Chapter V Findings as the original five, even with later communications. For the purposes of clarifying the research process, this difference is noted here as “original” and “later” participants.

Each of the original participants in this study received a letter from the researcher requesting their participation, outlining the research project, explaining the principles of participatory research, and stating the protections for participants. In most cases there was also a personal contact, phone conversation or email to establish any questions or further information needed by the individual. A follow-up letter was sent or hand-delivered that addressed possible questions, along with final consent forms, rights and protections. For the later participants, requests for participation were made face-to-face in Warwick. Since this research involved one or two taped dialogues with the participants, each was asked to sign the Informed Consent Form giving their permission for these face-to-face meetings to be audiotaped, transcribed and quoted by the researcher.

Once the initial consent process was completed, the original participants were asked to arrange a date at their convenience for the dialogues with the researcher. Since several of the lived far away, this involved travel by the researcher and coordination of schedules. In some cases, a combination of phone and written communications served as the second dialogue. In most cases, the original participants were sent research questions for the dialogues prior to the meeting time, with the understanding that these were subject to change as new knowledge



was created in the process. In all but one case, the researcher recorded the dialogues; David Heitler-Klevans was kind enough to answer the research questions in written form through email. The researcher also kept a written and tape-recorded field journal to document impressions, questions, and other contextual notes about the dialogue that were part of the collection of data.

After the researcher transcribed the first dialogue, it was sent to the participants for their review and consideration, which often prompted further communications. Participants had the right, at any point during the research, to withdraw or edit the transcripts, up to the time of printing. Likewise, participants were given a final copy of the dissertation several months prior to final printing for their revisions, reflections, and final comments. Happily, these were received and incorporated into the final version of this dissertation. Participants also facilitated the writing of their portraits by sending the researcher biographical information and, in several cases, written summaries. And finally, several participants were kind enough to send written reflections on what the research process meant to them, which are included in Chapter VI.

### Data Analysis

Recalling Kieffer's (1981) stages of participatory research, participants were able to analyze the data and construct new knowledge by discussing the transcripts with the researcher, either in face-to-face second dialogues or through written communication. In this study, the answers to the research questions and their implications for further research and action were so extensive that they became the primary focus of the data analysis.

Adapting the methodology of Reza (1995, p. 109), the following are questions that were posed in the second dialogue and/or later communications:

- What did you see as important in your first dialogue?
- Is there anything you wish to clarify?
- Did any thought or comment strike you as important enough to say again or to expand on?
- Is there anything that you didn't say that you think is important?
- Do you have anything to add or change in the Recommendations for Further Research?
- Do you have anything to add or change in the Recommendations for Action?
- What have you learned from the process?
- What else can we do to promote transformative song-making with children and support those involved in this creative process?
- What have I not asked?

#### Researcher's Background and Entry to the Community

The researcher has been an elementary school teacher and song-leader for the past ten years in urban Sacramento and rural Galt, California. He joined the faculty of California State University, Sacramento's Bilingual Multicultural Education Department in the Fall of 2000 as a result of the doctoral process. The idea of "songs for social justice" and integrating folk songs into the social studies and language arts curriculum first came out of a direct need to teach youngsters in

these schools with all the tools at hand and in heart. That these songs should address children's needs for curriculum that is anti-biased, multicultural, and bilingual is the direct result of who many of these children are: multicultural, bilingual, too often poor and underachieving. The desire for songs that connect personal to social justice led to an understanding of moral education. The experience of seeing music squeezed out of the teaching day to make room for more reading, math and standardized test preparation is painful and personal as well. Finally, the search for hope --- for a transformative pedagogy of education --- led to the doctoral program at the University of San Francisco, which provided the impetus and support for this research.

The entry into the community of progressive children's singers and song-leaders goes back further than the ten years of classroom experience. My relationship to the participants and interest in the field of song and social justice grow primarily out of personal experience. As the son of a talented singing minister in a musical family, I was raised on hymns and Black spirituals, harmonies and group singing --- all imbued with a gospel-based concern for the poor and oppressed that continues to be cornerstone of my life. As a young adult coming of age in Mexico and California in the 1960's, it was little wonder that I became a political activist and singer/cultural worker over the past three decades. During my college years in the late 1960's at UC Santa Cruz and the National University of Mexico, I was drawn to the hopeful political and cultural movements of the time: Civil Rights, the Anti-Vietnam War protests, Mexican and Chicano student mobilizations, labor organizing, and the general counter-cultural upheaval of that decade. I studied the familiar spiritual-based Civil Rights music such as *Oh*

*Freedom*, learned and played the *nueva canción* (new song) protest songs coming out of Cuba and other parts of Latin America. I became a fan and supporter of street theater groups in both Mexico (*los Mascarones*) and California (*el Teatro Campesino*, the San Francisco Mime Troupe). At the University of California Santa Cruz I studied the works of Fanon and Freire at a college dedicated to learning about the Third World.

The 1970's was a time of growth for local and international solidarity movements (Cuba, Chile, Vietnam, Nicaragua) and I grew with them, as a volunteer for the United Farm Workers (UFW) union for several years after college, then as a staff member and author (Baird & McCaughan, 1978) with the Berkeley anti-imperialist research group, the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) and, next, as an organizer for the Olga Talamante Defense Committee --- a campaign in the mid-1970's that freed a close friend jailed for sixteen months in Argentina as a political prisoner.

In the UFW campaign throughout the California Central Valley and later in the hyper-active San Francisco Bay Area, I volunteered song-leading at hundreds of rallies, picket lines, marches and meetings in both English and Spanish --- opportunities that allowed me to meet and perform with other activist musicians like José Luis Orozco, Suni Paz, Holly Near and Malvina Reynolds. During the 16 months that I worked out of the remote headquarters of the UFW in La Paz, California, I had the uncommon thrill of being the song-leader for the entire volunteer and farm worker community based there year round, always ready to lead a song whenever Cesar Chavez or Dolores Huerta or a dozen others thought it fit in --- which was often. Sometimes the songs I led and performed were my own,

but more often were from the Mexican and U.S. folk/labor tradition. What was key was the awareness of the organizers of that era that song and group singing, as well as theater and public art, were a crucial part of building a mass movement. This seems apparent today because of the scarcity of both strong social movements and leaders to guide cultural work.

The 1970's saw the American New Left, of which I was a part, evolve from supporting other peoples' revolutions to trying to make revolutionary change in the United States. We called it "party building," experiencing many of the same successes and pitfalls as the 1930's Old Left before us. My work changed from research to printing press operator, my learning focus changed from Mexico and Latin America to the American working class experience, while musically I paid less attention to Latin American music and more to "Solidarity Forever" and other anthems of American labor history. The bridge to both worlds was still "De Colores," the fighting folksong of the farm workers. I founded the Sacramento Labor Chorus with other progressive trade unionists shortly after a move to the California capitol in 1980. The Labor Chorus, in which I am still involved, is now completing two decades of singing for progressive labor, peace, education, ecological and other social justice causes in the Central Valley region of California. Highlights include performing with Pete Seeger, Charlie King, John McCutcheon, *Grupo Moncada* and other "big-name" and big-hearted musicians.

The 1990's brought many changes to the progressive movement, as well as for socially active musicians, including myself. In California and throughout the nation, liberal causes went on the defensive as the Conservative Right took the organizing initiative and began to roll back many civil, labor and gender rights

won during the previous decades. Meanwhile, I worked a dayshift at a printing plant and studied in night school, earning multi-subject, single-subject and bilingual teaching credentials that allowed me to move from the pressroom to the classroom. There followed fewer rallies and more school Sing Alongs and daily opportunities to use song and music as teaching tools with youngsters. Longing to learn more, I discovered the children's songs and music of José Luis Orozco and rediscovered Suni Paz and many others musicians of the Children's Music Network, who were now directly involved in singing in the schools, training teachers, performing at conferences and distributing their music.

This entire social context means that I came to this study and its dialogues with a certain amount of experience and empathy, not to mention very real questions that I longed to discuss and share in this research. Experience can cloud as well as illuminate, so I have tried to be mindful of both throughout the research process. I have endeavored to listen loudly to the voices and songs of my participants, as well as being true to my own song-making practice. This is the challenge and joy of participatory research and transformative song-making, an experience to which the reader is now invited.

## CHAPTER IV

### PORTRAITS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The portraits of the nine participants in this study are presented here in a historical manner — that is, by their age. In the folk tradition, age and experience, not fame, are valued attributes. Introducing the participant song-makers in this way also helps reinforce the idea that their lives form a historical and musical continuum. They too are standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before them.

#### Pete Seeger

*Setting: Camp Kutz, a picturesque Jewish summer camp on a wooded lake in rural Warwick, New York, retreat for the National Gathering of the Children's Music Network. I meet 81 year-old Pete Seeger Saturday morning by the sign-in table near the front door, just as he is driving in to Warwick from his hometown of Beacon – about a two-hour drive, he tells me. I'm worried that he won't remember our date made months earlier by letter, or that he'll be mobbed by other people; but he greets me with a smile and says, "Well, let's go get some breakfast and get to it."*

*In Pete's letter of August 2000, I'd got a picture of just how "overly busy" he is, yet how willing to help others:*

*I'm looking forward to seeing you in Warwick in October, and I'm sure we'll go off in a corner with a tape recorder: maybe, a half hour here, a half hour there, and a half hour somewhere else.*

*However, we'll have more time there than I have at home, where I am, literally, on the go from the moment I open my eyes, to the moment I hit the hay. I've never been so overly busy in my life, with mail coming in faster than I've got time to read it, and people sending me things, and telephoning me.*

*We dish up oatmeal and toppings and find a round table in the meeting room that overlooks the lake and its surrounding autumnal colors. He doesn't seem to have aged that much since I saw him last, nearly 10 years ago in San Francisco when our Sacramento Labor Chorus sang with him in concert. But he is more serious, perhaps a little more impatient, and more pessimistic about the world, as he reveals in*

*our conversation. Whatever the case, it is a thrill to be with him; just me, my tape recorder and the dissertation research questions. I'm nervous about asking dumb questions, but I launch into it anyway. I know that this is perhaps the most important dialogue I will have, opening my eyes to many issues and opening doors to other musicians – most of whom trace their musical & political origins to him.*

*Pete Seeger is the spinal column of this children's music network, connecting the folk music heroes of his generation to this new generation of radical song leaders raised on his camp songs, albums and concerts, who are in turn passing on the song tradition to their own children and grandchildren. Only Ella Jenkins has this kind of longevity. Pete Seeger not only still sings, writes and tells his stories across the country, he is an active member of this organization, coming to most of its gatherings, serving as Letters Editor of its magazine, offering advice and constructive criticism. What an opportunity to ask the questions and hear his answers, which follow. These are a composite of my dialogue, the keynote he gave later that morning, and questions from the audience that followed.*

Researcher's Journal, October 14, 2000

Pete's recounting of his musical background focuses on his upbringing in a musical family and his later experiences in boarding school. His father was Charles Seeger, a renowned musicologist, his mother a violinist and music teacher, and his stepmother was Ruth Crawford Seeger, the noted children's music collector and author --- all part of the circle of folk music revivalists that included John and Alan Lomax, as was discussed above. His parents were also involved in songwriting for the labor movement of the 1930's. He was thus exposed to both folk music and left wing causes from an early age --- visiting folk festivals with his father, singing around the piano at home with his brother, meeting musical friends of the family, picking up the penny whistle and other instruments that his family had lying around, but never learning how to read music seriously. His "music education" happened at the boarding schools he



lived at from the age of eight: chorus and glee clubs, jazz band and Sunday church singing, even exposure to pop songs, which he discounted as “phony.”

This path led him to Harvard, where a likely career in leftwing journalism got waylaid into a lifetime of “stealing” by singing folksongs with school children and adults, as he described in the Warwick dialogue:

I wanted to be a journalist. I'd run school newspapers and I'd enjoyed myself. At college I helped to run a little left-liberal monthly newsletter and I got so interested in my extra-curricular activities that I lost my scholarship and had to drop out of college in my second year. I found myself in New York looking for a job as a journalist, but I didn't even get to first base. Meanwhile, I had an aunt who was a teacher. My whole family is shot through with teachers; my two older brothers are teachers, one in college one in grade school. Anyway, my aunt said. “Peter come sing some of your songs for my class, I can get \$5 dollars for you.” Well, that was like \$50 or \$100 dollars back in 1938. I was 19 years old, but it seemed like stealing to do what I'd done all my life for the fun of it. But I went and took the \$5 and quit looking for a regular job. I got a job in a couple of other schools as a result.

Pete's long and deep connection to children has already been touched on in Chapter II of this study. Perhaps Phil Hoose (2000), who introduced and interviewed Pete at the Children's Music Network (CMN) conference in Warwick, made a far better summary of Pete's life and contributions. Addressing the several hundred children's musicians, teachers, parents and children there, he talked about Pete as a “pollinator”:

Everybody here knows who Pete is. He's better known for his adult singing and song leading than with music for children. He's well known for popularizing songs 60 years ago when he was an intern for the Library of Congress. He wasn't an academic, but a pollinator – he took those songs and got on the road. A lot of these songs we know today would not be known if it were not for him. He was part of the Weavers – *Irene Goodnight* was on the jukebox when I was five years old. He also wrote some classic songs like “Turn, Turn, Turn,” “Where Have All the Flowers Gone?” and “If I had a Hammer.”

Pete's finest work is to connect with people and build communities through music, including up the Hudson with the great sloop *Clearwater*,

doing music up and down the Hudson. This is a person who, through a very long career, has found many, many ways to build community through song.

I think people don't know quite as much about the enormous contribution he's made to children's music. As he'll tell you, his very first gig after dropping out of Harvard was a children's gig. He always has sung in children's camps for maybe 60 years now; there are several CMN members who remember having Pete Seeger as their camp teacher at the camps they went to.

Always from 1945 on, when he and his friends started the *People's Songs Bulletin*, which was the precursor to *Sing Out* magazine, always there has been a space that has been devoted to children's music. And he still has, as you know, a column in *Sing Out* magazine called "Appleseeds," which he started in 1954 and dedicated to "the thousands of boys and girls who today are using their guitars and their songs to plant the seeds for a better tomorrow in the homes across our land."

He wrote a great children's story, *Abiyoyo*, And I think just from the standpoint of the Children's Music Network... Pete is really a living part of us. I can't remember very many major gatherings of the CMN over the years that he has not attended personally. He was our Letter Editor of *Pass It On!* for a long time. He's there, he's present, he gives his ideas, he gives his feedback to you. Sometimes it's not always what you want to hear, but he's gentle in providing constructive criticism. But you know that he's out there and he's working with us, listening, contributing. He is as much as any of us a very active member of CMN. It gives me great pleasure to welcome our keynote speaker, Pete Seeger (big applause).

The stories and songs Pete told that day are shared, in part, in Chapter V of this study, as well as recounted in great detail in his own publications (Seeger, 1972, 1985, 1993). Asked for his own summation of his life for this portrait, Pete acknowledged his debt of gratitude to those who went before, offered regrets about how folksingers have come to be viewed as paid, mostly- white musicians with guitars, and cautioned this researcher that the *real* story is not about him, but about singing with children --- the "links to come":

Peter, keep it short: I've been singing for kids in school, mainly in USA, but also in 35 countries overseas, since 1938, gaining a rep as a "Folksinger," a label I now regret. There's as many, many different kinds of "folk music" as there are different kinds of folk in the world. I've put together new songs, usually using elements of old songs. We are all links in an old, old chain. May there be many links to come.

With thanks to Pete for his generosity of time and spirit, and in keeping with his advice to “keep it short,” the study now offers a brief portrait of Ella Jenkins and the other participant “links” who are highlighted here.

### **Ella Jenkins**

*Chicago----- Imagine, traveling 2000 miles for an interview! But this is no normal interview --- it's a chance to meet and dialogue about children's music with 77 year-old Ella Jenkins, “perhaps the most influential children's performer in American music” (Jenkins, 1993). I remember so well her records played everyday for seven years at Bethany pre-school when Ben and Lily were growing up – “You'll Sing a Song and I'll Sing a Song,” and so many others.*

*She responded to my email and phone call --- sent through the Smithsonian/Folkways web-page --- and phoned me at home to say she'd be glad to either have a phone interview, or meet in Chicago. Her voice was warm and her interest in the topic genuine. I wanted the chance to meet this woman who has been quietly doing multicultural, internationalist, African-American and freedom songs with children and families for more than 45 years.*

*I'm in Chicago, a working-class shipping and steel production town, the broad shoulders city that saw the Homestead strike, Saul Alinsky's organizing efforts, and the Chicago Seven. The city was an incubator of jazz, blues and gospel music that came north with the migration of African Americans from the South to escape poverty and Jim Crow persecution.*

*We meet in the Broad Shoulders Restaurant as Ella suggested, located on the ground floor of the Chicago Historical Society. Grey squirrels dance in the snow outside the window, while waiters bring tea and sandwiches. Ella is a member of this progressive organization, as is the legendary Studs Terkel, who stops by our table to say, “Hello Ella” and shake hands with the open-mouthed visitor from California. So much of this dialogue is non-verbal. Ella stops and we laugh at a shared understanding that never got said. Her lips frame a smile, set against the soft brown of her complexion. I hardly need to refer to my questions as she talks about her life, music, travels, hobbies, and passionate dedication to children. At one point she cups her hands and whistles a birdsong --- just as she does with the little babies and their parents that she meets in the park.*

Ella's family and music roots are imbedded in the South Side of Chicago. The family was poor and survived on government "Relief", her mother's house-cleaning jobs, and community solidarity. Ella remembers, "We may have been poor, but had each other. We had block parties and during the War we had Victory Gardens." Her roots connected her to three major music sources: Chicago's gospel-singing churches, its pop-music record shops, and her Uncle Flood's blues harmonica:

Actually, I'm not a formal musician. I never studied music. I always call myself a natural musician. Often people will ask, "Oh, where did you get your musical training?" I tell them, "Well, from neighborhoods I lived in. You'd have some of the storefront churches in the community that would have loud speakers out in front. Whether you're in that church or not, you'd hear some of the good music that was focused out into the street. So we heard good choirs and choral groups and sometimes tambourine playing; it depends upon what kind of church it was.

Then the other place was that a lot of the record shops also used to have speakers that would play the new records that came out. They wanted to have you know what was there. My friends and I would go out in front, because we didn't have the money to buy the records, but we could listen to them outside. We'd sometimes tap-dance to them, then sometimes just make up little dances to the music.

My uncle Flood, I guess, was much more of an influence than I thought. He sounds like a folk character. He was a steel mill worker whose pastime --- when he relaxed after a long day's work, after he had finished his meal and everything --- he would take out his harmonica out the vest pocket of his jacket that was hanging up on a rack. He'd play two or three hours at a time. I'd sit on the floor and listen. So one of the things that came to me musically came by listening to him.

One of the things that he liked to play mostly was the blues --- the blues harmonica. He was never professional, but he played just as well or better than some of the blues players today. It was also during that time that he had his own jukebox. It was in the apartment, so he would order "x" amount of records per month and they'd come and change them. But some of the people I later on met --- like Sunny "Lan" Slim and Big Bill Broonzy, T-bone Walker --- these were people that were on the records. That was a strong influence and I think I probably never would have wound up playing if it hadn't been for him.

The love of music, all kinds of music, continued to grow with Ella as she finished high school and traveled West to work as a teenage program director for the YMCA between 1948-52. Before leaving she began listening to folk music on the FM radio and attended some folk music concerts, including one by Pete Seeger:

I remember going to a concert where Pete Seeger was there. I got my ticket early because I wanted to sit right up front in the first seat. One of the songs he was doing was a capella and he had an axe and was chopping wood in rhythm while he was singing; there was wood all over me that first row! I think I fell in love with this natural music, because I'd heard a lot of blues in my uncle's jukebox.

But when she got to San Francisco, she found the "Latin beat" that has been central to her musical core ever since:

When I was on the West coast I used to hear folk music, but I was so caught up in Latin music that I was always tapping on tables and beating on wastebaskets and whatnot to keep the Latin beat.

I loved it and I loved Mexican music. I met a Mexican woman out in Chicago when I just got out of high school. She invited me over to her family and they were speaking Spanish, and the music that they played was Mexican music. I loved that music. Next I heard Puerto Rican music. But then when I heard Cuban music, that was when I fell in love with Afro-Cuban music. I came across Celia Cruz and all these singers.

"But," continues Ella in a theme she repeats several times, "I didn't want to shut myself off to other kinds of music. I'm one of these people who, even though I make music, I enjoy listening to all different types of music. I enjoy opera to folk music."

This desire for a broad multiculturalism was expanded further when Ella moved into a Jewish residence club near San Francisco State, where she began singing for people there. From there she began to work in children's camps and

developed her skill with simple chants and call-and-response songs that were drawn from her childhood memories of play and songs:

I didn't start making up little chants and remembering them until I started working in children's camps. I just made up little chants and sounds --- no meaning except the communication between the person that is chanting out and the person who responds. I went to Camp Reinberg in Illinois, once as a camp counselor and the next time I was the Community Song Leader, because they found that I could do some singing. I also used to also do volunteer work at recreation centers. I would do things based on the memories of my childhood.

All this came together for Ella after she moved back to Chicago and got a "break" to record for Moe Asch, the creator of the Folkways label who, as has been discussed earlier, had a vision for people's folk music that included recordings for children. Ella explains here that she continues to help new musicians--- and even researchers --- get a foot-up, just as she was helped by Moe:

I know there's some people that when they move up, they forget about where they were and that other people need help along the way. I get calls all the time by new people who are just getting into the field. "Could you help me? Could you listen to my music?" And I feel that I should because Moe Ashe gave me a chance.

There was a man named Kenny Goldstein who wrote liner-notes for a Blues record label. He said, "Ella, we can't use this music, but I've got a friend in New York City named Moses Asch. Just go up to a recording studio and get four of the songs that represent you best and I'll let you use my name with Ashe." I put four little chants on my first album -- "Tah Boo," it's on that album called *Call & Response*, the first 4 songs on it -- and I went up there. There were no real words, just sounds, because I'd heard a lot of Latin music and Haitian music, and all kinds of music, so the sounds came to me. I went up there and gave it to Moses Asch. He was listening to it. I didn't know what he was going to say. He came out and said, "I think you're heading towards a good career in music recording. I'd like to see you expand it a bit. I'd like to see you put more instrumentation," because I was just playing a conga drum or beating the drum and singing. He said, "Maybe we can get a few more numbers together and make a little album. Meantime, let's sign a contract."

That was the beginning of a five-decade musical relationship in which Ella recorded 28 albums and two videos, the last recordings done after Asch's death when the label was sold to the Smithsonian Archives. They have ranged from *African American Folk Rhythms* in 1960, to *My Street Begins at My House* in 1971, from *Multicultural Children's Songs* in 1995 to her *A Union of Friends Pulling Together* issued in 1999. At the same time Ella has made many guest appearances on children's TV programs, including "Barney and Friends", "Mister Rogers" and "Sesame Street." She has received numerous awards, including the Headstart Award for helping to unite children of many cultures, and the 1999 ASCAP Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award. This study has been enriched by her published contributions to children's music, as well as by her responses to the research questions, which are summarized and quoted more extensively in Chapter V, along with the findings from the other participants.

### Suni Paz

*Los Angeles, -----Preparing for the dialogue with Suni Paz here at the annual conference of the California Association of Bilingual Educators, I recall so many connections. We met several times in the 1970s, singing together at fundraisers for the Olga Talamante Defense Committee in Oakland and San Jose. Lovely voice, poetic use of the Spanish language, fervent believer in liberation causes, lover of children.*

*At the University of San Francisco our paths crossed again. She has been collaborating for many years with Alma Flor Ada on bilingual songs and poems for children. We reconnected just as I was beginning the research on song-makers; she gave me encouragement and direction, along with the idea of song-makers as "messengers" and invited me to my first gathering of the Children's Music Network in Petaluma, California. She has opened my eyes to what this research is all about.*

*Researcher's Journal, February 1, 2001*

*Petaluma, CA---- I left Sacramento at daybreak and drove fast freeways to Novato and then winding country roads to the Walker Ranch Education Center, a converted dairy ranch set in the brown rolling hills of the coastal range, a short 10 miles from the ocean. I found Suni in the common room waiting for the keynote speaker of the morning, Bess Lomax Hawes, the famous music folklorist, author and member of the Lomax family I've read so much about. Bess's talk was inspiring, especially the conclusion when she told us:*

*It is desperately tragic that our children's heads are being stuffed with violence, sexism, racism, and other abominations by the general .... So we must continue with the kind, the intelligent, the humorous, the yeasty, and the beautiful in the sure knowledge that there will eventually be little or no room in their heads for their opposites (Lomax-Hawes, 2000, p.8).*

*After the talk and standing ovation, Suni took me to meet Bess and three other musician friends of hers that she said "you need to talk to," Sally Rogers, Marcia Berman, and Bonnie Lockhart. It was a marvelous orientation to the seriousness and maturity of this network of people --- all of them concerned with the very issues that I want to learn about. Thanks Suni.*

Researcher's Journal, October 16, 1999

Like many other song-makers, Suni credits her family for her musical and creative drive. "I was born in Argentina to a family of poets, musicians and doctors," she explains. "The creativity of my brothers, sisters and myself was nurtured from birth by my parents, as well as by the aunts and uncles that lived half of their lives with us." There was her father --- "a fanatical lover of music" --- who played Wagner and Italian operas for an hour each Sunday and most evenings, with children's participation mandatory. Suni's mother played piano and translated these works and others from French, Italian and German into Spanish. Her grandfather, the town doctor, was a great violinist who "played the violin for half an hour in his office each day before he received his patients, so I would sit with the patients and listen to him." And then there was the aunt who



was a poet, one of the most celebrated in Latin America, and an expert on English folklore as well. It is not hard to see why, as Suni recounts,

Music came natural to me. Everything I learned in life I learned from music. It opened me to the world. It taught me the world. It taught me there were farm workers, that there were other people in poor conditions around the world. I became interested in anthropology, in history, in geography, in literature and everything you can imagine through music.

She explored Latin American folklore through artists such as the Argentine Atahualpa Yupanqui as a folk music revival, mentioned above, spread through Latin America in the 1960's and 70's. Eventually her interests led her to the United States, where she began to tour schools and share Latin American music and culture with children who were ready to receive it, especially to young Chicanos and Native Americans who were awakening to their own civil rights movements. For the Chicano Movement, this included the emergence of the militant Brown Berets, with programs and dress similar to the Black Panthers:

In education I could see that if music changed me, it could change others. So when I came to California I created a course to teach about Latin America through songs. That became my tie with education. I began doing it in every classroom here in California, from tiny little children all the way to high school.

It was very political because at that time the Brown Berets were coming onto the scene. I was the only person that was in a classroom singing to the children, bringing all the Native American culture and the Mexican culture into the classroom.

Part of her own growth was adopting a pen name for her musical and cultural performances. She chose "Suni," which means "lasting" in the Quechua language of Peru, and "Paz" which means "peace" in Spanish and is one of the most common names throughout Latin America.

Her educational path, meanwhile, led her to the East Coast, where she obtained a masters degree in Latin American Literature in 1977 and taught for

more than 10 years. Her ongoing musical work, meanwhile, brought her into the center of the U.S. folk music and civil rights scene, including singing with Pete Seeger and eventually recording two albums of children's music with Folkways Records for Moe Asch: *Alerta* and *Children's Songs for the Playground* --- recently reissued in CD by Smithsonian/Folkways. Asch told her to pay more attention to performers like Pete Seeger, who knew how to involve an audience, something that was not part of her Latin American traditions. From him she learned how to make a "monument" of *Guantanamera* and *De Colores*, two of the most beloved Spanish language songs in circulation today, and change her writing and performing style to include more audience participation:

So I began to look at Pete Seeger and see how this man does it, how he communicates with the audience, how he involves the audience. Then I began to change my writing. My writing changed because I asked myself every time I wrote a song, "How is this going to sound with the audience? Who is going to sing this with me? How will they do it?"

Suni has combined these lessons learned from family, school concertizing with children, and fellow children's musicians to publish more than 400 children's songs to date --- most of these in Spanish. In addition, she has set many poems by Alma Flor Ada to music, most recently the collection published as *Gathering the Sun: An Alphabet in Spanish and English (1997)*, which honors the lives of immigrant farm workers in the U.S.

Suni has been awarded for her contributions to children's music by the Association of Writers and Composers, and has been able to travel with her children to concerts in France, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Argentina. Of her most important awards, she wrote in statement prepared for this portrait:

My best award in life has been my children and being able to change the world a little bit with my music. Good students and good friends are among the other prizes that life has given me. I have had them both, as well as the love of my family.

That is why Suni sings:

*La música nos va a alegrar, la música nos va a mejorar. Es buena medicina, es mi mejor amiga. La música nos va a curar las heridas.*

Music will cheer us up, music will make us better. It's good medicine, it's my best friend. Music will cure our wounds.

But, she adds in this final poem, music is not enough. It must lead to action.

*Las cosas no cambian por sí solas  
Si tú no las cambias, no cambiarán.  
A no ser que esperes, que un duende lo haga todo,  
Si tú no haces las cosas, las cosas no se harán*

Things don't change by themselves  
If you don't change them, they will not change.  
Don't wait for a fairy to do everything,  
If you don't do things, those things will not be done.

One of the "things" that might *not* have been done was this study, had it not been for Suni's guidance and clarity through two long dialogues and numerous communications with the poet-singer, as well as her sharing of her published and unpublished poems.

### **Bonnie Lockhart**

*Petaluma, CA ----- After a fruitless search of ERIC and library databases for information on children's music and social justice issues, what a bonanza to meet Bonnie Lockhart at CMN here in Petaluma. She is not only a singer and teacher about children's music, but a researcher as well. I remember her as the feminist soprano of the Red Star Singers in Berkeley 25 years ago, belting out "Still Ain't Satisfied" at anti-war demonstrations and on their album. Here she is, still not satisfied with the status quo, one of the major forces behind this organization and with 20 years experience singing with kids. She also just finished a master's*

*thesis on the use of folk music to teach anti-bias education with young children --- her "tome" as she calls it. It was based on long interviews with eight children's musicians and she offered to loan it to me --- a dream come true!*

Researcher's Journal, October 16, 1999

More singing at meetings, gatherings and conferences. More songs included in newsletters, journals and anthologies. No plenaries without harmonies! No seminars without guitars! No panel discussions without hand percussion??? But, most important, no schools without singing!

Bonnie Lockhart (1998, p. 123)

Bonnie's voice is heard throughout this research, as a major literature source, a personal inspiration, and eventually as a participant in the dialogues themselves. In these talks she related that her first experiences of singing, like those of the researcher, were around the living room piano at home and at her family church:

I always sang. I sang in church and I had a loud voice, so that was something I got attention for. I very soon became typecast as Mary to sing the "Joseph Tender, Joseph Mine" lines. So it was an identity for me from very young that I enjoyed immensely --- I liked to sing. But it was more in church that I had that role.

It was her brother's teacher in elementary school who was indirectly responsible for breaking through the haze of Orange County conservatism and exposing her to Pete Seeger and other folk singers with their powerful stories and songs of the Civil Rights Movement. That began a life-long romance with folk music, anti-racism work and social activism that is yet to diminish:

Pete Seeger was a big influence. When my brother was in 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade -- he's a few years older than I am --- he had a teacher who was really into folk music. I remember having this *Pete Seeger at Newport Folkways* album; this was in the early 60's, maybe even late 50's. I just loved those songs, those old historical ballads. At that very time, Joan Baez became popular and that really influenced me a lot. I loved her, I loved her voice -- the old ballads and story songs. I was also moved by the Phil Ochs songs and Bob Dylan songs and other contemporary songs about social justice,

about social change, social conditions. All that kind of segued into the Civil Rights Movement.

Those singers were really the people who brought me the Civil Rights Movement, living in Orange County, Southern California. There's a good chance I wouldn't even have had a clue without being interested in those singers and seeing what they were doing with their lives, what was important to them and what they chose to sing about. It made me interested in those things.

Then when folk music became a way for everybody to be involved, I caught right on and learned to play 3 chords on the guitar, got involved in the folk scene in high school such as it was in Orange County. There were about 3 coffee houses that I frequented with black tennis shoes and black turtleneck --- I wanted to be a beatnik, which to the best of my ability, I was.

Bonnie was attracted to radical theater and played in jazz clubs for her "artistic commitment," but began to be drawn into the world of children through her music:

My friends started having kids. They said, "You know old Woody Guthrie songs. Come on and sing 'This Land is Your Land' with our two-year-old." I was very intimidated, didn't really know kids and wasn't quite sure of how to relate to them. And I was wary of being a teacher. I was excited by the new feminist consciousness that freed me to be a musician, to imagine doing things outside the proscribed area of "women's work." But I hadn't yet examined how much I'd internalized sexist assumptions --- the assumptions that work with small children wasn't really important or worthwhile.

So I had some resistance; part of me said, "Do you want me to waste my time with a bunch of little kids?" I'm now embarrassed to admit to that kind of attitude. But I was also intrigued, and slowly but surely fell in love with that world. I really liked the women who worked in early childhood education a lot. Those old sexist assumptions were challenged. "Hey, these women are really smart!"

I really liked finding my way into how to relate to children, how to work with individual children, and how my own enthusiasm for participatory, home-made music really found a home with young children because they responded to it so immediately. They wanted to sing, wanted to play with music. There were a lot of interesting things for me to discover about how children respond to music, how they become involved. It seemed like a really interesting world to me.

Interesting enough for Bonnie to stick with it for twenty years, doing multicultural vocal music in public schools and Headstart programs, and gaining the support of the California Arts Council, The Wolf Trap Institute, and Oakland Artists-in-Libraries. In 1998 Bonnie also earned her Masters in Music in Early Childhood at Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena, California, which has allowed her to begin sharing her knowledge with in-service early childhood teachers at Hayward State and California State University, San Francisco. She is a longtime member of the Children's Music Network, is currently the President of its Board of Directors, and is the New Songs Editor for its journal, *Pass It On!*

As mentioned above, the researcher was fortunate to have access to Bonnie's thesis (Lockhart, 1998), with its historical overview on folk music and its interviews with children's song-makers, including those with Jacki Breger and Ruth Pelham who also participated in this research. Since Bonnie was an original participant, the researcher was able to engage in two formal dialogues and many written communications with her, which has greatly illuminated this research.

### **Jacki Breger**

*Nevada City, CA ----- My second get-together with the Children's Music Network is here in Nevada City, picturesque former mining town in the Gold Country of the California Sierras. We meet in a large red-brick building that was once an orphanage for children of miners who died in accidents. The opening activity is a community sing led by Jacki Breger, a confident woman with spiked hair from Los Angeles, about my age. We sit in chairs in a big circle as Jacki strums a big guitar and chains together a few verses of this and that old favorite tune. My voice joins everyone else's, creating a thick sandwich of harmonies that vibrate through my body and instantly make me glad to be here, connected to this group of strangers. That's the power of good singing.*

*At one point Jacki directs her attention to a family with several children who have just arrived, asking them what their favorite songs*

*are. They reply with songs from Barney TV and Disney movies --- hardly the songs that most members here would have picked --- but Jacki is able to incorporate their songs and, thus these children, into the song-quilt. This lady knows how to talk to kids and is a talented song-leader!*

*Afterwards I attend a workshop that Jacki leads on "Songs from the Civil Rights Movement" in which she shares how she uses these songs, stories and photos with pre-school and elementary children. I'm amazed. She's talking about how to help even young children understand difficult concepts of justice and fairness, without going over their heads. It's clear that she has studied early childhood education, and has a lot to teach me. I want to ask her to be a participant.*

Researcher's Journal, May 6, 2000

Jacki did agree to become a participant in this study when we met at the next CMN Gathering in New York, enriching it with many stories, observations, and research from her more than twenty-five years of collecting songs and singing them with children. She is also one of the eight children's musicians interviewed in the Lockhart (1998) study. From these two sources and articles she provided, the following portrait emerges.

Jacki's musical background also began with her family, especially when the extended clan gathered at her grandmother's house to sing together. Father played the piano, mother sang, with the selections often leaning towards Gershwin and Cole Porter. Then there was the ubiquitous Pete Seeger, brought into the home on recordings by her parents, who were Jewish, political activists, and big on folk music. Jacki recalls,

*I was raised on Pete Seeger. The first song I remember is "The Farmer is the Man." Good left-wing folk music stuff. As I got older I started to go to folk concerts on my own. Although I didn't like most of the commercial groups, I loved the ethnic people who were on tour --- the Georgia Sea Island singers, and Jean Richie, blues artists from the Mississippi Delta. The rawer it is, the more I like it.*

Jacki was taken with this music, “seeing it as a window to another culture, to another experience.” It was also the window into people’s history, discussed in Chapter II, that made folk music so appealing to a history buff like her.

When I was a kid, I was interested in history and I was a history major in college. I used to wonder, “What do the people talk about at their supper table?” When I discovered folk music, I discovered the answer. That, literally and metaphorically, was what the people talked about. I was destined to get into folk music.

And then I was working in a summer camp, and started to play the guitar, and then started to sing. Gradually, I got thrown into places where I was the music leader, and that forced me to learn songs.

Not long after, Jacki took some time off from college and began to work as an assistant teacher and song leader in preschools. Then she became the full time director of “UCLA’s camp for disadvantaged kids” (Lockhart, p.61). Ever since, she has blended work in public and private schools, summer camps and child care centers, pausing long enough to nearly finish a Masters degree in Early Child Development at Pacific Oaks College. Like Bonnie Lockhart, she is increasingly sharing her experiences and songs with adult students of child development, parents’ organizations, and teachers in the field. She was a visiting professor at Pacific Oaks in the 1980’s, has produced her own radio series for children (“Here’s a Song”), and has recorded half a dozen collections of songs for preschool children.

In these capacities, Jacki the historian has written a series of unpublished articles and workshop outlines on “Songs in Culture and Songs in School,” “Music in the Anti-Bias Curriculum,” and “It’s Music Time: Tips for Teachers.” The latter resource has been reprinted with permission in the Appendix of this study,



as it is an excellent beginning resource for teachers, parents and teacher educators (Breger, 2000).

When she is not giving concerts, leading workshops, or granting interviews, Jacki directs two arts-in-education organizations from her downtown Los Angeles office. One is CityLife, a summer day camp (soon to be a secondary charter school) for teenagers, with a focus on using the arts as a tool to explore culture, history and politics in Los Angeles. The other is the Marcia Berman Fund for Music and Young Children, whose mission is, “to promote awareness of the importance of music in the school, in the home and in the lives of young children, and to support activities that bring developmentally appropriate music to young children, families and teachers.”

This study is indebted to Jacki for sharing her experiences through a brief dialogue in Warwick, New York and a longer one in Los Angeles, plus the resources that are printed in the Appendix.

### **Ruth Pelham**

*Warwick, NY --- I talked with Ruth Pelham in the CMN Gatherings main hall only briefly before I had to leave the conference and rush back to California to be with Dad, who'd taken a turn for the worse in the hospital. Though it was a brief discussion, I found Ruth very articulate about how her Music Mobile project connects to real issues in children's and teachers' lives: violence and conflict resolution, justice and standing-up for each other, hope and hopelessness. I was extremely touched by how clearly she explained the process of clarifying and personalizing social justice issues for the youth she works with.*

*Though we talked little about songs and music, I've been able to see that Ruth is a consummate songleader --- able to get a whole room full of folks rockin' and rollin' and singing along. Many of her original songs deal with the importance of human relationships and the need for family. She's one of the founding members of CMN and a lucid spokesperson for the power of song to transform lives.*

Researcher's Journal, October 15, 2001

The decision to invite Ruth to be a participant in this study may have been a research “surprise”, and one that was interrupted before an in depth dialogue could take place in Warwick, as described above in Chapter III. But her voice has provided important insights about children’s singing outside of the classroom, adding another harmony to what she calls “all the voices in the chorus.” Thanks to her careful reading and written response to a draft of this study, plus access to many published articles about her work, it has been possible to bring her own words into the sketching of this portrait and to the findings of Chapter VI.

A fuller picture of Ruth’s life and musical contributions are provided by an article and interview by CMN member Phil Hoose (1997, p. 2), with additional comments by Ruth in 2001. Hoose’s article addresses her family and musical background, her work with the Music Mobile in Albany, New York, and her songs:

Ruth Pelham is a singer, songwriter and educator who brings the world a radiant and encouraging vision of social change. Pete Seeger has called her “one of America’s greatest songwriters” and he sometimes says she’s an even better songleader. Born in 1949, Ruth grew up in Brooklyn as part of a family of four that loved to sing together. She spent many of her summers at Camp Wel-Met, a progressive Jewish summer camp where her counselors taught her the inspiring folk music of political activism. At the University of Wisconsin during the turbulent late sixties, she began to write and lead her own songs, and to develop a vision of how her art might work to bring communities of people together. After graduation, Ruth found her way to Albany, New York, where her work as a community builder, musician, and educator came together.

Ruth adds,

During my first years in Albany, there were two strands of my life that intertwined. One was being part of a feminist performing arts collective called “Full Circle” and the other was being a teacher at the Albany Area Open School, a progressive early childhood education alternative school.

I wrote a lot of hard-hitting feminist songs in those days, which I performed in the Full Circle Shows. I also sang them with the kids at the school and one of them, "Broomsticks," became the school song. The song sang about women getting their equal share, about standing up and taking charge of our lives.

Teaching the kids about fairness, about human rights and justice --- that mattered so much to the parents, to me and to all of us at the school. That's what we were about. My songs, and their politics of social justice, had a real home there.

Just recently we had a reunion of the school after not having seen each other for 25 years. Forty-some people showed up and everyone wanted to sing "Broomsticks!" So we sang it, bellowed it out just as we did 25 years ago, only now all the kids were young adults and the parents and teachers were middle-agers. People talked about the role that the music had at the school and in their kids' lives. That the music was central to teaching them values of a humane world, of right and wrong, of compassion, of social action. How affirming to know that the power of those songs stayed with the kids and were even a small part of them becoming the wonderful people so many of them turned out to be.

Phil Hoose (1997) continues:

After graduation, Ruth found her way to Albany, New York, where, in 1977, she founded a remarkably effective neighborhood program called the Music Mobile. Nearly 25 years later, she remains its director and its heart.

The Music Mobile itself is a colorful van, gaily decorated with children's drawings, which tours Albany's inner-city neighborhoods. Its instantly-recognizable theme song invites children to gather at a school or playground for singing and instrument-building activities. But that's just the start. Ruth's program also invites neighbors to recognize the value of sticking together, of caring for one another, of sharing with one another their hopes and fears. The program has steadily expanded to include programs for senior citizen centers and nursing homes. Ruth has taken the Music Mobile vision to the bottom of the Grand Canyon, which is the home of the Havasupai Indian Tribe. It has gone to the Soviet Union and other stops throughout the world. The program offers a model for transporting education and community-building beyond the classroom and into the common gathering places of everyday life.

Ruth's songs have been recorded by dozens of artists, including Ronnie Gilbert, Pete Seeger, Charlie King and Si Kahn. She has performed with many

musicians who work with children, including John McCutcheon, Betsy Rose and Sarah Pirtle. Current recordings can be found on *Look to the People* (Flying Fish), *Under One Sky* (A Gentle Wind) and *Collage* (Ruth Pelham Music).

Phil Hoose (1997) describes what it's like to be in a Ruth Pelham "concert":

Ruth works away at the walls between audience and performer until it simply dissolves. She makes us provide the words to her "zipper songs," and gets us to repeat the lines to her "echo songs," and invites us to help her make up new lines on the spot to old songs we all know by heart. Above all, she leads us in her heart-filled anthems like "Under One Sky" and "Look to the People," whose magnificent choruses leave us no choice but to sing.

It is a pleasure to bring Ruth's "concerts," concerns, and Music Mobile into this study.

### **Barb Tilsen**

*Warwick, NY----- Barb is a children's musician from Minneapolis, Minnesota with fair complexion and blond hair, but a rich voice that brings to mind Ella Jenkins, one of her major influences. At the CMN Round Robin she shared a rhyming song she composed, accompanying herself on a rhythm instrument. Barb is a board member of CMN, an organizer of children's choruses in her city, and is a long time organizer in the Midwest region. We met under strange circumstances, as is often the case.*

*She needed a ride to the airport when I was racing home to California from Warwick, NY to be with Dad and I needed a guide who could read a road map. We were able to share a lovely car trip and --- as it turned out --- a most productive dialogue about the history of CMN and her transformative song-making work with preschool, elementary and older children. After talking with Barb, I got a much clearer picture how songs of meaning can be adapted for different age groups, especially between early childhood education up to middle school. I also got a much clearer picture of just how important the work of Ella Jenkins is to all contemporary children's musicians.*

Researcher's Journal, October 15, 2000

Since our time together was brief, Barb prepared this portrait of herself which touches on her musical beginnings, her blending of political activism and singing to “sustain hope” in her community, and her extensive work with children that is a model of transformative song-making:

I was born in 1949, and have lived in Minnesota all of my life. One of my Swedish great-uncles played button accordion at lots of family gatherings as well as professionally, and I have wonderful memories of our extended family dancing together, singing and listening to him play. The accordion, of course, was one of my first loves musically and I learned how to play it when I was ten, picked up the guitar at age thirteen, and I wrote my first song the next year.

This was in the early 60's and I was immersed in traditional folk and the music of the expanding folk revival scene. Through those junior high and high school years, the music of Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Peter Paul & Mary, Chad Mitchell Trio, Joan Baez, Malvina Reynolds, and Bob Dylan shaped a lot of my musical sensibilities and directions. I played in a folk group in high school, sang a lot in college, and later in the organizations I was involved in. By now this was the late 60's and early 70's; over these years as I got more and more politically active in the anti-war movement, the women's movement and the New Left. Music was a big part of my life, both reflecting and nurturing the directions I took.

In 1972, I began working as a musician with Alive & Trucking Theatre, a political theater group in Minneapolis that was very activist-oriented, doing street theatre, agit-prop and on-stage performances. Music always played an important role in the plays we wrote about people's history, the politics of gender, race and class, the environment, war & peace, imperialism, and the many issues facing poor and working people around the country.

Throughout the 1970's as I started seriously writing my own songs, my music was always interconnected with the organizing, the activism, and the community life around me. My husband's grandmother, poet and writer Meridel LeSueur, also was an important mentor, inspiration and influence on the poetry and imagery in my songwriting and in my understanding of how art and the artist are an intrinsic part of movements for social change. I was part of organizing efforts around the peace movement, the women's movement, Wounded Knee, treaty rights and sovereignty, the environment, and the labor movement. I sang at political rallies and marches, at weddings, on picket lines, for birth ceremonies, funerals, tributes, in concert halls, and in coffeehouses, in people's living rooms, for meetings and organizational events. I sang at times and in places where people wanted music and invited me to come and sing, and my identity as an activist grassroots, people's musician in those years grew very naturally out of these invitations and this need. Sustaining hope,

uplifting spirit, transformation and change were at the heart of my music, as well as connecting my music to the lifeblood and pulse of the community. This has continued as an unbroken common thread in my music over these past thirty years or so.

In the mid-1980's I had done some creative musical projects with children in my family and in the neighborhood, and was asked by a friend to take over teaching some music classes she was giving at a private kindergarten. I taught my music program, Sound Beginnings, at that kindergarten for five years and continued to develop and expand it into an introduction and exploration of songs, musical concepts and skills, rhythm, the families of instruments, the creative process and self-expression.

It was very natural to bring in appropriate songs for children that reflected the issues and concerns that I had been singing about for so many years. In 1992, I expanded Sound Beginnings again into a program for infants through school-age and have been doing it as ongoing music programs, special workshops, and performances fulltime ever since. I have continued to perform in a wide variety of ways for adult audiences--life cycle events, community gatherings and concerts, and as always, part of the organizing efforts around me. In the past dozen years especially issues of nuclear waste, spearfishing and treaty rights, labor, neighborhood revitalization, international peace, etc. I have worked with children in childcare centers, family day care, park and recreation programs, community choruses, elementary and middle schools. I have often worked in projects that address some of the real nitty-gritty, survival issues kids face, doing songwriting with children about child abuse, violence, racism, bullying, homophobia, tolerance, making peaceful choices. I often work with artists in other artistic disciplines, combining my music with photography, drawings, multi-media, and dance in creative arts projects and performances. I have given high school and college workshops and seminars around musical themes and have done in-service teacher trainings in music for a number of years. I have also been part of several arts partnerships integrating music and arts into the curriculum in the public schools.

Throughout this time my biggest influences in music for children have been Ella Jenkins, Malvina Reynolds and Pete Seeger. In the Children's Music Network, I have found a community of people around the country whose music reflects the same passions, concerns, and politics that I hold dear. Besides being an active board member in CMN, I'm also involved in the Children's Music Web, and in a grassroots neighborhood arts group called the ArtStop. I'm on the faculty of the West Bank School of Music in Minneapolis and have directed a community children's chorus called Soaring Voices since 1992. I've had songs published in *Sing Out!*, in several books and other publications, and also included in several video, film and recording projects. I released my first solo CD recording, *Make a Circle Like the Sun*, in December 2000.

Like Ruth Pelham, Barb also read a draft of this study and offered additional responses to the research questions in written form. The research is more complete for the generous contributions from this “grassroots, people’s musician.”

### **Francisco Herrera**

*San Francisco, CA -----I drive into the poorer side of the Mission District and locate the crowded apartment that Francisco shares with his wife and two children. It is Sunday morning and I’ve arranged to pick him up and drive him to the parish where his folk chorus of young adults is going to practice and perform for the Sunday morning Spanish mass. Quick “holas” and some home-grown oranges for the family, and we’re on the freeway for the quick ride to All Souls Catholic Church in South Francisco, located on a hilltop overlooking the town and nearby airport.*

*We sit in the car of the parish parking lot and begin the tape recorder, interrupting it now and then to greet the young Latinos and Latinas who arrive for the rehearsal. Most of them were once part of a children’s chorus. Later I join their music practice in a room below the sanctuary. They sing simple songs in Spanish of faith and social concern, led by Francisco’s strong voice and accompanied by two acoustic guitars. Later, the service upstairs is filled to overflowing with Mexican and Central American families, everyone dressed in their finest on this one day of rest from low-paying service jobs and crowded housing. Francisco’s choir begins their call to worship and everyone sings, as a group of priests bless the children. I take a moment to consider this moment of faith, song and family unity before returning home.*

Researcher’s Journal, January 28, 2001

*Maestro Francisco*

*Little did I know how important it was going to be to include you as a participant in my dissertation research. I was expecting the cross-cultural perspective and the love for songs of struggle, but I had no idea about your faith-based journey and how it was forged in war torn El Salvador and Southern California barrios. You were eloquent and most patient with me, even while I was taking you away from your lovely family and nearly making you late for the misa. Muchísimas gracias! I loved the whole practice scene with the compañeros and the service was a powerful statement of las familias del pueblo. It is important work.*

*I will be sending you a transcript of the dialogue in a few days with a few follow-up questions that you can answer in email when you get a chance. I look forward to making some music together, working on the projects we discussed earlier.*

Researcher’s email, January 29, 2001

Francisco brings several special perspectives to this study that set him apart from most of the other participants. He is, first of all, a proud son of the Mexico-California border, influenced more by Mexican and Latin American folk and political culture than the U.S. variety discussed so far. Secondly, as the above journal entry begins to reveal, his story is part of a journey of faith-based political and cultural activism --- one that stretches from childhood Catholicism in Calexico to Jesuit seminary in Panama, from refugee camps in El Salvador to refugee resettlement houses in Oakland, California and folk masses in South San Francisco parishes. The importance of religion to his definition of social justice and his practice of political activism is unique in this study, not to mention his experiences in Central America. A third difference is that while children's music is an important part of what Francisco calls being a "cultural worker." It is part of a wider activism with immigrants groups and cultural organizations --- a distinction that he shares with Pete Seeger. Finally, it is fair to say that that at 38 years of age, Francisco is one of the youngest participants in this study. His concerns for children and his talents as a song-maker make him an invaluable contributor to the findings that follow.

Tracing the intertwining story of his music and activism, Francisco begins by talking in his bilingual style about family and folklore on the border:

*Pues, yo soy de la frontera; I'm from Calexico, California. My family moved to that region in the 1920's. My mother's side mostly all stayed on the Mexican side, Mexicali. My father's side all came to the U.S. side, Calexico, and worked as migrant farm workers.*

As far as music, I've really played music at the level of community culture for about 30 years. And I'm 38 only (laughter), so I've done it since I was a little kid. I think that experience has really formed me, in terms of music as an expression of community, as opposed to a commodity of the market.



My grandmother, for example, was a poet and wrote many, many, many poems. The typical experience that I grew up with was the living room, or the church hall, or the community center, or the park becoming the space that was transformed into a theater --- whether it was my grandmother from my father's side putting on a play in the living room with a sheet between the living room and the kitchen, or whether it meant singing in the *kiosco* in the main park of my town of five stoplights. Or it meant singing at the funeral, or at the wedding, or whatever.

Francisco was also part of a quartet with his sisters and brother that played Mexican *rancheras* and *boleros* until they went on permanent "strike" when he was thirteen. "At eleven I also started doing the church music thing, singing in the choir and playing the guitar," he relates, and "*serenatas* every Mother's Day, singing all night outside on both sides of the border to all the friends' mothers." All in all, the musical influences were "Mexican folkloric, rock-and-roll, and the mainstream stuff on the radio, as well as the romantic Latin American music of that time."

After high school, Francisco went to work in the tough and ethnically diverse Logan Heights neighborhood of San Diego, helping to organize the community of African Americans, Mexicans, Philipinos and European Americans. It was just a year after Archbishop Romero was killed by a right-wing death squad in El Salvador, and many multicultural and political activities were emerging in the U.S. and Latin America. Francisco explains how this cross-cultural, international, and ecumenical experience transformed his ideas and his music:

My life really got turned around there by the whole Salvadorean reality, with Archbishop Romero. It was wonderful. So for me the trajectory has very much come as a faith-based experience, mixed with a cultural heavy-duty nationalism of being a Latin American.

I got involved with several things. I sang with an African American gospel choir made up of Presbyterians, Baptists and Catholics. Then the

Spanish mass of course – and that’s where I discovered the Latin American “New Song” from Chile, Victor Jara, Viglietti, *la misa campesina*, Carlos Mejia Godoy of Nicaragua, and all that music.

Francisco’s political and cultural work were just beginning and there was a “ton of singing,” as he summarizes:

After the parish I went to Cal Poly Pomona, then I entered the Jesuits and spent 4 years in the seminary there. In the work with the Jesuits my focus became El Salvador and ending the war there. Then I went from there to Santa Clara, then to Panama, and then to El Salvador in 1985. I left the Jesuits in 1986 and completed a Political Science major at Holy Names College in Oakland. In that process we started the formation of a Refugee Resettlement houses in LA and Tijuana. At Oakland Catholic Worker we started a very good project.... We were part of the Sanctuary movement.

You know, it was a great experience for me to bring music into that work, discovering music in that work, because there was always singing. Like any good movement, there was tons of singing.

Today Francisco is involved in the theatrical and educational activities of *Caminante Cultural Work*, he co-directs the immigrant-based singing and cultural work of *Grupo Cultural SIN FRONTERAS*, is the Northern California organizer for the Interfaith Coalition for Immigrants Rights, and is active in children’s music. A recent description of his work with children highlights his collaborations with José Luis Orozco (1994, 1997), San Francisco Bay Area musician and author of bilingual songbooks for children:

Children’s Music is a key component of Francisco’s work, particularly in the development of movement and the integration of improvisation and theater exercises along with song. Francisco has worked with renowned composer and interpreter of children’s music, José Luís Orozco and occasionally takes on performances that Mr. Orozco’s busy schedule cannot accommodate. He has worked with children throughout California, Northern Mexico and Central America (Herrera, 2001).

Francisco’s contributions to this study remind us that one need not be a full-time musician to be a model for transformative song-making that impacts the lives of children and the broader community. The researcher is indebted to

him for sharing in an extensive dialogue, as well as emailing additional reflections and revising the final draft.

### **David Heitler-Klevans**

*Warwick, NY--- One of the most delightful parts of the CMN gatherings is the evening Round Robin, when everyone gets a turn to share a song, poem or story. It goes on for hours and is a chance for many of the amateurs to learn new songs, and for the many pros to share some of their newest songs. I even got up my courage to share "Mama Lee la Historia/Mommy Read me the Story," which was well received and was published in Pass It On! (Baird, 2001). Two of my favorite full time performers here are David and Jenny Heitler-Klevans, a married couple from Philadelphia who call themselves Two of a Kind and often perform original songs with their twin boys, who are about 7 years old. I had a chance to talk with David about participating in the study, but I had to leave the conference before we could talk. I hurriedly left him with a set of research questions and he agreed to do the dialogues over the Internet with me. What talent and kindness. I hope to meet Jenny next time, who is on the CMN national board.*

Researcher's Journal, October 15, 2000

Sharing several conversations with David in Warwick about the idea of "song-makers as messengers of hope" led to him eventually becoming a participant in this study. As with Ruth, Barb and Jacki, the planned face-to-face dialogues were disrupted and David's participation was mostly limited to written responses. Nonetheless, David did respond to the research questions with great clarity ---participatory research made possible thanks to the computer age. His insights about music education and the media proved key to the findings in Chapter V. At 34, he is also the youngest participant in this study and it is easy to see why he and his wife Jenny were mentioned by Bonnie Lockhart as one of the talented "younger" members of CMN. David wrote the following self-portrait, responding to the question, "What is your background as a musician, teacher,

social activist? How do they intersect?" In it can be seen many of the same musical and historical influences that helped shaped other participants in this research, as well as the special qualities he brings to this research:

I've been involved in music as long as I can remember. I grew up in a household where music was always intertwined with social change movements. Particularly, the connection between folk music and the political left was evident in my parents activism and folk singing, and in the music they exposed me to: Pete Seeger & the Weavers, Woody Guthrie, Paul Robeson, etc.

When I started singing folk music in my teens, I was particularly interested in songs with political/social content. In college (where I was a music composition major) and the next few years, my main folk performing was at political rallies. Also, as a composer of "serious" music, many of my pieces had political themes, including a number of musical settings of poems by Carolyn Forché, as well as Alice Walker, Patricia Parker, Nancy Morejon, Erica Jong, and others. After college, I tried to get a job with activist organizations, but couldn't get much other than fundraising with a music degree, so I fell back on teaching music.

I soon found doing music with children was the perfect combination of my interests. I found that not only children, but many of the people who work with them (other teachers, parents, etc.), appreciate the values and politics about which I care deeply.

I was a full-time music teacher for 6 years, mostly in elementary schools. I have been performing, writing songs and recording for children and families for about 12 years, and the last 5 years I have been doing this full-time. I find it very rewarding to help empower kids through music, and to use music to encourage kids and adults to think about issues in new ways and from new perspectives. I do continue to be active on various issues (particularly fair funding for public schools these days), but much of my social activist energy goes into my direct work with children now.

David also sent the following biography from their web site (Two of a

Kind, 2001):

Two of a Kind is an award-winning, nationally touring, husband-wife duo from Philadelphia, specializing in interactive music for children. David and Jenny Heitler-Klevans have been singing together since 1987. Their energetic, participatory performances are enjoyed by kids and adults alike. Two of a Kind helps audiences of all ages feel that they can create music and that they can make a difference in the world.

Two of a Kind presents musical programs for children of all ages, including songs, movement, sign language, puppets and stories - all with an emphasis on interaction and participation. Themes of songs and

stories range from friendship and animals to social issues such as the environment, conflict resolution and diversity.

Two of a Kind is on the artist roster of the PA Council on the Arts, the NJ State Council for the Arts and the Odyssey Program of the Philadelphia Folksong Society. David and Jenny are members of AFM Local 77 (Philadelphia) and Local 1000 (the North American Traveling Musicians' Union).

Two of a Kind has five recordings to their credit, including four recordings for children: "Going on an Adventure", "Connections", "Friends" and "Love Makes a Family". "Going on an Adventure" and "Connections" both won 1999 Parents' Choice Silver Honors, and "Connections" also won "Best Music for Older Children" in the Children's Music Web Awards ([childrensmusic.org](http://childrensmusic.org)). David and Jenny have also produced their own "two of a kind": twin sons named Ari and Jason born in January 1995!

Two of a Kind has appeared at festivals, concert venues, schools, libraries, aquariums, zoos, museums, daycare centers, camps, and on radio and television. They have shared the stage with artists such as Pete Seeger, Peter, Paul and Mary, Trout Fishing in America, John McCutcheon, Kim & Reggie Harris, Sally Rogers, Magpie and Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer.

The chorus is now assembled. Each member has been introduced, along with the varied circumstances of their involvement in the research process. To come, in the following chapter, their eloquent voices in concert.

## CHAPTER V

### FINDINGS FROM THE DIALOGUES

The purpose of this chapter is to hear the voices of the nine children's musicians who participated in the multiple dialogues of this study and to analyze the implications of these discussions for teacher educators. Their answers ---the essence of transformative song-making --- form the findings of this study.

These findings will be organized according to the seven Research Questions described in Chapters I and III. While basing this chapter on the Research Questions is a convenient method of presenting the many rich insights and experiences of the participants, it should be noted that the questions, and therefore the answers, are closely interrelated and should not be considered as isolated or disconnected from each other. Research Question #1, for example, requests a *definition* of social justice, while #2 asks what issues the participants feel are especially important for *children* to address through song-making. Research Question #6 focuses on the most important *impediments* to singing in our elementary schools, while #7 queries the participants about how these problems can be *overcome* through transforming schools. Sometimes the answer for one question leads into another, or touches on several in the same response. Wherever possible, these links will be pointed out in the text to minimize false dichotomies and separations of the participants' ideas.

Taken alone, these are talented solo voices of experienced musicians, storytellers and social activists --- each one warranting a chapter of its own. Heard together as they dialogue with the researcher about the same research

questions, the nine participants form a choir of collective experience, with harmonies and common rhythms, dissonances and counter-rhythms. The goal of this chapter, then, will be to listen for both the solos and their sound as a choir --- to listen for what is common and what is not, for what is said and what is left unsaid, for what seems so crystal clear that it calls out for action, and for that which requires further discussion or investigation.

**Research Question #1: How do you define social justice and its application to song-making with children?**

The purpose of this first question was to learn what the participants understand by the concept “social justice” and how they think it applies to their musical work with children. Given the participants’ diversity in age, geography, race, gender and country of origin, the reader might expect to agree with Pete Seeger’s initial response to this research question: “My guess is that different children’s musicians would have very, very different definitions of social justice, and how it would relate to song making.”

In fact, the definitions of social justice by the participants are not “very, very different” in their general worldview, as will be seen below. There seems to be more agreement than disagreement about the nature of social justice and song-making, though they express different emphases and priorities, reflecting the diversity in their life experiences. Perhaps this similar vision of social justice is not surprising, since participants were chosen for their commitments to children, education and progressive social activism. Accordingly, their shared work with children and dedication to similar ideas and values seem to make their

definitions more complementary than contradictory. The following, then, are some of the most important findings in the opening question of the dialogues.

The Struggle Against Systematic Dehumanization:

Several participants define social justice as the struggle against systematic dehumanization and violence, and trace its roots to the capitalist system of organizing society. Music and song-making are seen as healing and humanizing forces by these individuals. For Francisco Herrera, who has experienced oppression, poverty and war first-hand in Mexico, Southern California *barrios* and war-ravaged El Salvador,

the basic social justice framework that I'm working out of is that this society dehumanizes you, capitalism dehumanizes you, or whoever is going to be the oppressor. Our work in children's music is to lift up, evoke and nourish what makes us human. So it's really working to make the instincts vibrant, make the senses vibrant, to nourish the mind-heart-spirit; the whole thing.

Ruth Pelham's song-making and conflict-resolution work with Music Mobile, in what she calls the "war zone" of poor schools and city streets across America, has also led her to consider the institutional causes of violence in American society and what it does to individuals. She sees that this system hurts everyone--- the victims of the violence *and* those who are "well-off" and seemingly unaffected in our two-tiered society:

When there are inequities of money and opportunity, then violence is done to the being. It tells you you're not worth as much as another person. Capitalism in itself is a violent system; it totally implies cruelty upon other people who don't have enough. There's cruelty on the other side, of people who know that other people are not getting by. And that hurts you. We're all sucked into the system, living with these contradictions....It's not you who are directly exploiting, but you're one of the leaves on the tree.



Ruth works within these brutal contradictions by singing her healing, participatory songs and teaching methods of conflict resolution in schools and on the streets of Albany and other U.S. cities, as will be seen in the discussion of the other Research Questions. As far as addressing institutionalized dehumanization worldwide, she concludes, “People in the global society need to make changes that are profound and redefine who we are as human beings in relationship to each other.”

Ella Jenkins is also moved by the violence she sees in her own neighborhoods in Chicago, as well as in the scores of countries she has visited and sung about in her long career. She shares that in her journals she writes about her “random thoughts,” and reflects, “I haven’t written in them lately because it gets too depressing. I’ve been worried by all the things we’re doing to one another, refugee camps and all. I was writing poetry like”:

*Are you going to get an award or a medal for destroying this city?  
Or for killing women and children  
And seniors?  
Are you going to walk around proudly?  
Soldiers used to strut around proudly  
Because they were in a battle  
But we’re not now . . .*

### Equal Opportunity/Overcoming Discrimination

Seen through a slightly different lens that emphasizes the history of racial and language discrimination, social justice is the promise of democracy for equal opportunity and access to the American dream. Suni Paz, who emigrated to the U.S. from her native Argentina, defines social justice as,

equal opportunity, but real opportunity for people from every sector, every social strata. We say that with our democracy you can start from the

bottom and become the president --- not so. There are a million walls you are going to find along the way. Discrimination is one of the biggest barriers there is. But I believe that if you give equal opportunity to people, then you allow them to bring the best of their ability and talents.

Her work with children, as will be discussed in more detail below, has thus involved using her song-making talents to help Spanish-speaking children feel good about their home culture, and sharing the beauty of Latin American culture with children of the mainstream Anglo culture and other minority communities.

Similarly, when Bonnie Lockhart brought her social justice background and art to early childhood centers in the 1970's, she also came to understand the importance of creating a multicultural and anti-bias curriculum that can help even young children learn to overcome bias and develop "the impulse for justice." She explains that her definition evolved,

through working with people who I thought really were on to what it meant to be child-centered, what it meant to have a curriculum that responded to *who* children were and what they needed. They were people who were realizing that the civil rights, social justice piece of that was creating a multicultural curriculum that evolved into an anti-bias curriculum. Everyday interactions of those 20 kids were really how children were going to understand the impulse for justice.

For Ella Jenkins, multiculturalism and Civil Rights activism are also central to her definition of social justice and her song-making. This means not only expressing pride in her African American and working class culture, but in embracing all the cultures of the world through her music:

When I read in the books about slavery, I thought, "My God, you didn't want to be related to anything Black." Then all of a sudden along came Black Pride. There was a difference! (laughter) Years ago, Black youth, especially boys, walked kind of bent. It was something about attitude, they had attitude about themselves that was not sure, not feeling successful. And then something about that Black Pride, Black Power, their walk changed. [But] I don't get caught up in just my own culture. I feel only if

we can embrace the cultures of other people too, that's the only way that it makes sense.

Luckily, this approach has also made sense to several generations of children raised on Ella's embrace of all peoples' culture.

### Fairness and Sharing

What social justice boils down to for children, according to most of the participants, is simply about fairness and sharing --- concepts that children are very concerned with in their own lives, as Coles (1997) has observed. "The good thing about kids," asserts Francisco, "is that they understand sharing and they understand fairness. Those are two core pieces that are very good to work with. With kids you can work with the ideals, of utopia --- that wish for things to be better."

Jacki Breger, who has a knack for explaining complex issues in clear ways that children can understand, tells them "social justice means that you don't do things that are not fair, or that hurt other people." She uses her experience of working with children and teachers to correct what she believes to be a misconception shared by many people about what fairness really is:

Many teachers make the mistake of thinking that everything has to be equal, that if one person has a turn, everybody has to have a turn. But it's not *equality* we're after, but *equity*. If you don't need or want a turn today, you shouldn't have to have one. And if you really need an extra turn today, of course you can have it!

Returning to the simplest definition of social justice and its application to song-making, Bonnie Lockhart summarizes, "I think that the message is that everybody counts; that's the message of all group singing, regardless of what the words are." Jenny Heitler-Klevan (1996), wife and singing partner of David

Heitler-Klevans, has written that they choose songs “which deal with social issues such as peace, the environment, conflict resolution, and respect. We feel that music can help people make the world a better place.” In the same way, Barb Tilsen sums up her universal approach to singing for social justice with youth and adults:

What I do with kids is the same thing that I do with adults. It’s singing about things that move me, and that are very basic to us having a healthy and beautiful and just and peaceful world. That covers everything, so I find ways to sing about that with everyone, no matter what age I am with.

### Look to the Songs

To get a better understanding of what particular children’s musicians believe about social justice, Pete reminds us that we can look carefully at *who* they sing for, the causes they support, and the meanings of the songs they write and sing. As he wrote in *The Incomplete Folksinger* (1972) about his trail and blacklisting for singing for labor, civil rights, peace and other organizations associated with Communist organizing in that era:

[W]hatever I believe in can be easily deduced from my songs. Darn near a thousand different ones, during the last twenty-five years or more. My songs can’t help but reflect my feelings about people, the world, peace, freedom, etc. I’m about as Communist as my songs are. I’m about as anti-Communist as my songs are. I am as right as my songs are. And as wrong (475).

One need look no further than his musical autobiography (Seeger, 1997) for a place to study the songs that Pete has helped to write or introduce over the years: songs against racism (“We Shall Overcome”), to protest war (“Where Have All the Flowers Gone,” “Waist Deep in the Big Muddy”), and stand up for working people (“Talking Union”), songs to urge us to clean up the environment (“Ballad

of the Sloop Clearwater,” “Rainbow Race”), and proclaim the power of love (“Kisses Sweeter Than Wine”), to work for international understanding (“Guantanamera,” “De Colores”) and strive for a better world for our children (“Abiyoyo,” “Visions of Children”). No one song can sum up a lifetime of song-making for social justice, but “If I Had A Hammer” by Lee Hays (words) and Pete Seeger (music) comes pretty close, as these last two verses show:

*If I had a song,  
I'd sing it in the mornin'  
I'd sing it in the evening',  
All over this land.  
I'd sing out danger,  
I'd sing out warning,  
I'd sing out love between  
My brothers and sisters,  
All over this land.*

*Well, I've got a hammer,  
And I've got a bell  
And I've got a song---to---sing  
All over this land.  
It's the hammer of justice,  
It's the bell of freedom,  
It's the song about love between  
My brothers and sisters,  
All over this land.*

From Seeger (1993, p. 40-41)

### Summary

One thing that became obvious from the findings is the great consistency of the participants' responses. Even though each one is a unique individual with unique experiences, there is a commonality of purpose and outlook. The participants thus looked at social justice from several different angles that reflect their own special interests and experiences yet, nevertheless, seem to present a unified whole. They defined social justice as: the struggle against a dehumanizing capitalist system, providing equal opportunity and an end to discrimination for all people, and being about “sharing and fairness” for children. We were reminded to find out much more about social justice, song-making, and the songwriters by consulting the songs they sing and write, as exemplified by the songbooks of Pete Seeger (1972, 1985, 1993) and the other musicians in this study.

**Research Question #2: What are the social justice issues that you feel are especially important for children to address through song-making?**

This question is more specific to the needs, realities and developmental stages of children, and the answers reflect some of the differences between working with pre-school “tots” and upper-elementary “kids,” as well the commonalities. As in the first question, the points of view that follow are diverse but complementary.

**Fair Wages for Children’s Teachers and Caregivers**

Ella answers that one of the most important issues for children is to have good teachers and staff in their childcare centers and pre-schools, which means that these education workers deserve fair wages, good working conditions and adequate training that they are too often denied:

When you see a lot of little children going to preschool, they come from homes where things are not so good. Sometimes their best food is there at the childcare center. That’s why I think it’s still so important in these early childhood programs to get the very best people. And you can only get the very best people if they are paid and trained well. It doesn’t count if they get all this training and they go to work and get no reward. It’s not fair to them or the children they’re serving. Otherwise you’re going to have a lot of transience – just come for a little while and go on somewhere else.

While Ella was the only participant to pinpoint this specific issue, teachers and caregivers for children would certainly agree that working conditions impact children as much as the adults involved.

### Acceptance of Self and Others

Over half the participants talk about the importance of identity, of helping children love and accept themselves for who they are and for what they can become in life. This is seen as crucial in a multicultural society that continues to offer substandard housing, healthcare, schools and opportunities to children who are poor, especially children of color, as documented earlier (NCCP, 2000). As will be seen in the following section, acceptance of self is not an ending point, but the basis for accepting others who may be different.

Bonnie's answer to this question begins with this thoughtful description of why a strong sense of identity is the cornerstone of her work with children and adults:

This is a bit of a mystery to me, even as an adult, so I don't know exactly what I mean by that. A strong sense of: I'm a person, I deserve to be treated well in the world, I deserve to be loved, I know how to make connections with other people, I know how to keep my own sense of integrity, I know how to speak up for myself, I know what I'm feeling, I know when I'm mad and when I'm hurt, I know how to be happy and have a good time ----- I guess that's what I mean by identity. So rooting that, feeding that, helping it out when it gets attacked, knowing how to protect that and honor that, that's a really important issue for children. It's an important issue for any one of any age, but that is what I hope my work would address.

Suni stresses the same themes of self-acceptance and pride as she talks and sings with children of diverse backgrounds in her concerts and classroom visits:

To me the first thing is to tell them that they are appreciated. I've told children for many years, "Look at yourself in the mirror every morning and tell yourself, look how wonderful a person I am. Wherever you come from, whatever your language, your culture or social strata, you are a human being. Therefore there is something beautiful in you." That is the first message that I bring, which is very accessible to children. And that's why I sing the song *Orgullo/ Pride*:

*Orguloso de mi familia  
 Orguloso de mi lengua  
 Orguloso de ser quien soy  
 Orgullosa de mi cultura  
 Orgullosa de mi raza  
 Orgullosa de ser quien soy.*

I am proud of my family  
 I am proud of my language  
 I am proud to be who I am  
 I am proud of my culture  
 I am proud of my race  
 I am proud to be who I am.

--- words, Alma Flor Ada, music Suni Paz, (Ada, 1997)

Ruth calls this part of her song-making with children, “Responsibility for Self and Others.” In an eloquently written addition to the dialogue, she expands this concept to explain how children can be helped to take a moral stand against injustices:

Responsibility for Self and Others is another area that to me is at the heart of social justice for children. It’s based on the idea that we are one big family living together on this planet, and that we’re here to lovingly look after and take care of each other. Responsibility for Self and Others is rooted in children’s ability to feel compassion and empathy for others, by identifying and accepting their own feelings and recognizing that other people have feelings just like theirs. I think it’s then that a child will be invested in standing up against injustices done toward others and taking a moral stand to protect and defend others from being hurt. A connection of commonality and mutuality is made that helps to break down the separation of self and other, and builds up the notion of being interdependent, where my hurt is your hurt. Empathy and compassion prevail.

### Acceptance of Others & Overcoming Biases

Once again, Bonnie uses her background in early childhood education and anti-bias work, discussed earlier (Derman-Sparks, 1989), to explain that self-



acceptance is part of a child's process of growing and "recognizing that personhood in others and in life." She continues:

I think one of the obstacles in real life --- having your identity and being able to relate to others --- are the biases. On the schoolyard and in everyday life, they come out. They come out when girls are told, "You can't play on this climbing structure." They come out when children of color see test scores; they see who's going to college and who is not. They come out way before that when they see who is in which reading group, or who is able to achieve. So I think that I want my work --- and I think it's important for other people to see their work --- relate to those kinds of conflicts.

For an individual child it means teaching songs that affirm their humanity. "This Little Light of Mine" is one of the songs that I love. Anything like that which affirms each person's gifts, each person's right to be who we are and create what we need to create.

Ella adds that it's also about teaching children the message of moving beyond hatred and anger, to take care of themselves and their environment:

I get so caught up with what's happening to people anywhere in the world --- if they're being abused by hate crimes like in the communities of the Edison area [of Chicago]. I teach children to love, to not grow up with hatred, but see if they can counter this kind of feeling about people. I look at reports on TV and you see Beirut, Lebanon, and the fighting. But you can see in the background the beautiful mountains and water. Will the children ever get a chance to roam there?

So I talk to the children at the end of my concerts; "Children, take care of your environment. Take care of the place you live. Be good to yourself and respect yourself, then maybe you can respect other people." I say at the end of my programs, "You, all of us, can make a better world."

Coming from loving song-makers like Ella, Bonnie and the other participants, this message is a potent one for children.

### Multiculturalism and Civil Rights

Several participants join in naming multiculturalism as an important issue they try to raise with children, especially the aspect that helps children develop a

critical analysis of social history and challenge biases developed over time.

Francisco explains:

One of the biggest issues I like to raise is multiculturalism, not just because of the emerging immigrant population, but also because of the history of this country. The history of controlled books is pretty much the story of European Americans. The reality of this country is African, is indigenous, is all the “Indians” from Europe that also came. So I like to use that Pete Seeger Song “All Mixed Up,” of where you come from and those kinds of songs that get kids singing about the realities of this country and observing the real things in life.

Multilingual education, singing in other languages, is part of watching the reality of life. I’ve heard it said, “The difference between a dialect and a language is -- a language is a dialect with an army behind it”.

Jacki, meanwhile, relates that her use of multiculturalism in preschools of Los Angeles is mostly with “affluent white kids” and sometimes more racially mixed groups. She shares her wonderful songs and stories of the Civil Rights Movement with these young children to get across the idea that “people can change things” that are wrong and unfair. Later in this chapter she describes more about the songs and stories, but here she focuses on goals of her work and the need “for adults to take the strong moral stand, the moral high ground” on certain issues:

For four and five year-olds, my objective is not that the kids get it about the Civil Rights Movement. I could care less that they remember Rosa Park’s name. What I think is important for young people to get out of this is a couple of things: that adults do the best they can to make things fair for children and for people. But sometimes people make terrible mistakes; sometimes they make really bad rules. Sometimes we make them by accident and sometimes we do them on purpose. In the South, segregation rules were made on purpose because a lot of people had the idea that White people were better than Black people. It was wrong. It was a bad mistake!

What I want them to get out of this is that most people try to make reasonable rules, but sometimes not. Sometimes there are bad rules and that people can change those rules. That’s the critical piece. Not that Rosa Parks is a hero or Martin Luther King is a hero, but that *people can change things*.

(These ideas are presented in more detail in an excellent handout Jacki prepared for a teachers' workshop, "More Than 'I Have a Dream,'" and other materials, which can be found in the Appendix of this study.)

### The Folk Process and Changing Things

Pete and Bonnie respond to this research question by stressing the importance of children being able to experience participatory singing, where changing and adapting things is seen as a good thing. As Pete explains, "I think the most important thing we can do for kids is to let 'em know that they can add to and change things. This is what my father called 'the folk process.' If they hear something they like, they can add to it, subtract from it."

Pete believes that this aspect of song-making is very important for children because it teaches them to not just accept what they are told to be true by authorities, especially by the media/advertisers. He sees the future of the world as very much dependent upon children and adults thinking for themselves, thus enabling them to make needed social change. "Good things have bad sides and bad things have good sides," he cautions. "It's great to have information on television, but you know what's happened to the whole nation that's addicted to the plug-in-drug." He continues:

I tell kids to not depend on what the big companies hand out. They'll say, "Listen to us. Don't you know everybody is listening to so-and-so? You want to be with it, don't you?" Ah ha, it's the most important thing we can tell kids. You *don't* have to be with it!

Then I point out to kids that while the rich people generally control the world, they don't control 100% and there's all sorts of little ways which they can get their opinions out. This wonderful 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution has really saved this country. The American nation would not be here without it; there would have been revolutions long ago. But

because of the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment, the Abolitionists were able to keep pushing and eventually got rid of slavery. Women kept pushing and eventually got the vote.

Children who spend time with Pete thus get a lesson in people's history and civics, as part of his desire for them to become more critical thinkers.

### Messengers of Hope

One way or another, the dialogues about which social justice issues are most important for children lead to the issue of hope, as defined above by Freire (1970, 1997), Kohl (1998), and Greene (1995, 1998). In the first dialogue, Suni Paz shared her essential belief that "we are messengers. . . put on this earth to do something." This insight led to the researcher's formulation of children's song-makers as messengers of hope, and the incorporation of that key concept into the title of the study, *Children's Song-Makers as Messengers of Hope*. In the second dialogue, however, Suni clarified that while she agrees with the importance of hope, her message to children is not always hopeful:

We are messengers, which is much more open than saying we are messengers of hope. Hope is limiting, because we do not only transmit hope. In fact, sometimes we transmit something that can be very negative. But from that scratching of someone's soul comes the awareness. We have to be aware. *Awareness* is essential. If we are not aware we are closed, we don't have light inside. We need to have that light.

Francisco is also uncomfortable with defining himself as a messenger of hope, because of the assumption that "messengers" have all the information, and thus too often the power of others' destiny. "For me," he begins, "it's become a big deal to believe in the people. One of the biggest problems throughout history has been *caudillismo*, the big charismatic leader with all the information. I just don't believe in that anymore." Instead, Francisco likens the role of the song-

maker to that of a cultural-worker who needs to give up the power of being the charismatic “messenger of hope,” or all-knowing expert:

It’s a lie that I’m a messenger of hope and you’re just the recipients, poor little things. Until I’m able to understand the power that is there, in these little children, I’m just keeping the same domination that capitalism has created, that Stalinism has created. So that’s the paradigm shift for me; if you recognize the power issue as a cultural worker, then you end up having to disappear.

This is an important level of self-awareness and critical thinking for song-makers and other artists to consider in future discussions. Since the dialogues were done individually and not as a group, other participants did not get a chance to respond to the arguments of Suni and Francisco. Instead, the majority of the participants express that the issues they try to raise with children *are* aimed at providing hope, as well as awareness and imagination. Bonnie, for example, points out that hope is a crucial response to the fear, discouragement and pressure in children’s lives today:

I think that children have a great deal to be discouraged about, to be afraid about. There are a lot of differences in terms of class and privilege and access as to *why* that’s true, and to *how* that’s true. But I actually think it’s pretty true *across* those differences. Children need reason to hope within all those groups, and music can address kids in all those groups, whether they are very privileged kids who are feeling the pressure of succeeding being thrust on them way too early, if they’re middle class kids, or poor kids.

Jacki, likewise, expresses, “I think we really are messengers of hope. And that’s why I call these ‘Songs of Hope’ rather than songs of social justice.” She recalls teaching the radical U.S. history song, “Wasn’t That a Time?” by Lee Hays and Walter Lowenfels, to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders --- singing the words “Wasn’t that a time? Wasn’t that a time? Wasn’t that a terrible time to try the soul of man?” But, she notes:

The song ends in the present, with an eye to the future, exclaiming, 'Isn't this a time to free the soul of man! Isn't this a wonderful time!' It's hard to sing that song now, because there was optimism still. In the early 40's and 50's terrible things were happening, but there was optimism that we could make it better. . . I don't think people feel as optimistic as they did then.

Francisco, echoing Greene (1995), believes that the current shortage of optimism is caused by people's inability to imagine the world being any different than it is today:

In singing with children and adults, it's important for me to help them start to imagine what it *can* be like. I tell children, "Let's be dreamers and imagine what it can be like. Martin Luther King had a dream. We've had dreams about fairness and sharing too."

Whether the different points of view expressed here are disagreements, or are merely different ways of looking at the complex issues of how children's musicians can convey hope to children, "messengers of hope" would seem to be a lively topic of collective dialogue for future meetings of song-makers.

### Peacemaking

What Barb calls "peacemaking and healing" in our violent world is precisely why she feels especially blessed to do singing and songwriting with children. She explains that it is a process that reaches the internal and external world of children:

In our violence-filled world, I think the themes of peacemaking are especially important --- how to deal with conflict, respecting all cultures, living in balance with the earth. These are all especially important issues to work with in songwriting with children. Part of the power of writing songs with children is that it is a process that is both internal and external --- it involves what they think and feel and also can have an impact on both and can change both; it touches on what kids internalize and what they express.

Other participants, and those who attend the Gatherings of the Children's Music Network seem to echo this sentiment. They as adults need a strong and regular dose of healing and peacemaking that comes from singing together.

### Summary

Building upon the definitions of social justice, the participants emphasized their personal social justice priorities for children in six main areas: acceptance of self, the acceptance of others and overcoming biases, multiculturalism and civil rights, the "folk process" of changing and adapting things, providing hope in an often discouraging world, and peacemaking for children and adults. As in the findings for the first Research Question, one can see a great amount of overlapping opinions from the participants, as well as some intriguing differences in how they perceive the concept of song-makers as messengers of hope.

### **Research Question #3: How have you used your gifts of music, singing, song-writing, and performing to carry this message about social justice to children?**

The third question our song-makers now address is the nitty-gritty operational phase of *how* they do it. How do they take their concerns about the world and make them come alive to children through the art of song-making: from collecting and writing songs to helping children sing-along and become song-makers for social justice themselves? Their answers demonstrate a strong common vision of song-making as a participatory and empowering experience.

Equally important, their answers reveal the different ways that they go about trying to achieve this goal, reflecting the variety of their backgrounds and tastes. As educators hear their answers, perhaps we can come to better understand how we too can incorporate song-making into our vision of education.

### Communication, Love and Respect for Children

Ella and Suni begin by articulating their concerns about communicating love and respect to children through their music. Ella smiles in the way that has embraced several generations of children as she explains:

People tell me, “Ella, children are really your favorite people.” I say, “There’s really nothing quite like the small handshake. You get a small warm hand and the sincerity.” There’s nothing like the warm embrace and the wonderful smile from a child who is happy, or from a child who was crying or maybe is hurting in some way, but because you smiled and you are giving real warmth to this child, it’s very, very important. We give out a lot, but we receive a lot. All the people who work with children should know that we’re not just the givers; they give to us too.

I feel it’s so important when you’re meeting children and greeting them, it’s like you’re serving them in some way. Don’t be a phony and don’t be a fake! The children can discern that right away. Don’t speak down to them and don’t go over their heads either. The whole idea is communication, and if you don’t have communication you’re nowhere. So I do that in music, rhythm, rhymes, games and dances.

Ella tells a story about singing for three year-olds at the Jewish Community Center in Chicago and how they just couldn’t get her name right. “So they called me Ella Jacobs! --- You’re Jewish aren’t you?” She laughs, then reflects:

There’s one other thing I want to say about children. When you step forward on that stage, they don’t care what color you are. They don’t care how much you weigh. They don’t care how old you are. They’re waiting for some songs, they want to have some fun, and learn something.



Several thousand miles away in California, Suni seems to be on the same wavelength about the importance of communication, especially how it requires self-awareness:

First of all, I had to learn who I was. I had to learn to accept and love myself and then, after that, become aware about my shortcomings and my abilities. Then after that I was able to start communicating. When you are capable of loving, people feel that, they read it, they are able to relax and communication is possible --- and the message arrives.

That is the art of communication. The kids read you immediately; whether or not you are honest, whether you are truthful to yourself. Kids are wizards in that way. They know a phony in two seconds!

For both musicians, being honest with children means not having a standard children's concert that is performed over and over again. "I don't do carbon copies," Ella asserts. "I have to see. I look into the audience and it's always a different audience." Suni expresses the same determination, which sometimes gets her into trouble with the schools she visits and performs for:

I could memorize a speech and have a whole repertoire, but I can never deliver it the same way. And this is what usually puts me in trouble with certain schools that want me to have one single program, write it down, memorize it, do it and do it always the same. No, I'm not going to do it the same because my audience is not the same. The children are not the same. The vibes I read from them are not the same. The problems they are facing are not the same.

### Song Leading and Singing Along

All of the participants in this study think of themselves as song leaders, promoters of group singing with an underlying message that it is better to make music than to merely listen to it. All of them, including Ella, talk in their dialogues about having learned how it is done by attending concerts, summer camps, or heard recordings with Pete Seeger. Ella remembers a young Pete who accompanied his *a capella* worksongs on-stage by chopping wood with an axe.

For this researcher, a similar thrill is still vibrant from 1969, that of being one of 5,000 persons in the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium singing along and being carried along with the legendary folksinger and his message of social justice.

Bonnie describes the feeling of group singing as “so spontaneous and so immediate that you can feel the connection right away. It’s a physical thing.” She clarifies its message that “everyone counts” and calls it a non-competitive “collective creativity” that we sorely need in modern society:

I think that the message is that everybody counts. That’s the message of all group singing, regardless of what the words are. Your creativity is not in competition with the next person. In fact, the more you are expressing yourself and exhibiting your gifts, the more the person next to you can exhibit their gifts and experience that collective creativity. The actual song lyrics, which are just one of many different facets of this experience, may focus people’s attention for some part of that time together on a problematic area of fairness, or getting along, of equality. But you can’t focus on the problematic, or you exhaust people and you don’t achieve your purpose.

Today, Seeger continues to encourage and cajole his audiences of young and young-in-heart to sing along with him --- just as he did during the dialogue, transcribed below --- even though, he admits,

my singing voice is about 75% gone. I can shout, I can whisper, but I can’t really sing. I play the tune on the guitar and tell the audience, “You know the melody. I’ll give you the words. “To every thing, there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven. For those who know it, sing out. And those who are not so sure, take courage and join them.” Then I just feed the words: A time to be born, a time to die (*a time to be born a time to die*)...to plant, to reap.. (*a time to plant, a time to reap*), to kill, to heal (*a time to kill, a time to heal*), to laugh, to weep (*a time to laugh, a time to weep*); To everything there is a season (*to everything, turn, turn, turn, there is a season ,turn, turn*).

So I don’t sing at all. I just let the audience sing it. In church they call it “lining out the hymn.” So I do it whether it’s a hymn or an old jazz song. I do this with Irving Berlin’s “Blue Skies” and Yip Harburg’s “Over the Rainbow” as well as any slow song, even with “The Water is Wide.” If it goes too fast you don’t have time to give the words to folks.

### Start Simply & Add Rhythm

One of the many ways of encouraging group singing among children, according to Ella, is to give children a simple way to participate with music that is fun and engaging. Many of Ella's recordings for children focus on rhythms based in African-American culture, as well as simple chants, call-and-response songs, and other songs from the child's own experience. She explains her simple and effective method of giving every child a "slot" to become involved:

I always try to design something whereby any child can find a slot somewhere in the song, the rhythm, the rhyme, the game. You can snap your fingers, you can beat your chests, you can tap your foot. I believe that simplicity is important. You start subtly. When babies are learning to walk they crawl first and then they get up, so you start simply with something that you feel comfortable with. A lot of people who say, "we don't sing 'Mary Had a Little Lamb' and 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,'"---I do, because these are simple songs, easy, good words, very descriptive and graphic. Children can sing them.

Barb describes her own style of song-making with young children as having been strongly influenced by Ella Jenkins' songs, such as her "You Sing a Song", originally recorded in 1966.

*You sing a song and I'll sing a song  
We'll sing a song together  
You sing a song and I'll sing a song  
In warm or wintry weather.*

*You'll Sing a Song and I'll Sing a Song (Jenkins, 1989)*

Barb explains how Ella's songs "ring true" and have what she calls an "entry point for kids," what Ella referred to above as a "slot":

That combination of songs that have an entry point for kids on any level is a hallmark of Ella Jenkins. It's what makes them strong and makes them sung for so many generations, because emotionally and lyrically and with integrity, it all rings true. It rings as true for a two-year-old as it does for a 50-year-old woman singing it.

Francisco finds that singing for children whose first language is not English is a special delight and challenge, just as singing for a multilingual group:

It's all about participation. I do a lot of things, like playing with sound, including using silence as a sound. I also sing some songs that immigrant children may already know, and here's where I think José Luis Orozco has done a great job of collecting a lot of songs that span decades and decades of Latin American history.

When I'm working with a multilingual group, the less talking the better. The silent movement, rhythms, gestures and non-literal singing just gets us all in tune with each other, dissolves the language barrier in an instant, particularly because it's playful.

As in teaching children who are learning English, repetition is a key to their language acquisition. Francisco describes here how fun-repetition helps empower children:

In my presentations I create participation because it gives you a sense of power. I create repetition, whether it be with themes, or songs, or stories, poems etc., to create a sense of "this is not an exception. This is normal. I am normal, since many kids know these songs." I am particularly saying this in my experience as a child of immigrants. However this "normalness" is actually a secondary priority to children having fun, enjoying music, laughing, helping children be children.

When asked how to get kids to sing, Jacki wastes no time in responding, "There are no tricks. The kids just sing. If you have to use tricks and techniques, you might as well not." As the song leader, Jacki models the love for singing and that helps kids to love it too. In fact, what Jacki, Barb and Ella all say about participation points to the necessary playful aspect of song-making with children, which is addressed next.

### Humor, Games and Play

Pete Seeger is chief among the participants to state the obvious about children's songs --- that while we may have serious intentions with our song-making, most of children's singing should be about fun, humor and play:

The best children's songs actually do have a sense of humor, whether it's "She'll be coming 'round the mountain, Toot, Toot," or "I Found a peanut, found a peanut." These camp songs nearly always have a germ of humor. *Rise and shine and CLAP give God the glory, glory.*

So the sense of humor may save the human race!

Children's songs have also been traditionally linked to games and different forms of play. Bonnie Lockhart has incorporated movement activity, line games and circle games from the Georgia Sea Islands such as "Just from the Kitchen" into her song-making with pre-schoolers and primary-aged children in the San Francisco Bay Area. Movement helps more children become involved, she explains, and can teach many important lessons about life:

I like the movement because I've found that little kids sitting on the floor may not sing "This Little Light of Mine" because they're not singers yet, haven't been singing in a classroom. But they will start singing when they're moving, like with "Just from the Kitchen". There's always this little miracle happens --- not always, but often --- where a group of not-very-singing kids will start singing when they really get moving.

Francisco agrees that movement is most effective when it involves "the hands, the mouth, using movements to get them up and down. Working that way helps to get their attention when they get distracted, but also to spark those instincts with them." Sharing an experience from the war zone of El Salvador when we worked in refugee camps, Francisco also explains that play is how children often work through their most painful and difficult issues:

I'll never forget in El Salvador. This particular morning was excruciating. We had just survived around three or four hours of intense assault on our camp of 600 people (mostly women, children and elderly). It was a refugee camp administered by the Catholic Church. There were the children the

next morning; while the adults were all traumatized, they were playing around, excitedly collecting bullets, bullet shells, or shrapnel, or pieces of projectiles, and playing with them.

Children play; that is how we deal with pain when we are children; we play our way through many issues and that experience cemented that reality into my conscience.

For all these reasons mentioned above, play and humor and games are central to the art of transformative song-making, as is the next component, storytelling.

### Storytelling

While their methods may vary, all the participants agree that setting the social and historical context of a song is as important as the song itself. As the portraits of the participants revealed, many had their first glimpses of an alternative way of viewing the world by attending the concerts, or hearing the LP's, of the Folk Revival. Folks songs and songs of grassroots social movements often tell a particular story which can be illuminated through the introductions and explanations of the song.

Adults can help children connect to the meaning of a song, as well as to its musical qualities and to the people who made it up. "De Colores" is an appealing song for children of all ages, but it can become a lesson in multiculturalism when they learn that it was a harvest song from Spain brought to the New World by immigrants in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, now sung as an anthem by supporters of the United Farm Workers Union, and by Spanish speaking lay Catholics in United States. Likewise, "Follow the Drinking Gourd" is a haunting song in its minor key, as well as a powerful means of helping children understand the Underground Railroad from the perspective of people's history (Zinn, 1997). A

silly song like “On Top of Spaghetti” can even be funnier when it’s known how the parody was written from a love folksong, “On Top of Old Smokey.”

How song-makers set this context, however, can be very different. On one end of the spectrum is Pete Seeger, who ventures “I sometimes talk too much,” but then goes on to tell the compelling story surrounding “Amazing Grace,” one of the most beloved hymns of the African American church and U.S. Christian churches in general, written by John Newton in 1779, of whom Seeger says:

I like to give stories behind a song. Last week I told an audience down at the Storytelling Festival in Jonesboro, Tennessee the story of a man who’d been a captain of a slave ship, but his conscience was getting to him. It was a good job; he was a good captain. He delivered his cargo where they were supposed to go; mostly in the Caribbean somewhere. But when he was supposed to take out a new ship, he was unaccountably sick. This new ship went along to get another cargo and it was never heard from again. He decided that God had sent him a message. He became a preacher in England, lived a long life. In his 70’s people thought he was gonna die. He said “No, God is not through with old sinner yet!” He helped start the British Anti-Slavery Movement. He talked to a young man named Wilberforce who lived to see Queen Victoria sign the paper which abolished slavery in the British Commonwealth in 1837, almost 30 years before the USA.

On the other end of this spectrum, we might find Francisco Herrera, who says, “The storytelling is more between songs; not a long story, but a little anecdote here and another there. Sometimes it’s good to tell a little story before the song, since most of children’s songs are stories put to song.”

“Storytelling is the easy part,” according to song-maker and historian Jacki, who also admits that it helps “knowing some stuff about child development, knowing some stuff about history, and probably living through some of it.” She explains how she mixes her stories and Civil Rights songs:

I think of songs that tell a story, but also stories *about* the songs. We do it so that the song, “Back of the Bus” is a song of the triumph of the boycott—

“Don’t go in the back looking where I *used* to sit, because you’re not gonna find me there.” I tell it just that way. “I’m going up” and the kids go up, “In the *front!*”

With the sit-ins, “We Shall Not Be Moved” is not the triumph, it’s the defiance. “We’re just gonna stay sitting here. We shall not be moved until you change that rule.” And I pick the verses carefully. I use *We are fighting for our freedom* which provides an opportunity to talk about fighting and weapons, and combats the modern middle-class view of Martin Luther King and non-violence as “making nice.”

### Songwriting

Two important kinds of songwriting come up in the dialogues: songwriting for kids and songwriting with kids. The first will be discussed in some detail under Research Question #5, about what makes a good children’s song. Songwriting *with* children, meanwhile, is something that all the participants try to do in one way or another. The easiest way to involve children in this process is through the use of simple “zipper songs, like “He’s Got the Whole World in his Hands,” in which a key word or phrase (*He’s got \_\_\_\_\_ in his hands*) can be zipped in or out of the song by the song leader or the children.

David and wife Jenny take their Two of a Kind program to schools to do songwriting workshops – most often as “artists in residence.” He tells here how they do it:

We facilitate a cooperative group songwriting process through which children compose original words and music. We start with an introductory performance, and when we begin brainstorming with children about the subject for their song lyrics, we usually ask them: “What is important enough to write a song about?” This usually helps the children to choose a song topic which is meaningful. Also, we often do these songwriting sessions within an overall theme, such as the environment, conflict resolution, or diversity.



Ella, meanwhile, finds that she often makes up simple songs featuring the hometown and children of the places she visits. She, like Pete, invites children to adapt and change them, as she relates in this recent experience:

I was working down in Florida, in a place called Okeechobee to conduct a workshop. I saw this long name across the highway and I said, "Okeechobee. Where is Okeechobee?" "Well, it's right over there by Piobe. So I called the Chamber of Commerce and they told me Okeechobee was a city, it was a county and is a freshwater lake. And then it's the name of the Seminole Indians as well. So I wrote a song. I told the children "whenever I stop singing you sing Okeechobee."

*I know a city called \_\_\_\_\_ OKEECHOOBEE*

*I know a country called \_\_\_\_\_ "*

*I know a lake called \_\_\_\_\_ "*

*Okeechobee, Florida*

*There's a Seminole Reservation \_\_\_\_\_ " (x3)*

*Okeechobee, Florida.*

So the children from Okeechobee, Florida wrote to me. "Ella Jenkins. You know we liked your song, but there are a lot of things you don't know about Okeechobee":

*They got a lot of gaters in \_\_\_\_\_*

*They got a lot of snakes in \_\_\_\_\_ and a lot of other things.*

Ruth also does songwriting with children as one of her primary activities of her work with children. Since 1986 she has worked with the children and other members of the Havasupai tribe, who live at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. She takes songs that they have written about stopping a uranium mine that threatened their sacred land and shares them with her school assembly programs around the East Coast. Ruth writes:

Singing the songs that the Havasupai students wrote about standing up against the uranium mine is a poignant way of demonstrating to other kids that young people's voices, opinions and actions matter. A few years ago as an enrichment to their social studies curriculum, I did some workshops with some 7<sup>th</sup> grade classes about the Havasupai Tribe. A wonderful outcome was that all four classes decided to help the Tribe do something

to stop the mine! So one 7<sup>th</sup> grade class arranged to visit the elementary school and teach the “No Uranium Mining” song to all of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classes. Another 7<sup>th</sup> grade class actually organized a demonstration on a Saturday morning in front of a busy supermarket to tell the shoppers why it was important for them to help the Tribe stop the mine. The students marched and held up posters as they sang the Havasupai songs, and handed out leaflets encouraging the shoppers to write letters to the mining company to stop the mine.

I was amazed at the zest and passion that the 7<sup>th</sup> graders had. If you asked the kids if they were activists, they probably wouldn't have known what the word meant. Yet if you asked them if they cared about the injustices to the Havasupai Tribe and wanted to set things right, they would have enthusiastically agreed and started singing the song!

All of the aforementioned components of song-making go into performing, the next topic discussed by the participants.

### Performing

Whether the song-maker is enhancing the participation of children through simple songs, movement, rhythm, games, storytelling or songwriting, doing it successfully requires a set of carefully acquired abilities and sensibilities --- something called performing. Pete summarizes how song selection, pacing, contrast, and the “vital kiss” all make up a good performance with children:

In the middle of any children's program I give, I give a strongly contrasting song. It might be a folk song like “We Shall Overcome.” In recent years it's been “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child.” I tell them, “Imagine what it's like. A person can be sold, just like you'd sell a cow or a horse! And they could sell a child and you would *never* see your mother again.”

And at the end of this song, the kids would quiet down and listen to that whole long song – it couldn't be too many verses. But I think it's worth considering: rhythm is nice, funny songs, and then a dead serious song is very important. Not too many, but they could be the high point of the program. It's like in a great love story or movie – that vital kiss is very important. You don't have to kiss every minute, but somewhere in the movie you've got to have it. (laughter)

Suni, meanwhile, shares some of her ideas about “finding that communication with the audience.” She brings Latin American instruments like

the *charango* with her and demonstrates their use and history. When performing in Spanish, she often teaches a few words in Spanish so that everyone can sing during the refrain. She makes connections to what children are studying in school and what their lives are like at home. And always, she aims to touch their souls:

Once I sang “*El Condor Pasa*” to a group of tough high schools kids who were saying, “I’m tough. I’m fearless. And I don’t care about anything.” I had them crying, with tears coming out of their eyes. And at the end they said, “You made us cry *Suni Paz!*” because it touched the *veta* --- that protected center of their hearts that they needed to touch so much.

Finally, many of the participants have experience in teaching their skills to children, leading choruses and more informal groups of children in performing for their schools and communities. Pete believes that this is one of the most important tasks for song-makers of the Children’s Music Network.

One successful example is Barb, who has a children’s chorus in Minneapolis called Soaring Voices which has both a younger and an older section for children ranging in age from four-year-olds to middle school. She often combines music with other art forms in her work with children, printing out the words to a song in a book style for the children to illustrate and then includes them in performances as a “flip book,” or photographs their drawings for a visual accompaniment to the song as a musical slide show for a concert. When children sing for the community, she explains, something special happens to empower the children, their families and the school:

I have a Center on the North side of Minneapolis that is largely African American --- 99% of the kids are Black. We do a Martin Luther King dinner and they have a big celebration. I’ve gone there once a week for about 8 years and one of the things I do in late Fall and early January is to get the kids ready for the performance that we’re going to do together.

We're singing Civil Rights songs, we're singing about peace, about justice, singing about rich and poor.

Much more can and should be said about the craft of mixing teaching and singing with children, of storytelling and songwriting, of games and songleading. Serious students should look in the Appendix, References and throughout the manuscript for further tips, or begin by reading the books of Pete and Woody Guthrie, and listening to the recordings in the Smithsonian Folkways collection.

### Summary

The participants responded to this *how* question by explaining how they communicate love and respect for children, involve them in group singing, emphasize simplicity and rhythm, rely on humor, games and play, use storytelling to contextualize the songs, and, finally, blend all the above with performance skills. This set of answers provided a smorgasbord for the serious and unserious children's musicians --- personal insights on how to be as gentle and inclusive as Ella, as passionate and poetic as Suni, as masterful a performer as Pete and Ruth, as good a storyteller as Jacki, as dedicated to children as David and Barb, and as personally insightful as Bonnie.

### **Research Question #4: What are the pitfalls of doing transformative song-making?**

Doing song-making for social justice with children is certainly not as easy as it might seem from reading the words from the participants thus far. Indeed, problems and barriers abound for even experienced children's musicians.

Webster's Dictionary (1989, p. 1089) defines "pitfall" as, "any trap or danger for

the unwary.” Accordingly, the answers seem to get at personal hang-ups and attitudes, failures to understand children, self doubt, or a lack of vision about the transformative role of song-makers in social change. Unlike more intractable institutional and political problems that will be dealt with in Research Questions #6 and #7, these common pitfalls identified by the participants seem to offer the prospect of being overcome through more self-awareness and communication.

### To Preach or Not To Preach

Easily the most common caution or self-admonition offered by song-makers about their work with children is “don’t be preachy!” It is a topic of several articles in *Pass It On!* magazine of the Children’s Music Network, and it comes up in all of the responses from the participants here. The admonition can be readily understood as a top concern for people who have such strong beliefs about teaching values, morals, and creating a more just and peaceful society, yet don’t want to sound like The Moral Majority. How does one teach without becoming “preachy,” and communicate morals without becoming “moralistic”?

Ella makes the point: “Let’s not knock people in the head to get our point across, because I think if you present it and you present it well, and do it sincerely, then I think the message will come across.” Bonnie agrees with her and explains how her ideas and practice have evolved on the subject:

I tend to not like a lot of contemporary songs that people write because they are too preachy. I’ve written a lot of preachy songs myself, and I probably will write some more. But I like them less than I used to, and I’m more interested in embodying those values in the forms of the musical session than I am in having lyrics that tell about those values.

The biggest danger for children's song-makers, she goes on to explain, is that "you're an incredible bore" and you turn kids off. Bonnie underscores the advice given above by Pete about performing and the "vital kiss" of a well-chosen message song:

Sometimes you just need a few good rap-it-down, rhetorical-as-hell songs. But those are icing on the cake. You can't have a repertoire of those, or you're an incredible bore. So those songs are few and far between; each person picks a few that really work for them. But the bulk of what I do is not about songs that instruct directly through their lyrics. Instead, I try to find forms like those singing games. I make it clear that nobody gets two turns until everyone gets one. That's very clear and common, but I think it's an important message.

As an example of such a "rhetorical-as-hell song," Bonnie sings a bit of her own composition, "Witches." --- "It has a real axe to grind."

*Who were the witches?  
Where did they come from?  
Maybe your great, great grandmother was one.  
Witches are wise, wise women, they say  
And there's a little witch in every woman today.*

But she reports that kids still respond to it very positively, and admits that perhaps "there's a place for it" after all. In the same way, most elementary children love to sing "High Hopes," even though it might be called didactic. Bonnie thinks it might have something to do with a song's good melody and catchy beat. If that is true, then a rule of thumb could be drawn that message songs require certain characteristics of effective songs --- the topic of Research Question #5.

David helps clarify the problems of preachy songs by bringing in an excerpt of a song called "Responsibility" that his family reviewed and found "unbearable:"

*Let's talk about a word that's very long  
 It's so important, it needs its own song  
 It's a word for you and me. This word is responsibility!  
 Responsibility is yours and mine.  
 Responsibility all the time.  
 Responsibility. Hey, don't you know?  
 You must be responsible wherever you go.*

David feels:

There are a number of problems with this song. One is that it is poorly written, with little craft or artful execution. But the preachiness is another problem – lines like “you must be responsible”, etc. There are certainly great songs in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person, but it can be a difficult way to frame a message song, because of the tendency to fall into preachiness.

Jacki shares David's distaste for false and syrupy songs that speak down to children. But she takes the unique position that “we *are* preachers” and points to what she thinks are the real dangers to children from poor attempts at song-making: (1) presenting too much information, (2) making things seem hopeless by taking away the pleasure of singing and learning, and (3) presenting difficult issues --- such as death --- in ways that may be developmentally inappropriate to children. She argues:

There is an element of preaching that is involved. We *are* preachers and our work is a calling of sorts. The problem is presenting too much information that's over a kid's developmental stage, so that it just becomes a maze, a mass of stuff that they can't process and don't want anything to do with.

It's important that this experience be pleasurable for the kids. We may be talking about pain and suffering, but looking at it as hope and change. So kids today should experience this as pleasurable as they're learning it. You have to have a sense of humor about it, and you have to watch kids. If they get that glazed look, you have to say “Well, maybe we're done for today.”

The other pitfall is giving information that they can't process. You want to be careful not to do anything that is damaging. Some teachers start out and say, “It's Martin Luther King Jr. Day” and the first thing they say is he was shot. Why would you ever say that to four-year-olds? It makes them worry about being shot themselves, and why was he shot and who shot him. They get stuck.

Jackie was taken aback by a colleague who said this, but found that she could “fix it” by telling the children, “Yes, he was shot and people were very mad and upset, but you know what? That’s not the important part. When we remember about Martin Luther King we want to remember how he helped Black people change the rules, and how he helped them get their freedom. That’s the important part.”

One final story about how children learn and can teach grownups comes from Suni, as she expresses her belief that “you have to get it from *them!*”

Being preachy is never very good. You have to get it from them! A couple of weeks ago I went to a school and I told a little story. When I was done I asked them, “What do you call that?” A kid lifted his hand and said, “That’s discrimination.” I said, “That’s right.” She named the word.

That’s what I mean by you have to get it from *them*. We always think that *we* have all the answers. We don’t. Some kids are very aware. They are defending themselves, they are playing dumb, they are hiding their feelings, they are doing a lot of things to protect themselves. But when you scratch a little bit and if they trust you --- *if* they trust you! --- then everything comes to the surface. And then you learn the lesson of your life from these kids!

Set the context with singing and stories, and then ask children a question. This is yet another clue how transformative song-makers help children come to greater awareness about social justice without beating them over the head or brainwashing them. As Freire (1970) might analyze this experience, the children were led to name their own reality. Pete laughs as he paraphrases Einstein. “Remember. Asking the right question is the most important thing in the world.”



### Being the Adult

Another type of pitfall the participants mention occurs from their own lack of maturity, confidence and self-awareness. Bonnie describes her biggest challenge in working with young children as “being the adult:”

There’s this kind of illusion that working with children, “Oh, it’s fun.” And it’s true; it is fun. I was drawn to it for those reasons. But I think underneath that, what people don’t realize is that working with children isn’t about being a child. Working with children is about being the adult, not being a 12 year old who is worried about being un-cool, or left out, or dumb, or not doing the most popular thing.

That’s true of 4-year-olds too. I had to take seriously the discipline both of the music and learning about children and how they learn, how they get along and what they need.

Bonnie’s first attempts to bring her adult-oriented social justice issues to preschool children came out “very badly,” she remembers with equal parts chagrin and nostalgia:

My first experiences with kids were in the mid-to-late 70’s and I sort of thought, “Well, they should celebrate International Workers Day and every Third World country’s freedom celebration,”(laughter) --- a lot of adult overlay of leftist politics. That’s kind of how I started. I remember this one little girl almost 30 years ago who told me, “The trouble with you is you just celebrate, celebrate, celebrate!” which was kind of hilarious, but it was a really good criticism.

I didn’t really know how to do it when I started. I knew that I wanted to integrate my enthusiasm for music with the life of participatory music in people’s yearning for and organization for freedom, for justice, for inclusion, for equality. And I think these are good impulses. Sometimes I wish for that day again when I was so naive and could do things without being self critical, because there were moments of brilliance, even though a lot of it was misguided.

Ella describes a similar need to “make yourself present” for children, to do something worthwhile with them. “I use the children as my most severe critics,” she reveals, and counsels, “Never take them for granted. You just can’t do that.” Continuing her advice to the novice children’s musician, she adds:

When you're doing a concert and these children are out there in the audience, I feel an obligation to please them, to do something that's worthwhile. Some of the children may know you, a lot may not know you, but some children will hope you sing some songs that *they* know. Others are just getting to know you and hopefully will learn some songs. So when you first get out there, right away you make yourself present. You don't warm up on the children; you don't say, "I'll fool around with this and next time I'll really do a good job." When you perform it may be the one and only time that the children see you--- they'll go away with a lasting impression.

Sometimes it is adults who help song-makers see the need for personal growth, as Suni recounts in this poignant story of her early days as a singer in the United States:

A woman from the audience told me once, "I love your singing. I love your voice. I love your songs. But I cannot tolerate the violence and the anger that is in your songs. There's not an inch of love in your songs and I'm never going to come again to your concerts." I reacted to that by saying, "Maybe she's right. What is the source of love in myself? Where is it?"

Before I came to live in California this woman appeared again at my concert at a bilingual education conference. She asked, "Do you remember me?" I told her, "Let me give you a hug because you changed my life for the better. Thanks to you I was able to see within myself."

Whoever has seen Bonnie, Ella and Suni work in concert, knows the degree to which they have learned these lessons --- of what it really means to "be an adult" song-maker and educator --- enabling them to pass it on to the rest of us.

### Commercial Career vs. Vocation

Several participants also respond to this question about pitfalls by bringing up issues about their relationship to the commercial marketplace of children's music. One cannot help but remember the blacklisting of Pete and other progressive musicians and artists during the "red scare" of the Cold War, which forced them out of the mainstream media. Today Pete's strongest anger is

reserved for the big publishers and biographers who have mangled his songs and misrepresented his “career”:

When I got into music, I wanted music to help build the left wing movement. I really was not enthusiastic about what they called a commercial career. I hate the word “career.”

Other participants express mixed feelings about their “careers” in which few achieve the widespread recognition of a Pete Seeger or Ella Jenkins, much less the commercial success of children’s musicians such as Raffi or Red Grammer. Suni is happy that her two recordings with Moe Asch’s Folkways have been reissued on CD by Smithsonian/Folkways, and Barb is excited to have recently released her first CD of children’s music. Ruth Pelham, who has released three recent recordings and published numerous songs, spoke in an interview (Hoose, 1977) about her mixed feelings of getting her songs distributed in the children’s music industry --- a dilemma she has resolved by mostly choosing “grassroots” over “making it big”:

Well, like a lot of people, I think my songs are good and important and I want them to be heard by as many people as possible. I think in order for me to “make it big,” for any of us to do that, there’s a huge amount of time and energy that has to go into that. So far I’ve mostly chosen to spend my time and energy working in a very grassroots kind of way, because it feeds me as a human being, and it feeds me as a songwriter, as an artist, as an activist....Your ego makes you want to be known by everybody. But I’ve seen so many of us in the Children’s Music Network feel so badly, trying to shape our futures according to the children’s music industry (p. 2).

Bonnie brings up the problem that children’s song-makers have in common with teachers in general --- little respect for their craft and dedication from society at large. Consequently, she explains, “People want that recognition from other adults. I think we’re all a little hungry for that recognition, since we

don't get it our lives since we're mainly working with kids. I think there's a part of us that wants adults to say, "You're good at this!"

Just as Bonnie has admitted that children's song-makers are human too and sometimes need recognition, Ruth has expanded on this notion to discuss the challenges of self doubt for social activists and "messengers of hope."

### "Doubting That We Do Make a Difference"

In a written contribution to the dialogue, and in the finest spirit of participatory research, Ruth reflects:

A pitfall that some of us fall into is doubting that what we do REALLY makes a difference in social transformation, and wondering whether our work is TRULY valuable social change work. For me, that feeling comes when I get isolated and fail to value all of the little successes and triumphs that happen so frequently. It's like I stop seeing them and instead get overwhelmed by the big picture and how far there is to go to make any real system change. I'll give you an example.

Back during the Persian Gulf war, I happened to be doing a songwriting residency with six fourth grade classes from a school in the mid-Hudson Valley of New York state. On the first day of the residency when I asked the students what they wanted to write about, each class said almost verbatim "Kick butt and kill Sadaam Hussein!" I was absolutely stunned by the consistency of their responses and by the intensity of the hatred they expressed. Later on their responses made more sense to me when I learned that many of the students had family or friends who were fighting in the Gulf, and that the war and those people's safety was the most prevalent thing on their minds.

Figuring out how to do the residency was one of the biggest challenges I've ever experienced as an educator.... To make a very long story short, it turned out that all six classes composed powerful songs about peace and ending the war, which they sang at a culminating concert at the end of the residency that was attended by 500 people! All the kids in the six classes begged their parents to come because the songs mattered so much to them. And come they did. And they all sang along to the choruses and wow, the feeling in that auditorium was exquisite....

Meanwhile, me the social activist would go home everyday from this residency and come down on myself for not making time in my life to join the demonstration against the war that was going on downtown. On one of those days, fortunately I happened to have a phone conversation with Pete Seeger. I told him all about the residency and how compelling it

was, but that it was taking up so much of my time that I wasn't being able to get to the anti-war rallies to do my "real political work" as a community songleader. Pete listened and then responded with his simple wisdom. He told me that the work I was doing with the kids in that school was probably some of the most important political work that I'd ever do. He said that there would be other rallies to sing at but there wouldn't be another time to do this particular work with this particular group of children. How absolutely right he was!

It's so important to trust that what we're doing does make a difference. But sometimes it's hard to keep that perspective, especially when the world seems so out of control and things appear to be getting worse. Sometimes it's hard to determine what are the most useful ways of applying our skills and gifts to making the most difference. I think so many of us activists who work with children experience that dilemma.

### Summary

In discussing the pitfalls of their profession and social avocation, the participants brought up several important dangers and challenges to overcome: being too "preachy," not overcoming personal hang-ups, relating to the commercial market of children's music, doubting their own effectiveness as social change agents and --- as Francisco discussed in response to Research Question #2 --- becoming caught up in a power role that is antithetical to working for social justice.

It is also worth discussing what did *not* come up in the participants' responses: the unstable, poorly paid, and sometimes lousy working conditions that often come with being a full-time children's musician. How is it that this response failed to come forward, when it is one of the most obvious facts of an artist's life? Perhaps the researcher's questions did not lead the participants in this direction? One would almost think that the joy of working with children, and the independence of working from outside the institutions of learning, compensates for having no medical insurance and a car that is always breaking down. You can almost hear the voice of

Ella, and others in the chorus, reminding us that we get back more from children than we give.

**Research Question #5: What are some of the essential songs that foster human solidarity and a commitment to social justice with children?**

The participants responded to this question not so much with their list of “essential songs,” but with their ideas on what *makes* a great song, often illustrated with some of their favorite examples. The end result is list of characteristics of children’s songs that last over time, are pleasant to sing and hear, and help deepen children’s understanding of the world and their place in it.

These songs may come from four broad types: (a) traditional folk songs that connect children to people’s history, (b) authored songs like Woody Guthrie’s “This Land is Your Land” which have become part of the folk tradition by their mass acceptance and folk style, (c) new songs written by children’s musicians, including all of the participants, and (d) commercial or popular music designed for, or appropriated by, children (Disney movies and songs, pop radio, and so on). Most of the songs mentioned below come from the first three categories, while the issue of commercial music will be touched on again in Research Question #6.

**The African American Essence**

Pete, popularizer of so many African American, Anglo American and other folk traditions of the U.S., responds to this question of essential songs without a moment’s hesitation. “I think the whole world can learn from the African

American experience,” he says. “ You survive in spite of. You don’t give up. I’d say I’ve learned more from the African American people than from any other single group, though I’ve learned from Native Americans too.”

Jacki’s “Songs from the Civil Rights Movement,” which she uses so effectively with children, are just a few examples of the cultural and musical bedrock which is African American music, as these titles and lead-lines suggest:

*-If you miss me at the back of the bus and you can’t find me no where  
Come on over to the front of the bus, I’ll be riding up there*

*-Just like a tree that’s standing by the water  
We shall not be moved*

*-Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on freedom*

*-This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine*

*-I’m gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days, Hallelujah*

### Characteristics of Essential Songs for Social Justice

The following are qualities that the participant song-makers define as essential to good songs, especially songs that teach about social justice. A song like “This Little Light of Mine,” is likely to embody many of these qualities --- a clue as to why it is one of the all-time favorites of song-makers in this study.

1. **Melody:** The first thing to say about a good song is “it’s gotta have a good tune to make it singable,” according to Jacki. Calling forth an example from the folk tradition of freedom music, she contrasts the songs of the Civil Rights Movement with the songs out of the Suffrage and Abolitionist Movements; “Those New England hymns have convoluted tunes and words that just don’t quit, and who can remember them, whereas the

songs out of the South are more singable --- just change one word and you've got a whole new verse."

Providing some musicology background, Pete explains, "Now, some music is just melody. The great old Irish Aires like the 'Londonderry' --- you don't need words, you don't need rhythm. All you need is that beautiful melody, although I keep trying to put words to them sometimes."

Pete continues by talking and singing this music and history lesson:

Incidentally, Black people for hundreds of years have recognized the beauty of some Irish melodies. So they incorporate them into their own style, like *Rock a my soul in the bosom of Abraham* --- that's nothing but borrowed from the Irish jig "Irish Washerwoman." And in the new Baptist Hymnal, a Black songwriter, Dotti Rambo, has beautiful words to what most people call "Oh Danny Boy."

*Amazing grace will always be my song of praise*

*For it was grace that bought my liberty.*

*I'll never know just why he came to love me so*

*He looked beyond my faults and saw my need.*

2. *Rhythm*: Ella has done a large part of her song-making with children through rhythmic songs and chants. In January of 2001, at Ella's invitation, I was able to see her get a room full of children and adults singing, dancing and shaking instruments in San Francisco. In her CD and companion book, *This is Rhythm* (Jenkins, 1993), Ella writes:

I found out quite early in my work with children and adults that they both respond most eagerly to rhythm --- perhaps because it is such a basic ingredient. Exploring sounds is important to all of us at some stage in life, especially when we are children. We seem to need to express ourselves percussively (p. 4)

Rhythm, whether its roots are African, Indian, Asian, Native American, European --- or, most commonly, a multicultural blend --- connects children to dance, games, movement, and to life itself. Francisco



Herrera shares, “I love doing ‘*Tía Mónica*’ and ‘*Juanito cuando baila*,” two of many movement songs in Spanish and English that can be found in José Luís Orozco’s songbook and CD, *Diez Deditos* (1997).

Summing up, Pete remarks, “I think a lot of adult musicians forget how important rhythm is. Sometimes, a piece of music can be *just* rhythm.” To illustrate his point, he gets to his feet and begins an agile demonstration of *hambone*, an African America folk tradition of rhythmic clapping and slapping of hands, legs, and chest with which he has entertained children and adults for decades (Seeger, 1972, Chapter 4). (In spite of the demonstration, the researcher is still trying to get the hang of it.)

3. *Repetition*: This aspect of a good song is closely tied to rhythm --- which is repetitive by nature --- as well as to the repeating patterns of words and melody in song. In the African American tradition this may be a repeating word or line. Many of the participants refer to the “zipper song” they use so often (*he’s got \_\_\_\_\_ in his hands*) as a great way to have simple, repeating words that children or adults can adapt to the needs of the moment. Entire refrains or choruses, meanwhile, are repeated in the European tradition, such as in “Walk A Mile in Your Shoes” by Jan Nigro, a favorite song of Barb’s.

*I want to walk a mile in your shoes,  
I want to walk a mile in your shoes  
I want to know what you’re think, and what you feel  
So I really want to walk --- a mile in your shoes.*

Whatever the style or source --- poetry, chants, songs, rhymes, rap --- fun and rhythmic repetition can help adults and children learn something new, or participate in something already learned. Fun repetition is a practice for all children, as we have seen (Ada, 1990), but is especially crucial, as Francisco indicated above, for singing with and teaching immigrant children who are English Learners (Freeman & Freeman, 2001). It allows a low-stress environment for these children to acquire both language and subject matter, and a medium that is fun.

Turning the tables of language, it is hard to imagine Cuba's folkloric "*Guantanamera*," for example, without the poetic verses of José Martí, the rhythms of the Afro-Cuban *guajira*, or the repetitive chorus of:

*Guantanamera, guajira Guantanamera*  
*Guantanamera, guajira Guantanamera*

It is, in part, the repetitive, rhythmic and melodic qualities of this beloved song that have allowed millions of Spanish-speaking and non-Spanish speaking people to sing along with Pete since he first popularized "*Guantanamera*" in the U.S. 40 years ago, followed later by the pop version by the Byrds in the 1970's. It is, of course, a standard throughout Cuba and Latin America, including the signature piece of Cuban singer Josefto Fernandez, and the theme songs for a recent Cuban film of the same name.

Following a Fall 2000 dialogue between the researcher and Pete at the Children's Music Network annual gathering in rural Warwick, New York, Seeger told the following story of how José Martí --- Latin America's

beloved poet and Father of Cuban Independence --- wrote the words that are now sung to “*Guantanamera*” just a few miles from where we were sitting. Pete found the music and social justice themes of the lyrics so appealing that he began to sing it everywhere. The rest is history:

Guess what I found out just this last year? The words to *Guantanamera* which we sing were written only 13 miles north in Hayne’s Falls in the Catskills. In 1891 José Martí was living in New York and making himself sick with indecision. “I want freedom for Cuba, but I don’t want to hurt Spain because Spain is the mother country. And if we do get free of Spain, how do we keep it out of the claws of the Great Eagle of the North?”

He went up to Hayne’s Falls to spend the summer. “Martí,” the doctor said, “you’re making yourself sick. Go up country, go walking in the woods.” And while there he wrote 200 little quatrains. They were published in a book *Simple Verses/Versos Sencillos*. And 58 years later, Julian Orbón combined those verses to the tune we sing today. And 12 years after that I met one of his piano students who was a counselor at this camp. I learned it from him 70 or more years later, 13 miles away from where those words were written!

Having learned another lesson in “people’s music,” as well as the importance of repetition, we move on to another essential song characteristic.

4. *Humor*: Discussed earlier as an important issue for children and teachers, Pete reminds us once again that “a lot of the most important children’s songs are humorous,” --- something teachers and parents too often forget. By way of illustration, he sings a song he often uses with 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders: “Be Kind to Your Parents” by Harold Rome, which, he points out to the teachers in the audience, can also be sung “*Be kind to your teachers.*”

Be kind to your parents, tho’ they don’t deserve it,  
Remember “grownup” is a difficult stage of life

They're apt to be nervous & overexcited  
 Confused by their daily storm and strife  
 Just keep in mind, tho' it sounds strange,  
 I know most parents once were children long ago (incredible!)  
 So treat them with patience, & kind understanding  
 In spite of the foolish things they do  
 Some day you may wake up & find you're a parent too!

5. *Balance of Specific and Universal*: Jacki describes how balance is another essential quality of good children's songs:

Songs have to be specific enough to their event of origin, but universal enough in the appeal beyond that event. That's a hard one, but it's the critical piece. There are a lot of songs that have good tunes, but they died-out with an event because they were just too specific. They didn't have the universal piece. Or others that are so universal that they're unreal; nobody believes them.

David explains that this balance is often successfully achieved when "the issue is approached through telling a story about individuals (as in folk tradition's "John Henry," Bob Blue's "Courage," or Sarah Pirtle's "Walls & Bridges") as opposed to a more general, anthem-like approach, which can come across as preachy."

6. *Respect*: David goes on to sum-up several important ingredients of his favorite songs to sing with children, all which focus on the issue of respect for children that Ella described above. He suggests:

"I think that when songs are well-written, honest, respectful, and age-appropriate, children will respond to them. When I say respectful, I mean that a song respects children's intelligence and doesn't condescend or oversimplify.

7. *Authenticity*: For Jacki, who particularly likes songs that reflect people's history, it is very important that a song be authentic to this history. That usually means the participants create it from what Lett (1990) calls their insider's *emic* perspective, rather than outsiders with an *etic* perspective,

an interpretation that is not from the same cultural or class milieu. Jacki explains why she prefers “real” old songs that connect us to an historical “continuum” rather than newer compositions by many current song-makers that may have a “McNice” middle-class bias:

The Civil Rights songs I like to sing are the real songs of the real people who did the real work, or the real protests, or the real whatever it is.

A number of songs have been written over the past years about Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks and their heroic struggles and deeds. Some of them are pretty good songs. But I think they miss the mark in important ways. They tend to put the events into history, as if the events have actually ended. I look at all of this as a continuum --- it isn't just learning about something that happened a long time ago. If we can sing the songs that these people sang --- when children sing “Woke Up This Morning” or “Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round” --- then we really are part of each other, and we carry them with us, and continue their work.

Francisco agrees with what Jacki says about history, since “Singing songs like ‘Wade in the Water’ which people have sung for literally hundreds of years,” permits you to tell the story of slaves escaping on the Underground Railroad. But he also loves to use many newer songs that give children a different perspective on history --- songs that may have been written in recent years by the new generation of Woody Guthries and Malvina Reynolds, such as Nancy Schimmel. “Kids love to do the Nancy’s, ‘1492’,” he argues, with its catchy refrain that provides a refreshing Native American perspective:

*In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue  
It was a courageous thing to do  
BUT, someone was already here!*

Or what about the songs of Nancy's creative songwriting mother, Malvina Reynolds, who gave the world, and especially children, such insightful songs as "Little Boxes," "Turn Around," "If You Love Me" and Francisco's favorite, "Magic Penny?" --- all found in her invaluable *There's Music in the Air; Songs for the Middle-Young* (Reynolds, 1976). Francisco sings the chorus of "Magic Penny" that he believes is "revolutionary" for children today:

*Love is something if you give it away  
Give it away, give it away.  
Love is something if you give it away  
You end up having more.*

Then he interprets,

For me, that's one of the most revolutionary things right now. Love is something if you give it away. So give it away! Because everything right now is about selling and making a profit. I used to sing that song as a little kid, but I've just relearned it as we were celebrating the 100 Years of Malvina Reynolds. It's one of those songs that are available to us and touch the core of what life is.

Ruth, a prolific songwriter herself, adds another dimension to this discussion by suggesting that children's song-makers can speak out for those whose voices that have been historically silenced by discrimination and social stigma, including children from gay and lesbian families:

There are a few ways of viewing this notion of authenticity. I think it's very important for children to hear about a particular group's experience directly from the horses mouth, right from those folks who have lived and know best their own history, issues, feelings, etc. But I also think that there are some oppressed groups and individuals within those groups who for a variety of reasons may not be able to tell their story and speak their experience. ...

An example is a child who lives with two parents who are gay or lesbian. Let's say that the child goes to a public school where little of the child's family reality is ever affirmed or mentioned, and is even sometimes made fun of through gay bashing jokes and name

calling that so many kids unrightfully do. What's our role as people who work with children to affirm that child's reality and give it authenticity? ....

So a necessity I see that is essential for those of us who are songwriters is to step into the shoes of those children and families, and write the songs they need that can help them feel seen, validated, and valued. Where authenticity comes in is that we have to do our homework and talk to people in those situations and find out all that we can about their situations. We have to use our ability to empathize and step in their shoes and use our imaginations... [to] create enough safety and interest in the culture at large so that those people can eventually speak out more and more for themselves

8. *Adaptability*: Another sign of a great children's song is how well it can be adapted for singing by children and song-makers. Participants have already noted how easy it is to use "zipper songs." The very essence of folk music, meanwhile, is innovation and adaptation. Pete shares that he learned about writing songs by watching Woody Guthrie constantly invent new words and stick them on old tunes --- a skill easily acquired by children and teachers today.
9. *Translation*: There are many additional ways that songs are adapted for and by children. One of the most important of these is brought up by both Francisco and Suni --- the translation of lyrics to make a song be bilingual, or multilingual to meet the realities of our multicultural society. As one of Suni's many bilingual songs illustrates:

*Pon un poquito de amor y corazón  
en todo lo que hagas.  
Tu alma brillará en tus ojos.*

Put a little bit of love and care  
in everything you do.  
Your soul will shine in your eyes.

Pete, however, is quoted elsewhere that not every song *should* be translated into English for singing, because singing songs in their original languages can hasten bilingualism in the United States, which he strongly supports:

I've urged people *not* to try to put English words to great songs like "Guantanamera," "De Colores," and "Amanece." It's only a matter of time before the USA, like most of the world, is some sort of a bilingual country. Learning songs in Spanish will hasten the day (Seeger, 1993, p. 117).

Children's song-makers of all kinds can join Pete's affirmation, "Long live bilingualism!" (Seeger, 1993, p. 35).

10. *Familiarity*: Another key characteristic of songs that are chosen by children's song-makers is how well known they are to children today. Ella has already spoken about how she likes to begin her children's concerts with "Twinkle Twinkle" and other songs they may know --- regardless of where they may have learned them. David notes that familiar songs like "Wheels on the Bus" and "Eensy Weensy Spider" are more important to include in programs with younger children than with older ones, who are more open to newer songs and compositions. Bonnie finds herself singing "She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain" with kids in many of her museum and library concerts "because their parents still know those songs." Jacki adds that it's important to look for songs that may appear in the schoolbooks of elementary children, especially if they are lucky enough to have a music curriculum. And Pete still begins most of his concerts with the well known "Skip to My Lou."



As discussed in the “Statement of the Problem” in Chapter I, children today are not acquiring a large and rich repertoire of songs as they have in the recent past, thus making it all the more important to make these heritage songs known to children. Familiarity with good songs can breed acceptance.

11. *Context:* Bonnie reminds us once again, “It’s not just singing the song; it’s putting it into context and the stories you tell about the meaning of the song” to make it come alive for children.

### Summary

While a number of “essential” songs like “This Little Light of Mine” and “*De Colores*” kept coming up in the dialogues, along with the overall importance of the African American experience to American music, the answers to this question focused more on the essential *qualities* of good social justice songs and a few songs that typified them. From a researcher’s perspective, these findings are both “disappointing” and delightful ---disappointing because there is no small list of “essential songs” that can be pointed to, but delightful because that the list of essential qualities of good songs that were suggested can help each person find their own group of songs to sing with children.

### **Research Question #6: What are the factors that impede the singing voices of children in schools and society today?**

I think definitely people sing less; that is a fact. We used to sing in church, we played the piano with friends and would gather around and sing “Down by the Old Mill Steam” and hymns. My family didn’t consider themselves musical, but we did that. I think a lot of people did

that. So it's part of a non-participatory commodifying of everything people do. It makes me sound like a crank, but it's true.

Bonnie Lockhart

“Very important!”

Pete Seeger, in response to Bonnie Lockhart, above

Bonnie and Pete are not alone in voicing strong concerns about why children and adults are doing less singing in the United States, even at the risk of sounding like an eccentric. The participants respond below to this research question by describing a series of interrelated factors that all contribute to: (1) a society that is less democratic, (2) a culture that is less participatory, and (3) schools that are missing an opportunity to educate all children with hope and skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century through transformative song-making.

#### The Consumer Society: Challenges to Song-Makers

Francisco begins by restating his belief that you can't discuss the subset of children's singing without understanding the larger social context, which he and Ruth have described earlier as the worldwide capitalist economic system and its unequal allocation of power and resources. Francisco shares his belief that in recent years there has been a growth of,

malnutrition, violence in the home, violence in the workplace; it's worse now because, when unions were organized better and when there was more worker consciousness, people could identify being violated at work. But now people get violated at work and they come home and beat the partner, the partner beats the kids, and the kids beat each other.”

He describes the ways that modern society promotes both malnutrition and an “addiction to consumer goods” for its children that robs them of their innocence --- while providing a challenge to song-makers:

I think in El Salvador the problem was malnutrition with children. But in the U.S., I think the big problem is that it is super-violent here--- there's a certain brokenness, an alienation. I see it more of a challenge in reality. The challenge is to get children in touch.

At the younger levels, the children can really get into the playfulness, but when children get into the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade, it's harder. The innocence and openness of children in the urban societies is gone in many ways. There's commercialization and capitalism that break into people's hearts really easy, really fast. The whole addiction to consumer goods has kids dreaming about Nikes and feeling like they're nothing because they don't have what other kids have. The unfortunate thing is that in capitalist society, fitting-in means having to buy or steal \$150 shoes. So that breaks into people's innocence. And now kids have their cellphones.

Ella is also concerned about how modern society is impacting children's ability to grow and learn naturally, especially as modern technology replaces children's songs and games with computers and other gadgets:

I think about the children today. They're into computer games and everything is so fast and whatnot. When I look back I think about how we used to hop and skip and jump. We didn't have a lot of things purchased for us. It was being out there spinning tops. I love tops! We used to play jump rope. You not only had to be skilled at jumping, but had to be skilled at turning. If you didn't turn it right, you really got a lecture! With playing marbles, I look back and think of all the things that you learn by playing marbles --- about math, the square and circle, aiming, colors---- all these things were happening.

We used to play school too. In school, one person would be the teacher. You'd usually have two or three other children sitting on the steps. If they answered questions correctly, they would move up the steps. And then the one got to the top of the step, that person became the teacher.

All the participants express similar concerns about what childhood has become in the electronic age. For its cause, they point to the overpowering and increasingly integrated role of the media, music industry, and corporate advertising in bombarding children with messages to become consumers of culture --- a process brilliantly portrayed by researcher Jane Kilbourn (2000).

Pete talks about TV as the "plug-in drug" --- an addiction that is actually "changing our children's brains for the worse," but he acknowledges that there

are positive sides of television too. Except when he was blacklisted, Seeger has been on TV many times. Ella, likewise, notes that, "Television is a big medium, whether we like it or not." She admits that many youngsters have gotten to know her music because she has appeared often on television's popular Mr. Rogers and the Barney Show:

The thing is that children are sophisticated nowadays. There is a vast difference between years ago. I've been on the Barney Show, OK? Some people are pro-Barney and others anti-Barney. They'll say, "My child no longer watches Barney." I say, "Yes, but I have been in different cities and I get recognized by children who are 9 or 10 and ask, 'Weren't you on the Barney Show?'" Somebody's watched it!

Jacki targets commercial radio and other media in the electronic age as the reason that "people don't have the repertoire anymore," because "the stuff on the radio is not intended to be for group singing." Barb, meanwhile, is concerned in general about "consumerism in music" and specifically about the inappropriate messages that popular music is sending to children:

I've got a lot of concerns, as do many people in the Children's Music Network, about the really sexually laden pop tunes that are written for older teens and adults, but you've got 5 and 6 year-old kids singing them.

We become consumers of music, not makers of music. I think it's really the consumerism of music that is the big thing that keeps children from singing more. People do sing along everywhere, so we haven't lost that yet, but there is something different about being a consumer of music than being a nation that sings and creates.

Ruth doesn't see popular music as having an entirely negative impact on the young people, even when it is brought into schools, but, like Barb, is very concerned about the violent and sexual nature of much of rap and hip-hop music. She explains:

In spite of all the sex and violence in rap, there are a lot of very positive things that it offers. Rap is giving a lot of kids who don't see themselves as writers more access and motivation to write. They think of rap as fun, and

jump right into the writing process, which they see as a challenge and a game. Those kids are writing their own raps whereas most likely they wouldn't be writing songs. Writing raps helps kids want to use language in colorful and creative ways that will be approved of by their friends.

It reminds me of how we used to make up rhymes for the ball-bouncing games we played as kids in Brooklyn. We just made them up and didn't stop to think if they were good or bad. It was an anybody-can-do-it kind of thing. That's the good stuff, but it's the sex and violence that is so harmful and hard for kids to deal with. I guess what we have to do is to embrace and use the best of it, and work to minimize the parts that are damaging.

### Shutting Music Out of Schools

The second major factor that participants mention is how singing has been pushed out of schools by both budget-cutting in past decades and by pressures of standardized testing and other factors today. Chapter II documented how music and arts programs in schools fell victim to conservative "Culture Wars" and Reagan/Bush-era budget cuts of social services throughout the 1980s and 90s. In the new century, money has begun to flow back into schools and even into art programs, along with a series of reforms, mandatory tests and other "accountability" measures that have increased government's role in what happens in schools. The participants relate how they came to work in schools, their problems of doing song-making with children there, and why the current trends in education may be even worse for children's ability to sing for social justice.

Bonnie begins her list of impediments to song-making in schools with some essential historical background about how progressive musicians and artists like herself came to be so involved in schools in the first place:

All these years in the late 70's and 80's the money for music was really drying up, so most of us came in by hook and crook—the last of the Arts Council money, thru parent-funded kinds of things, even sometimes volunteering and wheedling money the way artists have always lived. And

the schools could get us for cheaper than they could get real teachers; we weren't on contract, we were consultants, so they didn't have to pay us any benefits. Plus, we wanted the freedom of our time to come in and out, to go on tour.

This is relatively recent history when compared to the longer relationship of people like Pete and Ella to singing programs for school children. But according to Pete, who started singing his songs for his aunt's pupils in 1938, the pattern is still the same, with money being a major factor. He remarks on the irony of "occasional" children's musicians having benefited from the dismantling of music programs across the U.S.:

I'd look at it this way --- money. A lot of music teachers are out of a job. "All we got to teach is science; forget about music." Well, there's a few dollars in the school budget and the principal says, "Gee the kids ought to hear a little music occasionally." So they hire somebody like you or me to do an assembly program. Ha ha. So we here are benefiting from the fact that music teachers are being thrown out of a job all over the country.

As we will see below, more money is now being made available for music and arts programs, but it doesn't seem to be promoting transformative song-making and other artistic disciplines that help children develop a deeper understanding of social justice issues.

### Impediments to Children's Voices

The following list summarizes the key problems that the participants see as limiting the role of song-making in the schools they work with. Their suggestions for how to change schools will be discussed in Research Question #7.

1. *Not enough music teachers:*

David, the only participant who was trained as a music teacher, believes, “the most obvious impediment to children’s singing in schools today is the fact that many schools do not have music teachers.”

2. *Few Singing-Teachers:*

“When schools do have music teachers,” continues David, “many of these teachers do not emphasize singing,” instead focusing on band and orchestra. Jacki seconds him, decrying the near complete lack of singing-teachers in schools, as compared to her own elementary experience of learning many folk songs--- (a period, incidentally, inspired by the folk revival summarized in Chapter II):

I remember singing a lot in my elementary school--- “Down in the Valley,” “The Erie Canal,” “Red River Valley,” “Shenandoah.” They were all elementary school songs. They weren’t good versions of them, I’ve learned later, but we sang ‘em!”

3. *“Music is a gift” and other old-fashioned approaches to music education:*

In various ways, the participants lay some of the blame for the lack of singing in elementary schools on the way music has been taught traditionally in schools. David begins by explaining,

Another impediment to singing in general is the old idea that music is a “gift” rather than a skill which can be learned. This idea is very prevalent and destructive. It leads people to believe that if someone doesn’t sing well the very first time they open their mouth, then they just don’t have the “gift” and they shouldn’t bother trying to learn how to sing. Bob Blue once wrote a wonderful piece in CMN’s *Pass It On!* in which he asked readers to imagine if we applied this sort of thinking to reading or math!

Ella sees the problem with music education as being too “formal” and not focused enough on helping children love music and express themselves through it:

A lot of children I’ve noticed have difficulties sometimes expressing themselves, because in schools we get so formal in how we want children to enjoy music and whatnot – they have to have a perfect this and a perfect that. Being a person who didn’t study music, but I enjoy music, I love music, I know that most everyone likes to hum a “la la,” a “lu lu” or whistle or something like that.

Pete expresses a similar critique: “I think when teachers get too strict about having exactly the “right” melody or exactly the “right” words, the children find themselves in a kind of box, and then they don’t sing so well. They sing better when they can holler out in their brassy, young voices.”

Jacki, finally, sees the problem as a rigid “reading music” approach to music instruction that comes from how music teachers themselves are trained to teach in the university:

I really think that something terrible happens to music people when they become music teachers. If they ever loved music in the beginning, they have it beaten out of them, because they have to do this lesson and this curriculum, and again – it’s missing the point. What’s important is not that the kids can read music. The entry to music is through the heart, not through the brain. If the heart loves it the brain will learn it. If the heart doesn’t like, the brain is going to reject it.

#### 4. *Music programs based on competition and contests:*

Both Bonnie and Pete are also critical of the practice of many music programs that are run on a competitive “contest.” Bonnie explains that this model takes the fun out of music and makes it hard to teach about fairness:



What I see in a lot of music programs is that they're organized around contests! Instrumental music and even choral music, even in 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade, is organized around contests within the districts and regions. It's run on an intramural sports model. There are these festivals, which are nothing more than contests and really have nothing to do with the things we've been talking about --- teaching that each person has value, that every contribution is worthwhile, and that everyone belongs. That's not what you teach when you're trying to win a contest. You teach by telling the kids that are not quick at matching pitches to sing quietly, or leave.

5. *No Songs of Social Change:*

Even when there are music teachers who do emphasize singing, David complains, "they certainly don't emphasize songs of social change. I think that many more music teachers would include at least some songs about social issues, if they knew that these songs existed!"

6. *Smaller Distribution of Social Justice Music:*

One of the reasons that music teachers don't have access to this now-extensive body of recorded and published music --- e.g. Smithsonian/Folkways Children's Collection --- is, in David's opinion, because, "most of the recordings by children's musicians who focus on these issues are not distributed widely and access to and awareness of these songs is limited." On a brighter note, he comments, "the Internet is beginning to have a positive effect on this."

7. *Increasing "corporate control of education":*

Another reason that songs of this kind are ignored is, in David's words, because "increasing corporate control of education is making it harder for teachers who want to deal with these issues to do so." Many participants

voice similar opinions, mentioning other specific impediments listed here that are all part of the business orientation of education discussed in Chapters II and I.

#### 8. *Taboo or Uncomfortable Topics:*

Ruth brought up the difficulty that she and many other song-makers she knows have had in introducing social justice issues that may be considered “too hot to handle” in school settings. As she argues below, the fact that they are “uncomfortable topics” like homosexuality, abuse and poverty, makes them all the more important for transformative song-makers to address:

There are topics that are considered taboo or uncomfortable that most schools don't want to touch. Homosexuality is one of them. Many of us in CMN have talked about the dilemma we feel when we go into a school and know that the school would much prefer that we not sing or say anything that has to do with gays or lesbians. Imagine doing a program about name-calling and bullying yet not referring to the word “faggot,” which is one of the most used put-down words! Or doing a program about appreciating differences or celebrating school families, and not singing a song that affirms the gay or lesbian families that are in the school community!

Divorce, adoption, abuse, death, disability, and poverty are some other topics that make people uncomfortable. I think that one of the most useful things that progressive children's musicians can do is to write and sing songs on these topics, get them into the schools and communities, and open some new doors to some much needed humanity and acceptance.

#### 9. *Screening out progressive music from schools:*

Bonnie and others in the Children's Music Network are concerned that it seems harder to bring their kind of music and advocacy into schools in recent years. Bonnie shares a discussion she had with other CMN singers in

schools about their fears that music and art in schools will bypass them and become just another measurable piece of the “top down curriculum”:

We see that the money is coming back into school art programs, but it isn't necessarily coming back to the Artists in Residence --- back to people who want to bring their music and their love of singing to the school and put that music into the social context. So now we rejoice that the funding is coming back, but we find that the curriculum is controlled from above.

We're kind of horrified to see people who are doing more harm than good; bringing in people doing music who aren't bringing it in from the heart, who aren't bringing it in with that joy of singing, who are bringing it in as another thing that's going to be tested and measured. It's another part of the top-down curriculum where certain standards are set and teachers feel pressured to meet them. Kids really lose out when that's what is driving it.

Jacki and Suni both bring up new limitations they are encountering in bringing their music to public schools in California. “We have to justify our music program and fill out forms,” explains Jacki. But, she argues, “Now the research is out: you don't have music because it makes you read better. You have music because it's wonderful and important in its own right.”

Suni, meanwhile, relates her recent experience with “money managers” in school districts that want her to teach specific skills to children, not culture, and who dismiss her work as “entertainment”:

It's hard to describe; it's a business education mentality --- measurable, product-oriented. But education is not something tangible only. We are touching the heart of the person. It can only be measured when we see how that person relates to her world.

#### 10. *Classroom teachers not singing with children:*

Many of the participants point to the very real problem that *most* classroom teachers in elementary schools today are not leading their students in singing as they have in previous generations. They point to two main

reasons: first, as David puts it, “Few classroom teachers feel comfortable leading singing themselves.” Why has this occurred? Participants seem to agree with research summarized earlier (Vandenberg, 1991) that linked teachers’ music reluctance with inadequate musical experience in their own K-12 schooling and teacher credentialing programs, not to mention the general decline of singing in modern society. The second reason, as many participants note, is that most classroom teachers have no time in their day to sing with their students. Bonnie Lockhart sees it as part of what she calls, “the standardized tests hysteria now,” which she describes here:

That’s the in-vogue way for people to explain why public schools are failing so many kids. “They must need more tests and higher standards!” Teachers really feel those pressures and it’s really hard. Not only do they have the higher standards and tests pressures, but there is so much that has been added to the curriculum --- health education, AIDS education, much worthwhile and much that isn’t. But people can’t autonomously decide what to teach anymore. A kindergarten teacher I heard this morning said that in his 3 hour program they are mandated from the state of California to teach 4 ½ hours worth of curriculum every day, not to mention what he feels is worthwhile to teach.

11. *Classroom teachers have little contact with visiting musicians:*

One specific result of this time crunch, according to participants, is that classroom teachers rarely get a chance to interact with visiting artists or artists-in-residence, even when they do come in for classroom singing or assemblies. In the researcher’s former elementary school, for example, the rural district has been able to continue hiring music teachers to visit elementary classrooms, but this is treated as teacher preparation time. Consequently, every time the music teacher comes in the classroom, the classroom teacher leaves. There is no opportunity for the “prep” teacher to

integrate songs into the regular curriculum, nor for the classroom teacher to absorb some of this music experience and integrate it into her own teaching day.

In a similar way, Jacki tells the story of leading singing assemblies in which classroom teachers do not have the opportunity or inclination to participate in the music, but instead are the “monitors” to keep the kids in line, thus benefiting little from the experience themselves.

*12. Overcrowding: There's no space to sing with kids:*

Bonnie's biggest frustration in her school singing-programs is associated with problems she has with trying to schedule time and space to sing with children. “The schools are in an epidemic of overcrowding,” she bemoans, “partly because of class-size reduction, and partly lack of construction. So there's a need for more classrooms and auditoriums.” Often the only place to have a music assembly is in the cafeteria, where an overworked staff is busy serving breakfast in the morning and then rushing 500-1000 kids through lunch in shifts from 11 A.M. until 1:00 because of extreme overcrowding. Shaking her head in disgust at what has happened to schools in Oakland and throughout California, Bonnie relates this vivid scenario and offers the common-sense solution to design schools where children can sing and learn together:

You can talk about good songs to sing, but if you're in a crumbly basement with no light and no heat, and there's a buckets on the floor to catch the leaking roof ---- you know, you can sing a message, “I'm special. I'm somebody. I'm a wonderful person,” but what is the real message there? It's, “We don't really care about you. We're not going to fix the toilets.”

Most schools I work in, there's not one space where everybody in the school can even gather. And if there is, it's incredibly over-booked. Music is not considered to be something that is worth using space for. But space is really important! We need to design schools that acknowledge that getting everybody together and singing is an important thing.

### 13. *Destruction of Primary Languages:*

Suni and Francisco are also critical of schools that do not offer singing in Spanish and other heritage languages. Singing has been noted above as one of the easiest and most effective way for children to acquire multiple languages and academic content (Ada, 1998). Recent anti-bilingual legislation currently sweeping through California and Arizona are hastening a pattern of language destruction and “backlash pedagogy” (Gutierrez et al., 2000) that includes stripping educators of some of their most effective and beloved ways of reaching and teaching all children. Multicultural programs and singing are bridges for communication among people, as Suni explains about her use of Spanish songs with her English speaking audiences:

I don't try to teach them Spanish. I try to teach them to not be *afraid* of Spanish. Spanish is not an enemy. Spanish is not going to deprive you of your culture. Spanish is a very beautiful language. It can accompany you, it can comfort you, it can change your attitude toward people.

### 14. *Music publishers exclude and mangle songs:*

Yet another impediment to singing mentioned by singer and author Pete is the issue of what songs big publishers select, leave out, or decide to rewrite in music texts and songbooks. Most often, songs of people's history are left out completely, while other times the words are changed to make them “acceptable” to the values of the market. In an example shared by Pete, the

publisher Scott and Foresman recently published a music text for 4<sup>th</sup> graders with a good collection of spirituals --- even Bob Dylan's "Blowing in the Wind" --- but, as Pete reveals, they appear to have distorted his songs for their own ends. Without his knowledge, they,

mangled the words of my song "Precious Friend." Instead of *Sing a little victory song*, they put, *Sing a little sing-along song*. And instead of *You and me and Rockefeller*, they put *You and me and everybody*. This big expensive book has beautiful illustrations, has got a lot of great songs, songs of many nations, but no margins! I've decided that every book needs a margin so you can write in, THIS IS NOT CORRECT!

15. *School/Song-makers collaboration is underdeveloped:*

When asked if schools and song-makers are doing enough to work with each other and develop model programs for children, Bonnie affirms the importance of outside artists in schools and says, "No, we're not doing enough."

I think there will always be a role for *outside* artists to come into schools as artists in residence, as assembly providers, as workshop leaders --- people who will not be spending all their time in a classroom. Through a collaboration of classroom teachers who do this, and classroom teachers who *don't* do it but *value* it and want help to make it happen for their students, that's how it can happen.

Asked if we are doing a good enough job of talking to teachers and music educators to empower them more, Bonnie answers:

No, we're not. I think that collaboration of the outside resident artists/assembly providers and the classroom teachers is very weak. There are a lot of practical reasons why that's true. Teachers are just incredibly over-worked and there is an incredibly unrealistic expectation of what they are going to do --- everything from AIDS education to cutting out paper Christmas trees, not to mention having to compete now for test scores on every given subject. And collaboration is by its very nature really time-intensive.

I don't know exactly how to solve that contradiction, but most programs that I've been a part of, and that I talk to my friends about, say

that the link is weak. There's competition, there's lack of time, there's lack of space.

### Summary

The participants were unified in connecting the overall decline of children's singing in the United States to the unequal allocation of power and resources under global capitalism and, in particular, how music and culture become commodities to be consumed rather than produced by each individual. They also saw a similar pattern of music and singing being shut out of schools by an anti-justice business mentality that has produced numerous impediments, described above. The "bad news" here is that even with a simple topic like singing, there is so much that needs to be done in our schools. The good news is that there is so much that *can* be done, as the next question addresses.

### **Research Question #7: How can musicians, educators, and parents today more effectively involve children in the process of singing and imagining a more just world?**

The broad scope of this question brings forth a wide variety of responses from the participant song-makers. Together, they form a composite vision of what can be done to involve children in transformative song-making.

### **Social Action and Rethinking Education**

The participants in this study see the task of involving children in song-making as part of a much larger movement they are *already* involved in --- a diverse and popular movement to reinvigorate the political process and, in particular, to redefine the role of schools as vehicles of promoting social justice in



the United States. As Francisco puts it bluntly, “In the adult world, we need to get more active again in taking over school boards and getting the money into the schools for music and arts.” Ella adds that voters need to consider that when we vote for initiatives or sit on school boards that take away arts and other schools programs “we are voting down children:”

To eliminate the arts is one of the worst things happening in so many communities. I can't think of people sitting on a board, or a meeting, or voting on a referendum --- and here they have children and grandchildren --- and they are voting physical education down, they're voting down music and arts. That's where they eliminate individuality because some children excel better in the arts than they do in other areas. When we're voting down these things, we have to remember we're voting down children. So you're going to have to take an active part, write to some of our people in government.

Bonnie points to the way many people in her Oakland community have become politically active through folklore societies and other community-based arts organizations that also need economic support. She explains her interest in connecting music in schools to these kinds of community-based “wellsprings of hope” and their broader goals of creating participatory culture and a society based on social justice:

So there are things like storytelling, there are organizations and many grassroots arts organizations that honor participatory folk traditions, non-commercial practices of the arts. I think those are really part of the solution and need to be nurtured. We need to fight to make sure that they get funded. The arts councils and foundations and corporate-givers recognize that these arts forms are really an important part of what makes a community cultured. I do believe that they are an important part of the grassroots of what's hopeful. Whether they'll win some ultimate battle or not, I'm not particularly interested in, but I do think we need to pay attention to those as wellsprings of hope.

When asked about the battle of winning public approval for refunding elementary school music programs, Bonnie responds that it's not just the music

programs she's after, but their quality, goals, and links to ongoing community-based organizations:

Just like every other educational reform and fad, music rides those waves. I think with the economy being a little better, that brings a few more tax dollars. At least in Oakland, a lot of those programs have been restored, as far as the funding. What is the quality of them, however? It's not just music programs I'm interested in, though it's always a good thing when more music gets funded. It's also, will we connect music to this participatory, community-building capacity that it has?

### Parents and Music in the Home

Over half of the participants also respond to this question by emphasizing the importance of having parents and other family members promote a singing culture at home by "just singing." Singing in schools then becomes a natural extension of the home. Barb explains how hard it is for her to involve children in singing when they have no prior experience from home:

Part of having kids sing more is to get adults to sing more, to make music be part of your life in a lot of ways that are not unusual or strange. I can tell when I go into early childhood centers for the first time if there's been music there before, or if the kids have music in their lives at home. If there isn't there's a reluctance to sing, like it's weird to have somebody making music in front of you, and that they want you to sing along too. They hold back. Then as I work with them for a while, the whole dynamics change; there are songs that they know how to sing, and it feels good to be singing together.

Bonnie recalls her own background of singing in church and around the piano at home, which laid the basis for her present love of music and singing. Consequently, one of her favorite roles as a song-maker --- indeed, for all the participants --- is to provide family music in settings like family concerts and summer camps, so that singing becomes a natural part of a child's home life.

Unfortunately, she continues, this experience is rarely open to children of poor families:

I love family music. I love family concerts and family sing-alongs. My own experience doing that is singing with families through camps and people saying, "God, why do we just do this around the campfire in the summer? Why don't we do this throughout the year?" And so through some family camps I've been able to sustain monthly sing-alongs with families. They're really wonderful, although there is a great difference from 20 years ago--- you really have to remind parents that *they* need to sing. A lot of young parents don't have that experience. That's a pretty privileged little niche.

The reality of deep class and racial divisions in Oakland, as in American society in general, has led Bonnie and others to seek out alternative means of reaching out to families. One community agency, for example, is planning free family concerts for parents on Saturday morning in the working-class and racially mixed Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland. The concerts will be held at the neighborhood school, after which the kindergarten teachers will meet with parents about helping their children get ready for school. Bonnie shares her excitement about this opportunity "to encourage parents and children to sing together. That language experience is also going to be very helpful for them as they get ready for kindergarten."

Ruth reminds us that her Music Mobile program, described in Chapter III, is all about getting communities of people singing right on their block. She elaborates:

Music Mobile is about putting the access right there on the street corner, in the empty lot, in the little pocket park, in front of the grocery store. When I drive the Music Mobile van through the streets of the neighborhood and the Music Mobile song is blaring out from the speaker, everybody pays attention. People are curious and are glad that a positive thing is happening that they can send their kids to or come as a family. Within minutes, neighbors of all ages are heading down the street to sing

and hang out. The adults will tell me afterwards that they haven't sung "those kinds of songs" in years, or haven't sung with their kids since the kids were very little.

To me, the whole concept of the Music Mobile is so basic. It boils down to going right where people are and making it absolutely easy to get involved. Not having to take a bus or drive the car, but simply walking down the block. It's about access and creating an informal atmosphere where every voice is welcome and all voices are good.

Ella also sees her role as spreading the joy of singing with all families through her community concerts, TV appearances, and visits to libraries, museums and schools. But when asked how she feels parents can help their children sing and imagine a more just world, Ella responds with an important non-musical point that parents must "step outside their culture" racially and religiously to *practice* the multiculturalism and social justice they preach to their children:

First of all, you have to live it yourself. And you have to be able to share some things--- share programs and activities with your children. You have to have friends. The worst thing, I think and that seems to me is phony, are people who design intercultural and interracial programs, but never have one friend who is of another race or another religion. So you can't just tell children what to do; you have to make inroads too.

That's one of the things with children; they do emulate their parents. But lets hope that they will do something worthwhile. Some people are afraid to make the gesture, to step outside their culture. I've seen people who design all kinds of programs, but they would never live next to somebody. I don't know if they are anti-Jewish or what. And sometimes, Black people can have the same feelings.

Francisco, meanwhile, emphasizes that one of the most important things that parents of immigrant families can do is to pass on their songs, stories, language, and other traditions to their children --- especially when lack of English skills or illiteracy deter them from helping their children in other ways.

Many times the parents get in the way of the children's growth because of their own fears. Many times the kid wants the parent to learn and they feel afraid because they don't have the same grade level as the kids. Several

parents have told me; “I don’t know how to read, so I’m intimidated. My kids want me to help them at homework, but I can’t.”

The world of music is an area the parents can help, because the parents grew up with the songs too. So I think that’s a real place to give parents power --- they can remember what their songs were and teach their kids those songs.

### Helping Schools Sing Out

While the broader needs for social activism and parents singing with their children are undeniably important, the focus of this study and the majority of participant suggestions center on how to improve singing in U.S. public schools today. Barb reminds us that the overall goal is to,

make singing a part of daily experience in the schools and in the homes. Singing together is a wonderful, healing and connecting experience: talking and interacting about the issues around us, what kind of changes we can each make, whether big or small. This kind of dialoging is important. It is also being involved in creative work that addresses our vision about the world and what it can be.

But how do we get there? Keeping in mind the many impediments listed by the participants in the previous research question, the following are their suggestions for bringing transformative song-making into elementary and preschools:

1. *Demand good music teachers in every school:*

David begins his recipe for change with a call for more music teachers, since being denied music is the same as being “deprived of an education:”

Educators and parents need to demand that every school have music teachers --- good ones --- and that every student gets their fair share of music time alongside other subjects. We need to recognize that everyone needs musical experiences, and that there are many people who learn best through music. If they are denied music, they are in fact deprived of an education!

2. *Music teachers for singing too:*

As noted earlier, music teachers that are in public schools tend to ignore singing over band and orchestra, ignoring the long and important tradition of singing in elementary schools that Jacki referred to earlier. Children's musicians in this study emphasize the need for adults to teach children to *love* singing, even more important than the skills of singing themselves.

3. *Rethink the entire role of music in education:*

In an opinion echoed by other participants, David asserts that we need to "change the way we look at music in the context of education," including two important considerations: (1) Music is not a frill, and 2) Music is a skill, not a "gift":

First of all, we need to see music --- and all the arts --- as a central part of education - not a "special" subject or a frill. I'm hopeful that the growing acceptance of Howard Gardner's ideas about multiple intelligences will help bring about this change - the concept that individual children learn best through different disciplines means that if we marginalize or cut out music from the curriculum, we are depriving a segment of students of their optimal mode of learning.

Secondly, we need to see music as a skill rather than a gift --- as something that can be learned. When we make this change, we open music up to a much wider segment of the population than the few for whom music comes "easily".

I think these changes can come from teachers, starting with changing teacher training in both music education and general education (for classroom teachers). I also feel that it can come from just about anywhere - parents, visiting artists, administration, etc.

4. *Bring forward the message of social responsibility and social justice:*

Once schools accept the importance of teaching their students the values of fairness and making the world a better place, it becomes natural to use song-making as one important avenue to heightening their awareness.

David adds, “when musicians, educators and parents are aware of music which can help us imagine a more just world, then we need to spread the word about that music by every means possible.”

5. *Continue and increase the role of outside artists and musicians:*

Jacki’s experience tells her that in order to bring about the kind of changes David is talking about, “you have to bring in people from the outside” who are specialists in song leading. In fact, she believes that music teachers are not apt to take up the role of teaching social justice, nor can they do it as well as “real” artists and musicians who have a proven track record in schools and authentic experiences to share with children. She argues:

You have to say to the schools, “Some teachers do some things very, very well. But singing nowadays, and having a collection of songs at your fingertips, is a specialty.” The older the kids are, the more it’s important to have somebody that knows what they are doing and has a connection to it. I think there’s a role for the non-institutional person to come into elementary and pre-schools, and I think it’s not just in music. All the arts should have real artists and real musicians and not music teachers.

Bonnie agrees that musicians like her and others fill an important role that is not necessarily going to be filled by more traditional music educators and full-time district employees. She remarked earlier that new arts money that is creeping back into California schools in recent years is not going to support the kind of musicians who are members of the Children’s Music Network. Instead, she calls for a renewed collaboration between artists and schools:

I think that there always needs to be the role of the artist in residence, of people who aren’t full-time district employee teachers. The job that needs to get done that we’re talking about --- the

experience of children making participatory music that embodies fairness in its form, and that draws on the tradition of music as a force for justice and for inclusion and change --- I think there are a lot of different people that can bring that to children. I think some classroom teachers will bring that to children, because they love music, because they come from social-change backgrounds. Many would like to, but don't have the musical confidence to do so. Some don't see that as part of their job as teachers.

So I think there will always be a role for *outside* artists to come into schools as artists in residence, as assembly providers, as workshop leaders --- people who will not be spending all their time in a classroom. Through a collaboration of classroom teachers who do this, and classroom teachers who *don't* do it but *value* it and want help to make it happen for their students, that's how it can happen.

6. *Support classroom teachers who lack confidence in song-making:*

The important role of outside artists does not diminish the importance of encouraging classroom teachers to use songs and other natural methods to cultivate "optimal learning environments" for all their students (Ruiz et. al., 1996). As we have seen in the responses to Research Question #6, one of the greatest concerns of all the participants is that "classroom teachers are not singing with their children." As noted earlier, one of the reasons that so few teachers teach through songs is the overwhelming pressure on teachers and administrators to raise student test scores in reading and math, leaving little time for music, much less science or social studies. This issue is part of the community struggle against high stakes testing and curriculum (Kohn, 1999).

The other cause --- classroom teachers' lack of experience, training, resources, confidence --- is something that the participants are already involved in and have much to say about. Most have done workshops for teachers, participated as artists-in-residence at schools, collaborated with classroom teachers on specific projects, and visited hundred of classrooms



where they interact with students and teachers. Speaking from this experience, Ella talks about the problem of teachers who say “I can’t,” and how she guides them around this roadblock with basic rhythms and participation ideas:

Many times when I’m going to give a music workshop, right away people say, “I can’t, I haven’t had any musical training.” I tell them, “I had no formal musical training either.” I just start out with basic rhythms with the teachers. Before we get all complicated with instruments and such, I tell them, “You can snap your fingers, you can pat your foot, you can beat your chest, you can do all these kinds of things. Most of us sing in the bathroom, in the shower.”

It’s just like with children; they shouldn’t get something too difficult in the beginning. Let’s concentrate on early, early childhood songs we’ve talked about before like “Twinkle, Twinkle.” Poetry too. Children love *Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water*.

She tells classroom teaches to not worry about having a great voice, and encourages them to use recorded music to assist them in getting started, to complement --- not replace --- their own version of song-making:

The thing is, you’re not there to entertain kids. Don’t think that you have to have the best voice. Then make use of your favorite CDs and videos and whatnot, but this is only as a complement to your teaching, not to replace you.

Finally, she reminds teachers that by asking a parent, grandparent or other guest to help teach a song or tell a story to children, a bridge as grand as the Golden Gate is constructed between the home and school:

Don’t forget about the mothers and grandparents who are in the community that are just flowing with the stories that they can share. This will make a program and pretty soon the music will come.

Suni has also worked extensively with teachers. She and the researcher talk about a “hidden repertoire” of songs that many people may know, but have repressed because they think, “I don’t sing,” or simply

because they can't recall the tune or lyrics for lack of practice. Song leaders know that it is *practice* (and good songbooks) that keeps these elements fresh in their memory. The song-makers role, then, is to remind others of what they may already know, to coax their memory with melodies and humor, to dust off the hidden repertoire of songs that most people carry somewhere below the surface, to recreate the physical sensation of being surrounded by human voices in harmony --- in teacher parlance, to tap into their prior knowledge. Suni shares how she helps educators "go into the interior of their hearts" and childhoods to rediscover this lost repertoire:

When asked, many teachers say, "No, I don't know any songs for children. No, I don't sing." But they have so much inside that they didn't know they have. That's what us as musicians and singers can do – to allow, to help them go into the interior of their hearts. They have to go into their childhoods, sometimes, to discover and rediscover the child they have inside and bring that child back. All of a sudden they say, "I know that old song." They have a whole repertoire inside that they didn't know they had!

Even a workshop can be an opportunity to rediscover this, when facilitated by a talented song-maker like Suni, who asks teachers, "Do you speak? If you speak, then you can sing. It's just like my voice teacher taught me, *Si canta como si parla* --- you sing as you talk." Suni then shares a gift of an unpublished poem, also inspired by her voice teacher, that she has written to help others learn to sing. Suni and the researcher translated it into English after our final dialogue in Los Angeles:

Clase de CantoSinging Class

By Suni Paz, 1/1/90

*Para cantar  
es necesario respirar.*

To sing  
it is necessary to breathe.

*No de lo alto de la nariz  
sino de raíz.*

Not from the top of your nose  
but from the root of sound.

*Del esternón  
en diagonal al corazón*

From the sternum  
diagonally to the heart.

*Desde el plexo solar  
donde el sol tiene su hogar.*

From the solar plexus  
where the sun has its cradle.

*Para cantar  
abre la boca de par en par.*

To sing  
open your mouth wide.

*Baja la lengua  
que no intervenga.*

Lower your tongue  
so it will not interfere.

*Relaja el hombro  
bien hacia el fondo.*

Relax your shoulders  
way back.

*Y alza el cachete  
donde te pones el colorete.*

Raise your cheeks  
where you blush.

*Y este consejo;  
deja al sonido*

And this advice;  
let the sound

*llegar al entrecejo,  
ese es su nido.*

rest between your eyebrows,  
its nest.

*Piensa en "amor"  
y tu cantar saldrá mejor.*

Think about "love"  
and your singing will come out  
much better.

7. *Increase contact time between classroom and music specialists and emphasize participation:*

Bonnie recalls the problem of teachers who are unable or unwilling to take advantage of music teachers and visiting guest musicians that come

into the classroom, or provide school assemblies. Bonnie winces a little as she airs her frustration about some teachers who do not pay attention to the few opportunities presented to them, or who refuse to participate and learn how to infuse singing into their teaching. She pleads with teachers to nurture their own artistic creativity and model this for their students by participating in the group activities:

When other people come in to do music, it's not a time to catch up on correcting papers. I'm not putting teachers down for this, because I know they have enormous pressures. But if only teachers would realize that this is about *participation*. If you want children to value participation, you can't sit in the back and do whatever you need to do while the guest artist comes in. You've got to participate.

There is something about a generosity of the spirit, that undivided consuming focus of attention – which is what the arts are about. You don't become a composer when you're talking on the phone or watching TV; you really have to give yourself undividedly to the work of creativity. And music is especially that way, because you do it in a group. You don't go off and work on your computer. You do it while connected to other people. You're still focusing only on what that group is creating together. If you want children to be able to sustain their interest, it's good for teachers to be there. They've got to be there.

Bonnie sees her role as pushing teachers, especially new ones, to set aside their inhibitions and participate in singing experiences with their students:

It's really hard to get them to do that. I think they don't think it's important. I think they're embarrassed and uncomfortable singing because they had lousy music education themselves. I constantly hear, "It's not my thing," or, "I'm not good at this," or, "You don't want to hear me sing," or, "Oh God, you'll be happier if I don't."

People make these jokes all the time and you have to say, "Yep. I really *do* want to hear you sing! You've gotta have singing experience some place in your life. You're not going to do it just because you read in an education textbook that children need to sing."

In a less sanguine commentary, Jacki shares her frustration at having given too many workshops to teachers who didn't seem to "get it":

You know, I think it's hopeless. The teachers who get it get it, and the teachers who don't, never will. I wouldn't have said that 20 years ago, but I see too many "tired" teachers, teachers-on-hold who teach by the book, who have been beaten down by the system and some who are simply in the system for the retirement and benefits.

Having said that, you have to never give up. Now I look more for sparking one or two or three teachers rather than trying to save the whole world. I get a lot of flack for introducing the Civil Rights Movement to young kids who don't know about it yet. It's controversial, and many teachers worry about how to answer the inevitable questions. In addition to all the usual obstacles they face, they now have to spend more and more time on testing and preparing for testing. All the more reason we need more singing!

Relating her song-making workshops to transformative education and the growing national movement that is questioning the wisdom of "high-stakes testing," (Kohn, 1999) Jacki concludes:

So if I can reach a few teachers in a workshop who are ready to sing, tell stories, listen to their kids' questions and ideas, then I feel I've been successful. And perhaps I will have helped support them to rise up against the high-stakes testing.

8. *Strengthen partnerships between schools and the arts community:* Barb hears about the severe problems of music and other art programs in schools all over the country, but contrasts this with the strong partnerships that continue in her community of Minneapolis --- a likely model for other cities and states:

I know people talk about this trend in other parts of the country. I don't think it's been as true in Minneapolis. There's really a very strong arts community there and a real commitment to the arts that is different than in other states. When I go into schools, for instance, there are music teachers there and I'm working with them. There are partnerships that are happening -- both with independent artists and with the music teachers and other

classroom teachers to try and integrate the arts. So there's been a big push, especially in the last 6-7 years in Minneapolis, for really using the arts to teach, because of the many ways that kids learn. There cannot be just one approach, and the arts can be key to speaking to how kids learn.

A promising example of how this can be done, even in California's high-stakes testing environment, is being provided in the Oakland public schools by Music in the Schools (MITS), an outgrowth of the Oakland Youth Symphony. With a staff of ten and a focus on the African contributions to American culture, MIT has been doing professional development for elementary teachers, music classes and Arts Intern workshops for the past three years. In their first newsletter, MITS Director Angela Wellman wrote, "Indubitably, the arts are a non-negotiable requirement for the complete, holistic development of we humans," and expresses pride in "a successful year of student performance, creativity, and excellence generated and nurtured through music learning" (Wellman, p.1).

9. *Infuse transformative song-making into adult education, college and teacher preparation course:* Finally, many children's musicians emphasize the importance of bringing the issues and skill-building of song-making into adult classes which prepare classroom teacher, music teachers, early childhood educators and others who work with children. Bonnie, for example, shares how she brings this practice into the center of her community college classes to prepare early childhood teachers --- sometimes producing surprising results:

I taught them “This Little Light of Mine” and they loved it--- I used the video “We Shall Overcome”. Do you know that video? It’s fabulous, narrated by Harry Belafonte. Everybody is in it; Bernice Reagon, Pete Seeger, clips from the late 50’s and 60’s and in the present talking about those times. Then I taught them “Skip to My Lou” and not one of them, even those born here in US, knew it.

Jackie & I have talked a lot about how great these songs are for early childhood education: they’re add on, they’re singable in a minute, they have great spirit. “This Little Light of Mine” and “Back of the Bus” tell a great story in a way that a 3-4 year old can participate in.

That was a powerful moment, finding out that the native-born students had as little clue of this aspect of American Civil Rights history as the immigrants. I have no African American students in this class, but my U.S. born students didn’t know anything about the Civil Rights Movement.

The researcher, likewise, has brought the practice of song-making into the multicultural and multilingual teacher in-service classes he teaches at California State University Sacramento, one of the largest teacher education schools in the U.S. It has been gratifying to see the response from the university students and returning teachers who are in the program --- especially when they learn how fun and effective songs, chants and poetry are with culturally and linguistically diverse students who make up over half the K-12 student population in California.

Speaking for her fellow children’s musicians, Bonnie emphasizes the importance “for us to be involved” in working with teachers at all levels:

I think there’s a real need for us to be involved. We really need to be involved in teacher training and teacher education programs, because so many teachers don’t sing and feel uncomfortable singing. We can teach about how music hooks into literacy connections, or music for music, or hooks into physical education programs --- singing games are great physical education . We need, as residents and guest workshop leaders, to really be infiltrating these teacher education programs in a much, much bigger way than we are.

There again, we may not be full-time instructors in them; we may be guest presenters and guest artists and weekend workshop leaders – we don't know the forms yet. But I think we're too far removed from the education of teachers at the present time.

Bonnie concludes by reemphasizing that teacher training is where her generation of transformative song-makers needs to be at this time to have a "larger influence" in the future on more teachers and more children:

I think teacher training is really the place that needs the most attention. It's important to be on the rug with the little kids and that will continue to need our attention too. But I think we're of an age where now it's time to try to be influencing a sort of mega-picture. If we're not paying attention to how teachers are trained we won't have that larger impact. It will just be dependent on the individuals who work directly with kids.

### Solidarity and Outreach for the Children's Music Network

Again and again the participants make reference to the importance of the Children's Music Network (CMN) as the vehicle that has best helped them to involve children in singing for social justice. They talk about CMN as an organization of social-activists and fellow children's musicians where they can define the issues, share and learn the best songs and song-making skills, disseminate these values and songs through the *Pass it On! Journal*, and support each other. They meet once a year in a national gathering, and another time in regional gatherings to swap songs, share expertise in workshops, and plan for a more effective presence in children's lives. All participants in this study except Francisco have been leading members in CMN for many years and acknowledge the debt they owe to its existence. The researcher of this study also became acquainted with CMN through the research process, attended three Gatherings in



California and New York to conduct dialogues and research, and is currently a member. These findings would be incomplete, then, without a brief summary of the CMN's self-definition and a few comments by the participants about the role this organization plays in their lives and lifework. According to CMN's *Pass it*

*On:*

In the 1980's, like minded teachers, performers, songwriters, radio hosts and parents who cared about the quality and content of children's music found each other...and established a group of dedicated individuals that soon became the Children's Music Network --- "CMN" --- a nonprofit association that now has members across the United States, Canada, and elsewhere....

We meet and stay in touch to share songs and ideas about children's music ... and to be a positive catalyst for education and community-building through music....

We recognize children's music as a powerful means of encouraging cooperation ...celebrating diversity ... building self-esteem ...promoting respect and responsibility for our environment ... and cultivating an understanding of nonviolence and social justice.

Bonnie, who is the "Songs Editor" and sits on the Board of Directors for CMN, says, "We're kind of a funny animal. Are we a social change organization? Are we an educational organization? Are we an arts organization? We are all those things and we're not willing to say we are more one than another, or one to the exclusion of the other."

Pete, longtime advisor, supporter and friendly critic of the CMN, in his keynote address in October 2000, told the National Gathering of the faithful in Warwick, New York, these optimistic words about their efforts:

The job of saving the world is not going to be done by the big organizations. You attract too many power hungry people. If there is a world here in a hundred or two hundred years it will be thanks to tens of millions of little organizations.

I think that our big job will be to keep on doing what we're doing right now. We are a very important small part of America --- and reaching people in a way that the big organizations haven't been able to reach.

Think of the Music Educators National Conference with 70,000 members and an annual convention with 5-6,000 people. They listen to some wonderful music and they hear some good words, but they're locked into a system where they can't do a lot of things they'd like to do. "You must teach this, you must teach that," [they are told]. We are comparatively liberated, as much as anybody can be in this world. Can you show a family what fun it is to sit around and sing family songs?

Looking out at the predominantly European-American members in the room, Seeger grew serious as he told them, "I think we must figure out how to make our gatherings representative. We represent a good segment of America, but we're not a rainbow organization yet."

### Summary

This final question elicited a wide range of suggestions from participants in several areas. They discussed the need for musicians, educators and parents to be involved in progressive political activism that focuses on arts and education issues --- including getting elected to schools boards and "getting money into the schools for music and arts." They also underscored the essential role of parents in singing with their children at home and involving them in the cultural activities of the wider community, especially in fostering primary languages and non-mainstream culture that is not emphasized in the schools.

The primary focus of the participants' comments, however, was about how to remove the impediments to children's singing in schools. These finding will be addressed in Chapter IV as Recommendations for Action. Following this important call for action, the participants also reflected on the essential role of the Children's Music Network (CMN) in supporting their work and promoting this social agenda for children and schools.

### Summing up the Praxis for Hope

In concluding the findings drawn and analyzed from the participants of this study, one finds a consistent pattern of optimism and determination to continue the work and play of song-making with children. This is perhaps one of the most important themes that can be drawn from the dialogues and research --- that these individuals are indeed messengers of hope. Summing up his thoughts about working in schools with his wife Jenny, David expresses his belief that “our core values are really appreciated and reinforced in schools.” He elaborates on the experiential basis for his optimism:

In terms of imagining a more just world, I am heartened by the work that I see going on in schools already. One of the reasons that we have chosen to work with children, and particularly in educational settings, is that we found (a bit to our surprise) that so many of our core values are really appreciated and reinforced in schools. We find that our themes of peace & conflict resolution, multiculturalism & diversity, respect for the environment, social responsibility, and telling a “people’s history” all feel very much at home in schools. And I am referring to a wide range of schools: urban, rural and suburban; public and private; secular and religious.

Certainly, there is much improvement to be made in this area, particularly when we look at specific areas such as homophobia or competition. However, I feel fairly optimistic about the role of schools in fostering a sense of social responsibility.

Francisco and others emphasize the honor they feel at being able to share uplifting music with children and their families, the joy at being the song leader, of creating what he calls “a little window into the utopia for which we work,” of what Ella described earlier as receiving “a warm handshake and the sincerity” from the children she sings with. Francisco shares this vision of what he works for:

In the cultural work, I love this action of having fun with the children, because fun is contagious and parents begin having fun and are more able to look at their problems in a different way.

It creates the space we all yearn for, a little window into the utopia for which we work. And I believe the more we create these little windows of friendship and support --- not simply tolerance but understanding and collaboration --- the more we make this harmony a permanent reality.

Francisco invokes the idea of children and adults “visualizing” long-term peace and justice in society, but, in the short run, singing a favorite song to help us get there:

I really believe we need to consistently create those moments of what it might be like for people to be able to really visualize peace, justice and all those good things that make us human. But given that this is a long task, in the meantime before that we get all that done, I love singing “*De Colores*” with the children. It never seems to grow old.

*Y por eso los grandes amores  
de muchos colores me gustan a mi.*

Ruth also feels hopeful and “privileged” to be doing her work with Music Mobile --- what she calls “evidence of decency” that give others hope:

I think part of the hopefulness I see in my work is that it’s really public and people know Music Mobile and understand on some level what it is I’m trying to do. And yet I’m doing this work and I am lucky and privileged to do it. People are yearning to see evidence of decency and that’s part of what we do. We’re evidence of that.

Bonnie points to other manifestations of hope --- the still-strong example of Pete and his CMN “kids,” the contributions of younger singers like David and his wife Jenny, the Smithsonian Folkways’ reissuing of the classic recordings of children’s music by Suni, Ella and Pete. And then there’s another family concert to plan, another CMN gathering to organize, another song to sing.

“But who will carry the torch next,” Bonnie is asked? She pauses, thinks, and then cautions that we must be careful lest we overlook those who are bearing

artistic torches all around us. She observes that the new song-makers ---  
 Arrested Development, Rage Against the Machine, Ani de Franco, Indigo Girls,  
*Maná* --- are likely to look and sound very different than the current  
 membership of CMN:

We have to be careful that we don't think that it has to look just like us. There are people who are doing rap music and who are addressing these core values and core problems that you and I have just talked about. But they may not know who Pete Seeger is. We need to make sure that they *do* know who Pete Seeger, or more importantly that we embrace the value of their work as carrying on that musical tradition of participatory music that's connected to social justice and connected to inclusion, that's connected to fairness and social change.

And what of Pete, who is not likely to be forgotten for many generations of children, folksingers and song-makers? He admits to not being so Pollyanna - optimistic as he once was, but confides:

Well, in my optimistic moments, I think the world will survive. And I think music will be one of the main reasons, because you can leave barriers of language, religion, politics and ethnic differences of all sorts behind --- just the way good food can.

I think that if we can get young people to realize just how much fun we can have with music, then it can in many ways save your life when you feel discouraged. Whether it's a sad song or a happy song, a serious song or a funny song, or a mix of them all....I think if children can get this from us, it will help them live long lives, and productive lives, and constructive lives.

*One grain of sand,  
 One grain of sand, in all the world,  
 One grain of sand,  
 One little boy, one little girl.*

*From "One Little Grain of Sand" (Seeger, 1993)*

**CHAPTER VI**  
**SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS,**  
**RECOMMENDATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS**

Summary

The purpose of this study has been to investigate the perspectives of nine leading children’s musicians on how they go about singing and talking with preschool and elementary-aged children about social justice issues, the impediments they perceive to this transformative practice in schools and society, and how we as parents, educators and song-makers can bring about changes that improve the ability of children to sing for social justice in U.S. schools and society. Seven research questions were designed to explore these issues with the experienced song-makers, with the goal of gaining a deeper understanding of the issues involved, as well as formulating specific recommendations for all stakeholders in education to consider.

This concluding chapter has an additional goal: to explicitly bring in my voice and analysis as the researcher to ponder the implications of the rich data. The following pages of this chapter then both review and analyze the findings in Chapter 5 and offer specific suggestions for change as “recommendations for action,” and “recommendations for further study.” These are followed by some “reflections on the findings” and “reflections on the process” by both the musician participants and by myself as researcher and co-participant.

The theoretical framework of the study was constructed from three basic sources --- transformative education, arts and music education, and folk music ---

discussed in Chapter II as three legs to a theoretical music stand. The study used a participatory research design, described in Chapter III, which allowed me formulate the research questions, conduct dialogues with the participants using these questions as a beginning point, and later return to the participants for their evaluation and commentary on the tentative findings and conclusions.

Originally, five participants were asked to take part in the study. They accepted the invitation and were able to engage in at least two research dialogues, as well as participating through additional correspondence and phone conversations. Four more song-makers were asked to become participants as the research unfolded, bringing the total to nine. The dialogues were carried out over a nine-month period in 2000 and 2001 in the musician's hometowns --- Oakland, Los Angeles and Chicago --- and during three different gatherings of the Children's Music Network in Petaluma and Nevada City, California, and in Warwick, New York. Consequently, travel was a significant aspect of the research, as reflected in the portraits of the participants in Chapter IV. In addition, email, letters, and phone calls were invaluable. These contacts with the participants have produced a rich body of more than 250 pages of single-spaced written transcripts, most of it transcribed from audiotaped dialogues. In addition, I have benefited from a wealth of background material from the participants' recorded music, published books and articles, unpublished poems, back issues of the CMN journal *Pass it On!*, and in the case of Bonnie Lockhart (1998), an invaluable master's thesis on a related topic. Finally, the participatory research process has allowed me to renew several old friendships and establish new ones with these inspiring children's song-makers and their work throughout the United States.

As the researcher, who is also a musician, bilingual classroom teacher, and now university professor of multicultural education, I have played an active role in this study so close to my heart. In drawing up the research questions, contacting the participants, dialoguing with the song-makers, transcribing their words, and now summarizing the conclusions and implications, I have been a co-participant as well as a facilitator. Up to this point I have tried to keep my voice in the background in order to bring the participants' stories to center stage. Now, however, comes an opportunity to briefly comment on the findings of Chapter V and make my own explicit reflections at the end of this chapter.

### Conclusions

The most important conclusions that I draw from meeting and dialoguing with the song-makers who participated in this study are that they *are* messengers of hope, and that their messages are central to the task of transformative education. Connected as they are to the traditions of folk music and the lessons of people's history, they play an invaluable and perhaps unique role in linking today's generation of students and educators to what is possible in a troubled world. As artists and poets, storytellers and masters of audience participation, they demonstrate to young children what the creative process is all about and invite them to follow. Therein lies a modeling of pedagogy that teachers cannot afford to miss. Furthermore, children's musicians are conscious of their role in passing on the love of singing and of spirit of social activism to children and other adults, as revealed by their articulate responses to the research questions, their involvement in schools and music advocacy for children, and most profoundly of all, their songs and song-making with children.



### “The Choir”

While the degree of consistency of the participants’ responses to the research questions may seem striking to some --- and unrepresentative to others --- it is not hard to understand. As stated earlier, these individuals were sought out because of their commitment to social justice and involvement with children. They are a panorama of what has been called the Progressive Left, with similar views on social and economic issues because, in part, they have experienced a common era of popular movements from the 1930’s to the 1960’s and up to the present day. In their words we can hear the accumulated experiences of Labor and progressive political movements, the Civil Rights mass movements led by African American, Chicano, Native American and other oppressed communities, the Anti-War, Anti-Imperialist and Peace Movements, the Feminist and Environmental Movements, the Gay Rights and Language Rights Movements, to mention only the major struggles for democracy in the U.S. They share the experience of being song-makers to these mostly-disparate grassroots communities, yet are united through their common beliefs, their sense of a shared folk music history, and, finally, their membership in organizations such as the Children’s Music Network.

As one advisor to this study has observed, “You don’t have nine soloists. You have a choir!”

### Solo Voices

At the same time, each of the participants expressed different priorities, congruent with their personal histories, regarding how they define social justice and what they feel is most important for children. There is Pete’s belief in the power of

songs to shake the mighty, and his insistence that children learn to speak out against injustice and become independent thinkers --- but have a rip-roaring fun time while doing it. There is Ella's reaching out to the world from her South Side Chicago community, bearing the message that no child should be lost. There is Suni and Francisco's sensitivity to Latino linguistic issues and cultural/musical traditions, set against a backdrop of life in the Mexican borderlands and in Latin America. There is Jacki's commitment to pass on the authentic lessons of Civil Rights, and David's keen understanding of music education. There is Ruth's voice reminding us of how violent the streets have become for children, and how much they and their families need the hope of her Music Mobile and similar efforts. There is Barb's dedication to heal some of the pain through peaceful song-making. And there is Bonnie, singing on the rug with young children in the mornings and with their teachers in the evenings, talking to all of them about creativity and participatory culture and making a difference.

### The Art & Craft of Song-Making

The findings also provided a smorgasbord of ideas, essential songs and song characteristics, and song-making techniques for experienced and novice children's musicians, whether they be out on tour or in the classroom. The portraits and quotations from the participants offered personal insights on how to be as gentle and inclusive as Ella, as passionate and poetic as Suni, as masterful a performer as Pete and Ruth, as good a storyteller as Jacki, as dedicated to children as David and Barb, as personally insightful as Bonnie and Francisco.

Much more can and should be said about the craft of mixing teaching and singing with children, of storytelling and songwriting, of games and song-leading.

Instead, serious students can look in the References, the Appendix, and throughout this study for further tips. They can begin by reading the books of Malvina Reynolds, Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie, or listen to the recordings of the participants and other links in the chain of people's music. They can seek out the local song-makers that are out there in their own communities and schools, or attend a meeting of the Children's Music Network and similar organizations. We all probably know a few songs to begin our own list with. For more ideas, try out the 1200 songs "with words, chords and sources" in *Rise Up Singing: The Group Singing Songbook* (Blood and Patterson, 1992), or join *Sing Out* magazine.

In the end, I believe the main lesson of how to do transformative song-making with children is to just start singing and learning with children, having confidence in your own love of music and social justice, as well as surrounding yourself with as many good songs and singers as possible.

#### Dramatic Tensions in Song-Makers' Lives

The findings also point toward many ambiguities in the lives of progressive song-makers, as they resolve on a nearly daily basis the tensions they referred to between:

- teaching and "preaching"
- participation and performance
- popular organizing and popular music
- counterculture and the mainstream
- the world of children and the world of adults
- love and anger

- humor and the seriousness of life
- career and avocation

These are just some of the dramatic contradictions that were brought to light by these dialogues, and suggest not only how preliminary this exploration has been, but how fruitful further research in this area can be. They also point to the complexity of each participant and how significant it is that they have made individual decisions that lead them to a common commitment to sing with children.

### Recommendations for Action

As we have seen, the findings have produced and inspired an extensive list of Recommendations for Action. These are grouped according to the area of primary responsibility for each: parents and the wider community, public elementary and preschools, teacher education programs at colleges and universities, and children's music advocacy organizations. The following list is not meant to be inclusive of every option for action, but rather flow from the study's findings and encourage further ideas from readers. In the spirit of Paulo Freire (1970, 1997), it is an invitation for us to become subjects of our own history.

#### Parents and Wider Community

1. Make singing part of your family life, sing with your children, pass on family language, culture and values, attend artistic events in your community, and obtain the kind of recorded music that affirms life. Don't say, "I can't sing," unless you want your kids to say the same. The best way is to surround your children with music and help them become creative music-makers, rather than

passive music-consumers. Parents who are teachers, do the same with your school family.

2. Become politically active at your children's schools, with your local school board and at higher levels to advocate for singing and the arts as essential parts of all children's education.
3. Demand that every school has well trained and motivated music teachers who encourage singing and are acquainted with music that reflects the social justice and multicultural values of the community they serve.
4. Encourage your children's classroom teachers to bring songs and other expressions of people's culture into their daily teaching. If they don't feel confident or are not acquainted with positive participatory music, share a CD from one of the participants in this study, or share a song or two yourself.
5. Volunteer at your local school to promote song-making by visiting a classroom, organizing an assembly for a visiting artist, and promoting Artists in Residence and other such community-school partnerships.
6. Acquaint yourself with the best in children's music by looking into resources such as the Smithsonian/Folkways Children's Collection, the Children's Music Network, and many others available online or at your local bookstore.

### Elementary and Preschools

1. Rethink the role of singing and the arts as being one of the main ways to reach all children --- to create a multicultural community, encourage peacemaking and problem-solving, teach the values of social justice and service to the community, unite the curriculum, and make school a more fun place to be for students and

staff. Make it part of your school philosophy and allow it to reshape your school environment. Get rid of the ideas that only the “gifted” can sing and that music is another contest to see who is the best competitor.

2. Hire well rounded music teachers in every school who can support a new vision of music education and singing by working closely with classroom teachers and staff to plan assemblies, school-wide group singing, community programs, and partnerships with outside artists. If there are no credentialed music teachers available who can do this, look to outside artists and song-makers, as many schools already do. Music teachers should be trainers and motivators, not roving “prep” teachers who never get to interact with the regular classroom teachers.
3. Select songs which exhibit some of the essential characteristics of good songs: singable melody, good rhythm, repetitive form, humorous, balanced between specific and universal, respectful of children’s intelligence, authentic, adaptable, multicultural and multilingual, familiar enough to sing, and telling a good story about real people.
4. Encourage classroom teachers to meet the needs of their students by integrating fun and meaningful songs and other art forms into their everyday teaching. This can be done through collaborations with music/singing teachers and outside song-makers, school in-service trainings, district workshops and other means. Remind teachers that children follow their example; participation is essential. Hire teachers who are excited about reaching their students through the arts.
5. Communicate to colleges, universities and credentialing institutions that new teachers, especially those teaching ethnically and linguistically diverse children,

need preparation to be able teach to the whole child, including through music and kinesthetic modalities that are addressed through song-making.

6. Provide teachers with resources to involve children in singing, including music recordings, songbooks and capable people to demonstrate their use. Make sure that a good part of these resources reflect the folk music traditions of the United States and the world community, which will in turn reflect enduring values of social justice.
7. Reach beyond the traditional school environment and build partnerships with a wide variety of artistic and community organizations that can enrich the lives of students and staff. Involve multicultural song-makers like those in this study to help set up short-range programs and long-range partnerships. They are the proven experts in this field and have shared just a small portion of their experience through this research.
8. Design new schools and modify the existing ones to make room for children to sing together.
9. Encourage parents and family members to share their music in school settings, as part of an overall program of having the local school meet the needs of the parents and the surrounding community.
10. Make time each week for staff and children to come together and sing for fun and social justice. It will build community, promote literacy, foster multicultural inclusion, model good pedagogy for teachers, teach social responsibility, and make everyone feel good. (Consequently, it will probably raise test scores too.)

### Teacher Education

1. Advocate and incorporate the actions listed above into your education programs for new and experienced teachers. Support those elementary and preschools who are already doing transformative song-making and ask them to help you.
2. Retool the whole idea of music and arts education along the lines suggested by the participants, kicking out the competitive model of music in favor of one that fosters participation, creativity, imagination and --- here's the most important one --- love of singing.
3. Use transformative song-making as a way to raising the consciousness of new and returning teachers to the central role of social justice in public education. Have students read John Dewey, Maxine Greene, Paulo Freire, Alma Flor Ada, Bonnie Lockhart and Pete Seeger.
4. Bring music and, in particular, singing back to your theory and methods courses as one of the most pleasurable and effective means of teaching children language, social studies, math, science and music. Pre-service teachers need to have singing and other artistic experiences themselves to become effective teachers, especially if they were denied it in their early years. This is essential for classroom teachers at the elementary level and doubly true for music teachers.
5. Prepare teachers of immigrant children and culturally and linguistically diverse students to use songs, poetry, and chants as Total Physical Response activities --- all research-proven techniques of second language acquisition. English learner students are now the majority in California schools, and other states are facing similar challenges.



6. Draw upon children's musicians and other community artists to come in as visiting lecturers, guest artists and part time faculty to share their experiences with pre-service teachers, especially if current faculty are not prepared to teach about transformative song-making. This may involve collaborating with the local arts community and organization such as the Children's Music Network. Some of the most talented song-makers may be classroom and music teachers from nearby public schools, who constitute another rich resource for higher education.

### Children's Music Organizations

1. Make teacher education an increasingly important priority of your organization and member services, as suggested by Bonnie Lockhart.
2. Support and publicize successful partnerships and collaborations of song-makers with local schools and teacher education institutions, such as the one in Minneapolis referred to earlier by Barb Tilsen.
3. Play a direct role in supporting schools and teacher education programs by providing resources, speakers, singers, workshop leaders etc.
4. Continue to support and promote the children's radio programs that are sprouting up all over the country, especially encouraging public radio to take an active and independent role in this area.
5. Examine the role that song-making has in fostering children's vocabulary, reading, and academics. It may not be the main reason for singing, but it's a wonderful byproduct.
6. Take seriously the mentoring role that song-makers can play in not only local schools and districts, but in colleges and universities, as outlined above. Schools

should know that you have got the tools and the heart to facilitate learning through music. Your values will be imbedded in what you do.

7. Continue your efforts, as Pete Seeger suggested in Warwick, to become the “rainbow organization” you envision.

### Recommendations for Further Study

The three-year process of undertaking this research with children’s song-makers has uncovered many areas that the researcher would have liked to look into more, but that were outside the delimitations set by this study. In addition, the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for action have produced other areas that require further investigation and clarification. These recommendations are posed for further study:

1. Approach a similar study with classroom teachers as the participants; perhaps involving both those who already use song-making in their teaching, and those who do not. This would be very valuable in guiding teacher education programs, both pre-service and in-service. It would also be valuable to update the research on pre-service teachers’ attitudes towards teaching music and the arts cited in this study (Vandenburg, 1991).
2. Use children as participants in a similar study to explore their perspectives and experiences with singing and learning about social justice issues. A good place to begin is with Patricia Shehan Campbell’s *Songs in Their Heads: Music and its Meaning in Children’s Lives* (1998).
3. Include other children’s musicians as participants in parallel or contrastive studies to both test and deepen the findings of this research. This is especially

- important to bring in the perspectives of Native American, Asian, more African American, Arab American and other song-makers not represented in this study.
4. Focus on the middle school and high school as another important extension of this research, just as this study focused on the preschool and elementary school. See high school teacher Bob Peterson's article in *Rethinking Schools*, "Songs with a Global Conscience" (Peterson, 2001) as an excellent point of departure. Look at back issues of this valuable teacher-made newspaper for many more ideas.
  5. Focus research on teacher education programs across the United States, studying how well they prepare teachers for addressing (a) song-making, and (b) teaching children about social justice.
  6. Do a case study of several excellent partnerships between local art communities and schools, such as the ones Barb Tilsen described in Minneapolis, Minnesota and the Oakland MITS (Wellman, 2000) program mentioned earlier.
  7. Take a deeper look at how the U.S. folksong movement has historically addressed the needs of children. One avenue of research would be to examine the "Appleseeds" children's column that Pete Seeger has written for *Sing Out!* magazine since 1954.
  8. Investigate who the new song-makers for social justice are, and will likely be in the future. Bonnie Lockhart advised that they won't necessarily look like the participants in this study; in fact, they are likely to be more culturally and musically diverse. This would be a fascinating area of future study.
  9. Do a case study of the Children's Music Network as a viable model for song-making for social justice and children's advocacy.

10. Investigate other organizations that support children's music in the U.S. and other countries.

### Reflections on the Findings

I have been surprised and delighted that such a clear action piece has come out of the research, and that it's tied to teacher education and multicultural issues that are the focus of my new teaching role at the university level. Without knowing it, I guided the research in this direction and, likewise, it brought me to this work of defining and promoting transformative song-making.

A recent trip to Salt Lake City to give a large workshop for school district teachers on "Singing Your Way to English Language Development" for teachers of English Learner students has made me aware of how timely and valuable this research is. Even as California and other states legislate against bilingual education and creative teaching in favor of scripted curriculum designed to push up test scores, many schools and individual teachers will resist the trend and teach their increasingly diverse students by the best methods available --- including through music. I agree with Bonnie, who wrote in the conclusion to her thesis:

**It will take more than songs to bring equity to education. Likewise, I believe it will take more than education to dismantle racism and male supremacy and to create social and economic justice. But surrounding ourselves with music, the music we make with young children, I know we'll find what we need for the long haul.**

This is just the right balance and message. I know that song-making is not the whole package, but it is an artistic fulcrum to move society and a comforting way of building the community solidarity we need to imagine and construct an alternative.

Finally, I think the participants have told a valuable set of stories through this study. I hope that it resonates with educators, musicians, parents and others who are in a position to do something about the recommendations for action and further research.

### Participants' Reflections on the Process

The participatory research model of this study provided an opportunity for the participants to not only shape its outcome, but to also comment on the process. Ada and Buetel (1993) have written from the point of the participants about what it is like to be involved in research of this kind:

When we read the text and realize that our words were being listened to, punctuated, acknowledged, validated, enhanced, or inspired by the mutual relationship in the dialogue, then we see that the nature of what we created was not just a conversation. It was something more than that. The text gives us a clue to our relationship with the world.

Suni, for example, reflected on how the dialogues were “a nice surprise” that stimulated her own self-awareness:

I was surprised to see it all written down. When you asked how I connected my life as an educator, musician and social activist --- well, that tickled me. I'd not had a chance to think about that before. Your question forced me to examine the connections to my teaching and art and activism. It was a nice surprise.

For Ella, who values all the persons she meets and even has a collection of their business cards, the interview process in Chicago was “wonderful.” Barb echoed the words of Francisco and David when she wrote, “I'm honored to be in such great company.” Bonnie wrote after reading and correcting a draft, “It's really been a joy reading this!! It feels like such a validation of my work --- of what I'm all about.” Ruth expressed a similar feeling of validation and pleasure from being “in the

chorus,” and wrote, “I also couldn’t stop myself from adding my own voice throughout. I kept talking to myself and commenting.” Jacki, meanwhile, wrote in her final comments, “I can’t wait for the finished product so I can sit down unhurriedly and really read it.”

Pete was the first to read and offer his revisions to the manuscript, but has the last word here, since he speaks to the unfinished business of researching transformative song-making. On April 19, 2001, he wrote:

Peter --- congrats on a wonderful study. I’m proud to be a part of it. Somewhere you should mention some of the wonderful people you didn’t have time to interview: Jane Sapp (in Springfield, Mass.), Bill Harley (in Providence, R.I.), José Luis Orozco (in San Francisco), and of course there are many, many others.

#### Researcher’s Reflections on the Process

As Pete’s words demonstrate so well, I have been honored to have worked with the participants in this study and by many others in the wider network of children’s musicians and educators for social justice. At every turn I have tried to admit that I know less about this subject than most of the people that I have been surrounded with. As a result, I know a little more and have been able to share some of their collective knowledge.

I have been particularly blessed by the addition of many new and talented people to my circle of friends through the process of this research. Foremost among these are my fellow doctoral students, my professors and advisors, and my nine participants. As is usually the case in the research process, I am aware that I have been the primary beneficiary of its knowledge so far. As part of my commitment to

participatory research and to social justice, I look forward to “giving back” this rich legacy in future years.

I could not have imagined the impact that the doctoral process in general would have on my life. Seemingly without my intervention, it has taken me from my third grade bilingual classroom in Galt, California, when I began the process, to the university classroom at California State University, Sacramento where I am now “training” teachers in bilingual and multicultural education. Specifically, the children’s music topic has helped me review my own experiences with music and place them in a historical and educational perspective. As a result, I’ve come to take my own song-making more seriously, including my resolution to share its values with more people on an ongoing basis, especially with in-service teachers, teachers in schools, and with children.

My own teenage children, Lily and Ben, have literally grown-up during this research process, witnesses to the joys and challenges of life-long learning. My wife Joy has lovingly allowed me to turn our bedroom into a study and write as many words as I’ve got in me --- until it’s done. On a very personal level, the hardest part of this process has been the loss of my father during my research trip to Warwick, New York, and the subsequent research demands of what he called, “putting the seat of the pants to the seat of the chair,” in spite of emotions to the contrary. He was a singer and a writer *and* a preacher, so I know he understands and would be proud of what this project represents.

During the many years that he and my mother did their radio program, “A Good Word and a Song,” my father’s theme song, and a mighty good one for the close of this study, was “Without a Song.”

*Without a song, the day would never end,  
Without a song, the road would never bend,  
When things go wrong a man ain't got a friend  
Without a song.*

*I got my trouble and woe  
But sure as I know  
The Jordan will roll.*

*I'll get along  
As long as a song  
Is strong in my soul.*

*I'll never know what makes the rain to fall  
I'll never know what makes the grass so tall;  
I only know there ain't no love at all  
Without a song.*

Lyrics by William Rose & Edward Eliscu, music by  
Vincent Youmans from the musical play, "Great Day."



## REFERENCES

- A complete education. (2000, July 30). *Sacramento Bee*, p. I-4.
- Ada, A.F. (1997). *Gathering the sun: An alphabet in Spanish and English*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books. CD (1999). Westlake, Ohio: Del Sol Books.
- Ada, A. F. & Beutel, C.M. (1993). *Participatory research as a dialogue for social action*. San Francisco, CA: Alma Flor Ada and Constance M. Beutel.
- Ada, A.F. & Campoy, F.I. (1998). *Música amiga: Pedagogía creadora a través de la canción*. San Francisco, California: Del Sol Publishing.
- Ada, A. F. & Campoy, F. I. (in press). *Authors in the classroom: A transformative education process*. Allyn & Bacon.
- Ada, A.F. & Paz, S. (1990). *Aprender Cantando I-II: El uso de las canciones en la clase*. (Cassette Recording). Sacramento, California: (CABE) California Association for Bilingual Education.
- Amen, B. M. (1982). *The effect of selected factors on the time spent teaching music by elementary classroom teachers*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University.
- Ayres, W. (1998). A Dream That Keeps on Growing --- Myles Horton and Highlander. In W. Ayres, J. A. Hunt, & T. Quinn, *Teaching for social justice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Baez, J. (1987). *And a voice to sing with; A memoir*. New York: Summit Books.
- Baird, P. & McCaughan, E. (1979). *Beyond the border: Mexico and the U.S. today*. Oakland/New York: NACLA.
- Baird, P. (2001, Winter). Mamá lee la historia/Mommy read me the story. *Pass It On!* 16. Evanston, IL: The Children's Music Network.
- Bennet, W.J. (1993). *The book of virtues: A treasury of great moral stories*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Blood, P. and Patterson, A. (1992). *Rise Up Singing: The Group-Singing Song Book*. Bethlehem, PA: A Sing Out Publication.
- Botkin, B. (1963). The Folksong Revival: A symposium. *New York Folklore Quarterly*, Vol. 19.

Breger, J. (2000). *It's Music Time: Tips for Teachers*. Originally prepared for EHA PL 91-230, Title VI-C, Early Childhood Project, Los Angeles Unified School District. Los Angeles, CA: Unpublished

Bryan, A. (1984). *I'm going to sing: Black American spirituals, Volume Two*. New York: Atheneum.

Campbell, P.S. (1998). *Songs in their heads: Music and its meaning in children's lives*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Campbell, P. S. & Scott-Kassner, C. (1995). *Music in childhood: From preschool through the elementary grades*. New York, NY: Schirmer Books.

Cantwell, R. (1996). *When we were good: The folk revival*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Choksy, L. (1986). *Teaching music in the twentieth century*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Coles, R. (1997). *The moral intelligence of children*. New York, NY: Random House.

Collins, D. (2000). *Paulo Freire: Una filosofia educativa para nuestro tiempo/Paulo Freire: An educational philosophy for our time (Bilingual Edition)*. Mexico D.F. : Universidad la Salle, University of San Francisco.

Copland, Aaron, in *The new encyclopedia Britannica*. (1990). (Vol. 3, p.610-611). Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Hall.

Crump, C. (2001, June 7). Learning for Art's Sake: Visual, performing programs making a comeback in school. *The Sacramento Bee*, pp. B1, B5.

Denisoff, S. R. (1971) . *Great day coming: Folk music and the American left*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Derman-Sparks, L. (1989). *Anti-bias curriculum: Tools for empowering young children*. Washington D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children/NAEYC.

Dewey, J. (1897). *My pedagogic creed*. Chicago: A. Flanagan Company.

Dewey, J. (1946). *The public and its problems*. Chicago: Gateway Books.

Fals-Borda, Orlando. (1981). The challenge of action research. *Development: See of change*. pp. 55-61.

- Fine, M. (1991). *Framing dropouts*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Fine, M. (1995). *Habits of mind: Struggling over values in America's classrooms*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Freire, P. (1997). *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*, New York: Continuum.
- Freeman D. & Freeman Y. (2001). *Between worlds: Access to second language acquisition*. Portsmouth: NH: Heinemann.
- Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.
- Goldsmith, P. (1998). *Making people's music: Moe Asch and folkways records*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Goodman, J. L. (1985). *Perceived music and music-teaching competencies of classroom teachers in the State of Ohio*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Ohio State University.
- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Greene, M. (1998). Introduction: Teaching for social justice, In W. Ayres, J. A. Hunt, & T. Quinn, *Teaching for social justice*, New York: Teachers College Press.
- Guthrie, W. (1970). *Born to win*. New York: Macmillan Company.
- Gutiérrez, K., Asato, J., Santos, M., Gotanda, N., (2000). *Backlash pedagogy: Language and culture and the politics of reform*. Paper presented at the OLE Institute, Sacramento, CA.
- Handy, S. (1994). *M.O.R.E. of the singing reading connection (Musically Oriented Relevant Experiences)*. Hillmar, CA: National Education Network.
- Handy, S. (1996). *The singing-reading connection: Part one*. Hillmar, CA: National Education Network.
- Hawes, B.L. (2000, Fall). Yeast to Make the Bread Rise: Keynote Address to CMN's 1999 National Gathering. *Pass It On! #36*, 1-8 insert. Evanston, IL: The Children's Music Network.
- Heitler-Klevans, J. (1996, Fall). Writing Songs Inspired by Children's Literature. *Pass It On! #24*, p. 14-15.

Hoose, P. (1997, Winter). An Interview with Ruth Pelham. *Pass It On!* Issue 25, p. 2-32.

Hoose, P. (2000, October). Unpublished introduction to Pete Seeger, keynote speaker, at Children's Music Network Annual Gathering. Warwick, New York.

Hopkins, S. (Ed.) (1999). *Hearing Everyone's Voice: Educating Young Children for Peace and Democratic Community*. Redmond, WA: Child Care Information Exchange.

Horton, M. with Kohl, J. and Kohl, H. (1998). *The long haul: An autobiography*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Ivey, B. (2000). Remarks by Bill Ivey, Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts, National Association of Music Education: Make Music America 2000! National Endowment for the Arts Endowment News.  
<http://arts.endow.gov/endownews/news00/MENCSpeech.html>

Jenkins, E. (1989). You'll Sing a Song and I'll Sing a Song. *You'll sing a song and I'll sing a song*. CD, CS, LP. Washington DC: Smithsonian Folkways Recordings Music for Children. Recorded 1966.

Jenkins, E. (1993). *This is rhythm*. Bethlehem, PA: A Sing Out Publication.

Jones, L. (Amira Baraka) (1963). *Blue's people*. New York: William Morrow and Company.

Kieffer, C.H. (1981, April). *Doing "dialogic retrospection": Approaching empowerment through participatory research*. Paper presented at the International Meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Kilbourne, J., Pipher, M. (2000). *Can't Buy My Love*.

Kohl, H. (1995). *Should we burn Babar?* New York: Beacon Press.

Kohl, H. (1998). Afterward: Some reflections on teaching for social justice. In W. Ayres, J. A. Hunt, & T. Quinn, *Teaching for social justice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Kohn, A. (1999). *The schools our children deserve: Moving beyond traditional classrooms and "tougher standards."* New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin.

Lehmann, P.P.R. (1987). *Music in today's schools: Rational and commentary*. Reston, VA: MENC

Lett, J. (1990). Emics and Etics: Notes on the epistemology of anthropology. In T.N. Headland, K.L., Pike, & M. Harris (Eds.). *Emics and etics: The insider/outsider debate* (pp. 127-142). Newbury Park: CA. Sage.

Levine, D., Lowe, R., Peterson, B., & Tenorio, R. (Eds.) (1995). *Rethinking schools: An agenda for change*. New York: The New Press.

Lockhart, B. (1998). "For tomorrows that sing": *Relating multicultural music to anti-bias practice*. Unpublished master's thesis, Pacific Oaks College, Pasadena, CA.

Marshall, J. (1998). *Making meaning: Transformative art education for middle school*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA.

McLaren, P. (1988). Culture or canon? Critical pedagogy and the politics of literacy. In M. Minami & B. Kennedy (Eds.), *Language Issues in Literacy and Bilingual/Multicultural Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Review.

Music Educators National Conference (MENC). (1996). *Get America singing . . . again!* Milwaukee, IL: Hal Leonard Corporation.

*National Center for Children in Poverty --- Young Child Poverty Fact Sheet (July 2000) --- Child Poverty in the United States* (<http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu//dept//nccp/ycpf.html>) (2000). New York, New York: The Joseph L. Mailman School of Public Health of Columbia University.

National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). *A nation at risk*. U.S. Department of Education.

Network of Educators on the Americas (NECA) (Ed.). (1993-1994). *Songs for Social Justice. Teaching for change*. Washington D.C. : NECA

O'Brien, J. P. (1995). *The listening experience: Elements, forms and styles*. New York, NY: Schirmer Books.

O'Neill, (1983). *Rethinking education: Selected readings in the educational ideologies*, Debuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt.

Orozco, J.L. (1994). *De Colores: and other Latin-American folk songs for children*. New York: Dutton Children's Books.

Orozco, J.L. (1997). *Diez deditos: Ten little fingers & other play rhymes and action songs from Latin America*. New York: Dutton Children's Books

Park, P. (1989). *What is participatory research?: A theoretical and methodological perspective*. Center for Community Education and Action, Inc. Northampton, MA.

Perry T. & Fraser, J. W. (1993). *Freedom's plow*. New York: Routledge.

Peterson, B. (1995). *What should our children learn? A theoretical and methodological perspective*. Northhampton, MA: Center for Community Education and Action Inc.

Peterson, B. (2000/2201, Winter). Songs with a global conscience: Using songs to build international understanding and solidarity. *Rethinking Schools, Vol.15. No.2*. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools. [www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org)

Piaget, J. (1995). *The language and thought of the child*. New York: Meridian Publishers.

Pirtle, S. (1998). *Linking up! Using music, movement, and language arts to promote caring, cooperation, and communication*. Cambridge MA: Educators for Social Responsibility.

Reagon, B.K. (1985). The power of communal song. In B. Kahn & D. Neumaier (Eds.). *Cultures in contention*. Seattle, WA: Real Comet Press.

Reimer, B. (1989). *A philosophy of music education*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Reynolds, M. (1976). *There's music in the air: Songs for the middle-young*. Berkeley, CA: Schroder Music Company.

Reza, J. (1995). *The voice of Latina leadership/ A participatory research: Leading through Our Tears*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA.

Ruiz, N, Garcia, E. & Figueroa, R. (1996). *OLE curriculum guide: Creating optimal learning environments for students with diverse backgrounds in special and general education*. Sacramento, CA: California State Department of Education.

Sapon-Shevin, M. (1999). *Because we can change the world: A practical guide to building cooperative, inclusive classroom communities*. Needham Heights, NA: Allyn & Bacon.

Schuller, G. (1977). *Early jazz: It's roots and musical development*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Seeger, P. (1972). *The incompleat folksinger*. New York: Simon & SchusterInc.

Seeger, P. & Reiser, B. (1985). *Carry it on!: A history in song and pictures of America's working men and women*. New York: Simon & Schuster Inc.

Seeger, P. (1993). *Where have all the flowers gone: A singer's stories, songs, seeds, robberies*. Bethlehem, PA: A Sing Out Publication.

Seeger, R.C. (1948). *American folk songs for children: In home, school and nursery school*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company

Smith, H. B. (1986). *The evaluation of music teacher competencies identified by the Florida Music Education Association and teacher assessment of undergraduate preparation to demonstrate those competencies*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Florida State University.

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. (2000). Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian.

Spencer, J. M. (1990). *Protest & praise: Sacred music of black religion*. Minneapolis, MA: Fortress Press.

Stafford, (1987). Perceptions of competencies and preparation needed for guiding young singers in elementary schools music classes. (Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 1987). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 48, 591A.

Tilsen, B. (2001). Biography. [www.barbtilsen.com](http://www.barbtilsen.com)

Two of a Kind. (2001) Biography. [www.twoofakind.com](http://www.twoofakind.com)

Vandenberg, C. C. (1991). *Northern California classroom teachers' perceptions of their preparation to teach music in grades two and five*, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of San Francisco, California.

Walker, A. (1998). *Living by the word*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich.

Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language. (1989), New York: Portland House.

Wellman, A. (2000, Fall). Getting in the MIX – Music is Extraordinary! *Music in the Schools, Edition 1*. p.1.

York, S. (1991). *Roots and wings: Affirming culture in early childhood programs*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

Zinn, H. (1997). *A people's history of the United States*. New York, NY: New York Press.

**APPENDICES**



## Appendix A. Consent Cover Letter to Participants

(Date)

(Name)

(Address)

Dear (Addressee);

My name is Peter Baird and I am a doctoral student in International and Multicultural Education in the University of San Francisco. I am also an elementary school Bilingual Resource Teacher in Galt, California, in a rural school with many poor Mexican-American and Euro-American students. For many years I have done all kinds of singing with children; what I call song-making. I am presently doing a study on the declining role of song-making among elementary school children in the United States. I am interested in engaging in dialogue with six leading children's musicians about how they define their music, how they share it with children, what songs are especially effective in raising social consciousness and multicultural awareness with children, which factors are causing the apparent decline in singing in the schools, and what can be done to foster greater self-expression and social commitment through song-making in the future.

You are being asked to participate in this research study because you are a leading voice among singer-songwriters who work with children and have much to contribute to this study.

To provide some background, current research on music education and song-making in elementary public schools across the nation has revealed that music is becoming an increasingly limited part of the curriculum, especially the use of songs that voice critical issues of social and personal justice. Researchers and music educators have documented some of the causes for this decline: the reduction in funding for music teachers, the exclusion of music from teacher education programs, the labeling of music as a "frill" not essential to the core curriculum, and because society is not valuing social justice education for children. As a result, the socialization of children through music and song, once an important domain of the school, is increasingly being left to radio, TV, computers and the music industry to control.

Absent from much of this research is the voice of the singers and songwriters themselves, thanks to whose efforts we have music to be sung. Over the years, you and a relatively small number of activist-musicians have provided a special genre of multicultural and uplifting songs for and about children. Today you continue to bring to children this message of hope through school visits, concerts, conferences and music recordings. You inspire a wider group of activist teachers, parents and community members to bring this kind of music back into the center of school life.

The problem is that the educational and wider community is not hearing how children's musicians define social justice and how they use their gifts of music and song to bring its message to children. Teachers need to learn from you and others more about some of the essential songs that foster a commitment to social justice in their students. Educators need to pay attention to what you have to say about factors that impede the singing voices of children in school and society today. And society in general can benefit from the perspectives of leading children's song-makers such as yourself on how educators and parents can involve children in the process of singing and imagining a more just world.

The procedures of this study are those of a special kind of research called Participatory Research, in which the participants play an active role in shaping the study. Specifically, this involves the following main steps:

- Review the Consent Procedures outlining your rights and protections
- Review the Research Questions proposed by me for this study, adding or modifying questions as you see fit
- Arrange two one-hour dialogues with me at your convenience in the late Fall of 2000 or early Spring of 2001.
- To the extent that you wish, review written transcripts of these dialogues which will be mailed to you for your comments and amendments
- To the extent that you wish, review any other general findings and writing that I will be doing to complete this dissertation by April of 2001.
- Be knowledgeable of your right to remove any portion of our dialogues, or discontinue participation in this study at any time for whatever reason up to publication

Due to the public nature of your work as a musician, I am requesting that your name be used in conjunction with the writing up of these dialogues for this study. I am also requesting that you consent to being audio-taped so that the transcriptions be as accurate as possible. For confidentiality, I will keep both transcripts and audio-tapes under lock and key at my residence for a period of seven years. After this time, tapes and transcripts will be destroyed unless there is specific permission from you for their preservation. If you would like, you will be provided with a duplicate copy of the audio-tape in addition to the written transcripts already mentioned.

I do not envision that you will have to incur any expenses as a participant in this study, except for the costs of any phone calls, fax or mailing. As the researcher, I expect to cover all expenses and reimburse any costs to you during this process.

Conversely, I offer no monetary compensation for your active participation in this study. Instead, I share with you what I have written as the Significance of the Study and how it can benefit its participants and those who will eventually read its conclusions:

*“ This interdisciplinary study, which focuses on song-making for social justice among elementary school children, will add a unique body of data to the fields of Music Education, Education for Social Change, Multicultural Education, Critical Pedagogy, and Teacher Education. In particular, it will amplify the authentic voices of leading children's musicians of our day to members of these fields of education. The give-and-*

*take process of the dialogues between researcher and musician-participants, as well as the coming together of the participants' ideas and analysis, can hopefully provide information and insights that will prove useful to members of each of these fields.*

*Specifically, this research can be used to inspire classroom teachers to integrate more multicultural and socially conscious songs into their teaching. It can encourage music teachers to choose their songs more deliberately and more mindful to the social and academic needs of their diverse students. It can encourage school administrators to build an inclusive school community through regular Sing Alongs and enrich classroom curriculum by including song-leading as part of their teacher Inservice Trainings. In addition, it can support those musicians and parents who are actively working to engage children in songs that are meaningful to their lives. Finally, this research can remind Schools of Education training the teachers and administrators of tomorrow that song-making is part of the core curriculum and song-making one of their most powerful pedagogical tools."*

As a participant in this study, you fall under the protections outlined in the Research Subjects' Bill of Rights, which I quote below:

"As a research subject, I have the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is trying to find out;
2. To be told what will happen to me and whether any of the procedures, drugs, or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice;
3. To be told about the frequent and/or important risks, side effects, or discomforts of the the things that will happen to me for research purposes;
4. To be told if I can expect any benefit from participating, and, if so, what the benefit might be;
5. To be told of the other choices I have and how they may be better or worse than being in the study;
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study;
7. To be told what sort of medical or psychological treatment is available if any complications arise;
8. To refuse to participate at all or change my mind about participation after the study is started; if I were to make such a decision, it will not affect my right to receive the care or privileges I would receive if I were not in the study;
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form; and\
10. To be free of pressure when considering whether I wish to agree to be in this study.

"If I have other questions, I should ask the researcher. In addition, I may contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS by calling (415) 422-6091, by electronic mail at [IRBPHS@usfca.edu](mailto:IRBPHS@usfca.edu), or by writing to USF IRBPHS, Department of Psychology, 2130 Fulton St, San Francisco, CA 94117-1080." In summary, I hope that this letter has given you enough information about my research study to encourage your participation. Thank you for your attention. If you have any questions about this consent process, please contact me using the enclosed pre-addressed,

pre-stamped envelope . If you agree to participate at this time, please complete the attached survey and return it to me in the same envelope.

Sincerely,

Peter J. Baird, M.S.  
Doctoral Student  
University of San Francisco



Institutional Review Board for the  
 Protection of Human Subjects  
 Office of the Vice President  
 for Academic Affairs  
 2130 Fulton Street  
 San Francisco, CA 94117-1080  
 TEL 415 422-6091  
 FAX 415 422-2517

June 22, 2000

Peter Biard  
 5511 Ashland Way  
 Sacramento, CA 95822

Appendix B

Dear Peter Biard:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF), which operates under the rules and regulations set forth by the federal Office for Protection from Research Risks (OPRR) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has reviewed your initial application for human subjects approval regarding your study, "We Shall Overcome: Children's Song Makers as Messengers of Hope."

Your Initial Application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #00-103). Please note the following:

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still collecting data from human subjects, you must file a Renewal Application.
2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (e.g., changes in subject sample, wording of items, consent procedures, tasks required of subjects) must be proposed in a Modification Application, which must be approved prior to implementation of any changes.
3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of Human Subject must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days in the form of a Human Subjects Incident Report.

If you have any questions, please contact Steven Del Chiaro, IRBPHS Coordinator, at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP  
 Chair, IRBPHS  
 USF School of Education, Room 023  
 Department of Counseling Psychology  
 2130 Fulton Street  
 San Francisco, CA., 94117

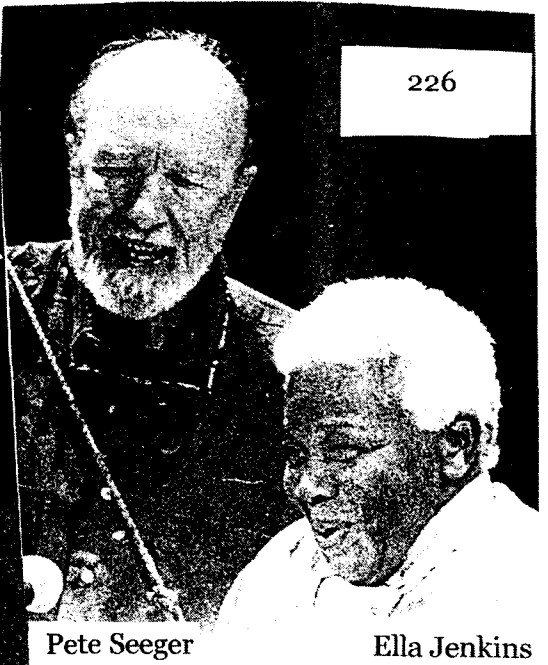
cc: Dean's Office, School of Education-ATTENTION Janet Snyder  
 Alma Flor Ada, Ph.D., Faculty Advisor



Jacki Breger

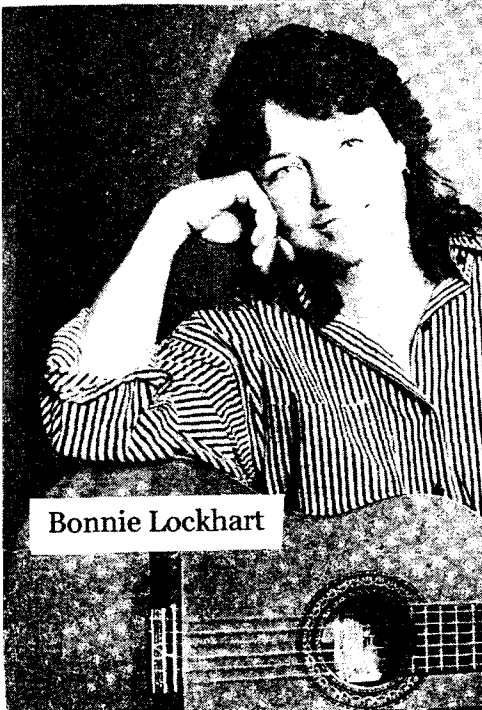


Barb Tilsen



Pete Seeger

Ella Jenkins



Bonnie Lockhart



Suni Paz



Alma Flor Ada



Peter Baird

Ruth Pelham



Francisco Herrera

*Jacki Breger**918 Eighteenth Street**Santa Monica, CA 90403**310 828-6378***MORE THAN "I HAVE A DREAM"****Songs and Stories of the  
Civil Rights Movement**

Presented in the Advocacy Center

CAEYC, March 2000

**I. Basic Concepts for Young Children**

- A. Sometimes laws and rules are unfair
  - 1. Mostly we try to make good rules -- no hitting, taking turns, etc.
  - 2. but sometimes there are bad rules -- Segregation
- B. People can and DID work to change unfair laws in the Civil Rights Movement
  - 1. They were very brave and courageous
  - 2. They worked very hard for a long time, a lot of years
- C. People used many strategies, plans, methods, ways to fight for changes
  - 1. People did fight, but not with guns or knives or swords..
  - 2. Their weapons were Words and Speeches, Boycotts, Sit-ins, Marches, Meetings, and Songs
- D. Songs were a very important part of the Civil Rights Movement
  - 1. People made up songs about their successes
  - 2. They sang while they marched, at every meeting, demonstration, etc.
  - 3. They sang old songs and made up new ones
  - 4. Singing helped them feel brave and strong

**II. Good Stories for Young Children and Songs to go with them**

- A. Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott -- *If You Miss Me at the Back of the Bus*
- B. Student Sit-ins -- *We Shall Not Be Moved*
- C. Marches -- *Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round*
- D. Determination, Inspiration -- *Woke Up This Morning, This Little Light*
- E. Voting Rights -- *Welcome Table*
- F. The "Anthem" of the Movement -- *We Shall Overcome*

## II. What's Important to Include for Young Children

- A. Ordinary people worked together to change the rules
  - 1. Moms and dads
  - 2. Children -- big kids and little kids
- B. Martin Luther King, Jr., was one important leader, maybe the most important
  - 1. He could think of important things to do
  - 2. He inspired people and helped them to feel they could do very hard things
- C. Other leaders were ordinary people who did extraordinary things
  - 1. Rosa Parks
  - 2. Fanny Lou Hamer
  - 3. Students who led the sit-ins
- D. There were two groups of White people
  - 1. Those who agreed that segregation laws were bad and helped Black people change them
  - 2. Those who had made the rules and believed in them and didn't want them changed

## III. What's NOT Important to Include for Young Children

- A. The assassination of Dr. King
- B. Fire hoses and dogs in Birmingham
- C. Arrests and going to jail
- D. Brutality and murders



**SONGS FROM THE  
CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

Songs & Stories of the Civil Rights Movement

Presented in the Advocacy Center

CAEYC, March 2000



*Jacki Breger*  
918 Eighteenth Street  
Santa Monica, CA 90403  
310 828-6378

**IF YOU MISS ME AT THE BACK OF THE BUS**

If you miss me at the back of the bus  
And you can't find me no where  
Come on over to the front of the bus  
I'll be riding up there  
I'll be riding up there  
I'll be riding up there  
Come on over to the front of the bus  
I'll be riding up there

If you miss me in the cotton fields  
And you can't find me no where  
Come on over to the court house  
I'll be voting over there...

If you miss me in the Mississippi River  
And you can't find me no where  
Come on over to the swimming pool  
I'll be swimming over there...

Repeat first verse

**WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED**

We shall not, we shall not be moved  
We shall not, we shall not be moved  
Just like a tree that's planted by the water  
We shall not be moved

We're fighting for our freedom, we shall not be moved...  
Black and white together, we shall not be moved...  
Repeat first verse

**WOKE UP THIS MORNING**

Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on freedom  
Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on freedom  
Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on freedom  
Hallelu... Hallelu... Hallelujah!

I'm walking' and talkin' with my mind stayed on freedom...  
Ain't no harm to keep your mind...  
Goin' to school with my mind...  
Goin' to work with my mind...  
Repeat first verse

**WE SHALL OVERCOME**

We shall overcome, we shall overcome  
We shall overcome some day  
Deep in my heart, I do believe  
We shall overcome some day  
We'll walk hand in hand...  
Black and white together...  
We shall live in peace...  
We are not afraid...today...

**AIN'T GONNA LET NOBODY TURN ME 'ROUND**

Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round  
Turn me 'round, turn me 'round  
Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round  
I'm gonna keep on walkin', Keep on talkin'  
Marching to that freedom land

Ain't gonna let segregation turn me 'round...  
Ain't gonna let Jim Crow turn me 'round...  
Ain't gonna let Bull Conner turn me 'round...  
Repeat first verse

**THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE**

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine  
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine  
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine  
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

We got the light of freedom, I'm gonna let it shine...  
Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine...  
Ain't gonna let nobody [whooo] my little light out...  
Repeat first verse

**WELCOME TABLE**

I'm gonna sit at the welcome table  
I'm gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days, Hallelujah  
I'm gonna sit at the welcome table  
Gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days  
I'm gonna walk the streets of glory...  
I'm gonna be a registered voter...  
I'm gonna feast on bread and honey...  
Repeat first verse

*Jacki Breger*  
 918 Eighteenth Street  
 Santa Monica, CA 90403  
 310 828-6378

## IT'S MUSIC TIME

### Tips for Teachers



Music Time as discussed here differs from formal instruction in music. It is structured as a large group activity, meant to establish community feelings. It is usually scheduled immediately preceding the Option Time (time for child-directed activities) and can include group announcements such as what activities are available, birthdays to celebrate, or introductions to visitors.

Goals of the Music Time are to build concepts -- awareness of self and of others. (Refer to *Community Music Time: Goals and Values* for more on goals.) Songs are determined by group level, needs and mood. It is important to help children experience that it is *their* music time.

In addition to the regular, or Formal Music Time, music can be used informally throughout the day, during the Option Time, in play, and even during the teachers' Formal Time. Singing is very close to story time and can be closely tied to reading. Counting songs can be helpful and effective during math time.

The dream is to have a song for every possible person, animal, action, situation, occasion, happening, etc., that can take place. Then to be comfortable enough to be able to use the appropriate song at the appropriate time. For example, during an Outreach group session one week, we were talking about songs and situations when, suddenly, a teacher fell backwards in her chair, landing flat on the floor. While a near-by adult made sure she was okay, the rest of us began to sing, "...Jenny fell down and bumped her head; ouch wouch is what she said..." (*Jenny Fell Down*, by Malvina Reynolds).

### **Organizing Music Time** (Refer to *Things to Consider at Music Time*)

It is preferable to have more than one class participate in the Music Time. It not only makes for more variety and excitement, it is very practical in that there can be several adults to help the group.

Having two adults lead music together offers strength and security as well as support in the planning. Rotate leader responsibility within the entire teacher group. Have each pair of leaders take a week, or two weeks, or a month at a time. This provides continuity for the children as well as giving teachers the opportunity to follow through on particular songs and concepts they begin.

The rest of the adults can locate themselves strategically throughout the group. This will help with motivation, and give teachers the proximity and ability to help children as needed. It also offers tremendous support to the leaders.

A good rule of thumb for organization is to have the leaders concentrate on songs, concepts, and the group as a whole, while the other adults help individuals with singing, moving, and participating in general.

## Establishing Ground Rules, Routines and Procedures

Try to use the same area for Music Time each day -- on a rug, on a grassy spot, under the tree, etc. Also try to have music regularly at the same time -- preceding Option Time, before lunch, after nutrition, etc.

Determine what kind of organization best facilitates a fun and cooperative music time, e.g., everyone who is able sits on the rug, crutches are put on the floor, everyone sings or listens, etc.

Be sure to tell children in the beginning what the ground rules are, and remind them from time to time. Sometimes a simple reminder will avoid or eliminate a serious behavior problem.

## Kinds of Songs

Use a variety of songs each day, varying tempo and intensity. Give children plenty of opportunity for singing loud or soft, standing up or sitting down, etc.

Good songs are those that use children's names, provide opportunities for children to express feelings, share experiences, develop concepts (counting, colors, vocabulary), build awareness and do things. And of course, that children like. You may know a great song that does all of these things, except that your group of children just doesn't go for it. Better find another song.

## Choosing Songs

Choose three or four songs ahead of time. Then make a list and include a few extra "back-up" songs. That way you are prepared to go longer, if the group demonstrates eagerness, or you are ready to change a choice, if necessary. Also, having a list is a good way to avoid that "my mind is blank" syndrome.

Choosing songs can be worked into the routine. The teacher might begin with the first song, then children can choose the second or third song. Or the teacher might make all the choices, and allow a child to choose the go-to-work song (the last song to disburse the group).

The method can vary from day to day. Be sure to let the children know the procedure at the beginning of the Music Time. Or you may find that it is best for your group to use the same method all week, or forever. As long as the group know this and you are flexibly consistent, that's fine.

## Taking Turns

This is one of the most important factors in a successful Music Time. Plan several songs each day that provide opportunities for children to choose and/or do something. Most songs can be adapted in this way. For example, in *If Your Happy and You Know It*, children can be called upon to choose the next activity. Or in *Mary Wore A Red Dress*, let children call attention to what they are wearing. In *Mouse in My House* (by Marcia Berman), children love to share what they had in their houses last night.

Establish your routine, which will be similar to that of choosing songs. Make having a turn a reward for participation that is appropriate for that child.

Remind children that not everyone can have a turn in every song or every day. Perhaps guidelines might be established, such as one turn a day, or today people wearing blue will have turns, or people with curly hair, or people with braces or crutches -- whatever criteria will work for your group.

In addition to your criteria, don't forget to notice and call on that child who absolutely cannot wait (even though he is not wearing blue), or the child who asks for a turn for the first time ever, or the

child who needs a little extra attention today. Explain to the group the reason for the exception and they will understand and accept it.

Be sure that everyone gets at least one or two turns during the week. Remember, too, that some children really don't want turns, or aren't ready for the mass recognition. Be encouraging, but don't insist.

Songs with turns can go on for a long time or can be cut short, depending on the group. It is a good idea to end the song before the group demonstrates discomfort in the form of squirminess, restlessness or misbehavior. Be sure to announce that the end is near, e.g., "two more turns," then, "this is the last turn." That way children expect and are prepared for the end of the song. This helps them to get ready for the next song.

### **Teaching Songs**

Children will enjoy learning the songs as they are sung more than being taught words by rote. It is important, however, to provide the opportunity for children to learn the words and understand the concepts if they are able.

One way to accomplish this is to sing the song all the way through, inviting those who already know it to join in. Then talk the words, line by line, having the children repeat each line. Then sing the song slowly several times.

How many times, how much teaching, how long to spend on it will be determined by the group. The leader must judge when the group has learned the song, needs more practice, or has just plain "had enough" for that day. Then tell the group you can come back to this song tomorrow, and go on to another song.

Remember that some children cannot learn the meaning of the words, but enjoy the sound and rhythm and rhythm of the song anyway.

If you spend a long time teaching one song, it is a good idea to plan one or two short and familiar songs to balance the time. A "moving around" song might also be helpful.

Repeat the songs often, especially in the beginning. Do this during Music Time as well as during Option Time and throughout the day. Repetition is a great teaching technique, and a fun one for children.

Experiment with different ways of singing and choosing songs: use a chart or pictures, add hand motions, make up activities, share a book, make props.

### **Participation** (Refer to *Signs of Children's Involvement/Non-Involvement*)

Singing is only one way to be an active participator in Music Time. Recognize and encourage other ways. Some children prefer to listen and watch; some like to clap hands.

Some children are extremely shy, or have problems with speech. It is important to include these children in songs with choices and turns. Teachers must learn to recognize the child's motion or sound as his/her personal response. Children with physical impairments can be helped with activities such as standing, clapping hands and jumping. It is the response that is important, not precise articulation or the correct motion.

Help the group learn to wait for a response from a child who takes a long time. Give that child ample opportunity to make his/her response. On the other hand, know when it is time to step in and help that child. Also, be sensitive to the rest of the group; today may be one of those "restless" days, and not a good day to choose a child who takes a long time to respond.

## A Few Things in General

Remember to collect songs about everything. Books, records and people (children as well as adults) are good resources.

Music Time is a good time to talk, or sing, about feelings and emotions. It is a good time to help children learn that it is okay to be mad, and it is okay to be sad, etc..

Try to find songs that require a minimum of adult explanation. Activity songs are good for this because the song rather than the leader tells the group what to do. (Also answer-back songs.)

Avoid "nagging" to control behavior. If children are restless, sing an activity song (in some groups a quiet song works better in this situation); if hands are flying, try *My Hands Upon My Head*. Let the songs do the work. And don't be afraid to end the Music Time early.

Use songs to define the beginning and the end of Music Time. *Good Morning* is a good beginner; *Hush Little Baby* and go-to-work songs are effective enders.

Know your group and be sensitive to them constantly. That way, hopefully, the leader can determine what will work best in any situation.

Most important, relax and have fun!

## A FEW RESOURCES FOR GETTING STARTED

**Children's Book World**  
10580 1/2 West Pico Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90064  
310 559-2665

This is a great place to visit when you have questions and lots of time. The people there are quite knowledgeable, and can help you with books, tapes, CD's, combinations, ideas, etc.

### A Starter Collection of Recordings

The following albums are among the very best in music for young children. The songs themselves are good--they use children's names, reflect a feeling, tell a story, provide an activity, help a friend. They are well sung--the various singers are sensitive to the mood and content of their songs, they pitch their songs well, they maintain a complimentary balance between songs and accompaniments, they provide variation in style and musical form, they sing the words clearly.

Marcia Berman: *Activity Songs*  
Marcia Berman and Patty Zeitlin: *Everybody Cries Sometimes, Won't You Be My Friend, Spin, Spider, Spin*  
Marcia Berman: *The Best of Marcia Berman*  
Jacki Breger: *Here's A Song*  
Jacki Breger: *Sing This Song*  
Woody Guthrie: *Songs to Grow On*  
Ella Jenkins: *You'll Sing A Song and I'll Sing A Song*  
Peter Seeger: *American Folk Songs for Children, Song and Playtime*

Listen also to other people, including Tom Hunter, Malvina Reynolds, Dan Crow, Leadbelly, Hap Palmer, Tom Glazer. And find out about The Marcia Berman Fund for Music and Young Children, and The Children's Music Network (SoCal info: Carrie Higgins @ 562 426-1460).

*Jacki Breger**918 Eighteenth Street**Santa Monica, CA 90403**310 828-6378***COMMUNITY MUSIC TIME****GOALS AND VALUES****Primary Goals**

1. **To develop a sense of community, to have a group experience**
  - a. participating, working together in concert
  - b. the child should experience himself as an important part of the group
  - c. building group identity -- repertoire of songs "we all know"
2. **To provide an introduction to music**
  - a. enjoyment of music through participation
  - b. singing, sounds, melodies
  - c. rhythm, movement
  - d. lose self-consciousness

**Secondary Goals**

1. **To enhance communication, motor development**
2. **To build social awareness, social controls, social confidence**
  - a. taking turns
  - b. recognizing other people
  - c. feeling at ease
  - d. helping others
3. **To provide exposure to other cultures, languages, customs**
  - a. songs in other languages
  - b. origins, customs, traditions from other cultures
  - c. listening to "ethnic" music
4. **To stimulate motivation for learning**
  - a. vehicle for individual children with motivational deficits
  - b. identification, empathy
  - c. tolerance for differences, failure, non-success

**Other Gains**

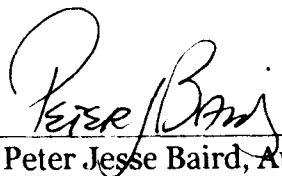
1. **Celebration of the new day--highly motivating influence to getting ready for work**
2. **Novelty--using the group to introduce new things**
3. **Group learning instead of individual learning**
  - a. anonymity--safety in numbers
  - b. relinquishing individual control to the group will
  - c. no fear of exposure of inadequacy--reduces shame, sense of doubt, leaves responding in child's control
  - d. building skills--memory, attention, focusing, hearing, speaking, concepts, reading, large motor, fine motor, information...


THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
Dissertation Abstract

Children's Song-Makers as Messengers of Hope:  
Participatory Research  
With Implications for Teacher Educators

Pete Seeger, Ella Jenkins, Suni Paz and six other leading children's musicians in the U.S contributed their experience to this study about the crucial role of music and singing for social justice in children's lives and its shrinking presence in U.S. pre-school and elementary schools. The study built its theoretical framework on arts and music education, transformative education, and folk and socially conscious children's music. Participatory research, based on the revolutionary education theories of Paulo Freire, guided the dialogues with the participants. These activist singer-songwriters were asked how they define social justice, how they involve children in singing, and what songs are especially effective in raising social consciousness with children. They were also asked which factors are causing the decline in children's singing in schools today, and what parents, teachers, teacher-educators, and musicians can do to help children develop greater self-expression, literacy, and social commitment through song-making. The findings revealed consensus about the power of music to convey the values of fairness and sharing among children. Other themes discussed were multiculturalism, overcoming biases, critical thinking, second language acquisition, and conflict resolution. Transformative song-making was found to involve a wide variety of skills: singing, song-leading, song-writing, storytelling, using games and humor, and performing. All are aimed at involving children in

participatory singing that is fun and helps them to imagine and create a more just world. The study found many factors that diminish music in schools, from the general impact of the media and consumerism to the specific ways that high stakes testing and the accountability movement are narrowing curriculum. It also provided an extensive list of suggestions from the participants on how to foster singing and music programs that address social justice in elementary schools and pre-schools, including an increased role for outside artists and musicians, better support for classroom teachers who lack confidence in song-making, and the reemphasis of children's music in teacher-preparation programs. The researcher concludes with specific recommendations for action directed to parents, elementary school teachers and administrators, teacher education institutions, and advocates of children's music and social justice education.

  
Peter Jesse Baird, Author

  
Dr. Alma Flor Ada,  
Chairperson, Dissertation Committee