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# Rock ' n' Roll in the 1950s: Rockin' for Civil Rights

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Rock 'n' Roll in the 1950s:  
Rockin' for Civil Rights

by

Eric Vaillancourt  
January 2011

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of the State  
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Rock 'n' Roll in the 1950s:  
Rockin' for Civil Rights

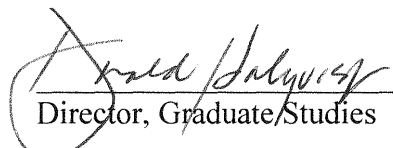
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Historiography:  
The Impact of Rock 'n' Roll on Race Relations in 1950s America

The influence of rock 'n' roll on the culture and society of America is almost too vast to measure. The impact of rock 'n' roll was first felt by the masses in the 1950s. During this time rock 'n' roll became a dividing and uniting force. It pitted parents, the mass media, and the government against teenagers, and at the same time helped erode some of the prejudices felt towards African Americans. Parents disliked the influence and message behind rock 'n' roll. They disliked the sexuality of the lyrics and of the performers, they disliked the fact that the music came directly from African Americans regardless of if it was a white performer who recorded the song, and they disliked the rebellious nature that the music was accused of inspiring. One of these acts of rebellion was a changing attitude toward African Americans, amongst teenagers, which at times happened blatantly, but often times took place subconsciously. White teenagers listened to music not just inspired by, but often performed by African Americans. By doing this they embraced a part of culture that seemed or in many households actually was forbidden. They went to concerts where performers and parts of the audience were black. They watched movies such as *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) that showcased integration in schools and inspired youth to question authority. In the 1950s, rock 'n' roll was able to do what jazz couldn't when it created a common culture amongst white and black teenagers. This was made possible by the advent of the radio, the availability of records, the television, and the population movement and societal changes of the 1950s. The common culture of rock 'n' roll helped to erode long standing prejudices felt towards African Americans.

Early accounts of the history of rock 'n' roll from historians such as Carl Belz whose book, *The Story of Rock* was published in 1969 often ignore the conditions that allowed rock 'n' roll to become popular. One of the biggest factors being a change in lifestyle for the

American family after World War II. More recent accounts by authors such as Piero Scaruffi and Glenn Altschuler spend a good deal of time pointing this out. At the start of the 1950s, America was just a few years removed from the end of World War II. World War II had led to the end of the Great Depression and also helped create an economic boom that lasted into the 1950s. This economic growth created an increase in the disposable income of the average American household. One of the groups that received a good portion of this disposable income was the American teenager. Just a generation ago the American teenager spent their spare time laboring away on the family farm. Teenagers of the fifties had much more leisure time due to the fact that most Americans had moved to the suburbs.<sup>1</sup> Due to the increased spending power of the American teenager, the market for teenage products grew exponentially. By the end of the 1950s consumers were spending more than \$10 billion dollars a year on products that were marketed specifically to teenagers.<sup>2</sup>

During the 1950s, families were more likely to be financially stable and as a result no longer needed to supplement their income with the labor of their children. When a teen did have a job, he or she was generally allowed to spend their money on the things that they wanted. Some teens did not even have to have a job to gain money as parents increasingly gave their children allowances. A new leisure-oriented teen culture developed that would stay in place until the present day.<sup>3</sup> The popularity that teenagers helped rock-

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Campbell and James Brady, *Rock and Roll an Introduction*, (Belmont: Schirmer Thomson Learning, 1999), 50.

<sup>2</sup> "A New Ten Billion Dollar Power: The U.S. Teen-Age Consumer," *Life*, (August 31, 1959): 78.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Friedlander, *Rock and Roll: A Social History*, (Boulder: Westview Press), 1996. 21.

and-roll music gain made it possible for the music industry to sell more than \$75 million dollars in recordings each year.<sup>4</sup> Other than school, teens in the 1950s had few responsibilities. Teens now had the kind of purchasing power to buy all kinds of things. One thing that millions of teenagers started to buy was rock 'n' roll records.

### **The Origins of Rock 'n' Roll**

A big commonality between earlier research and more recent research on rock 'n' roll is that both seem to give a great deal of attention to the origins of rock 'n' roll music, the influence that Alan Freed had in bringing it into the homes of Americans, and how Elvis Presley helped turn many teenagers onto the genre. The music that would become rock 'n' roll had many influences from other genres, most of which were predominantly influenced and created by African Americans. During the 1940s most white Americans were listening to the soft songs of pop singers such as Frank Sinatra. While at the same time African Americans were listening to a style of music that was much different and more upbeat. This genre was called rhythm and blues, which pulled on influences from race music or music recorded by black musicians that was not gospel. These genres included blues, jazz, boogie-woogie, and swing.<sup>5</sup> Rhythm and blues quickly began finding its way into the record players of young white teenagers at the start of the 1950s.

One recent publication titled *Something in the Air* by Marc Fisher gives a great deal of attention to the impact that radio had over rock 'n' roll. By the early 1950s radio was

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Bertrand, *Race, Rock, and Elvis*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 20.

<sup>5</sup> Glenn C. Altschuler, *All Shook Up: How Rock 'N' Roll Changed America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 11.



starting to notice the popularity that rhythm and blues had acquired. One of the most important disc jockeys to promote the new music at a national level was Alan Freed, who worked for WJW in Cleveland. In 1951, he convinced his manager to give him a nightly rhythm and blues show. As his show gained popularity Freed moved to WINS in New York City, and not long after changed the name of his show to "Rock 'n' Roll Party." The term rock 'n' roll was soon used to describe the music played on Freed's show rather than rhythm and blues. In doing so historian Glenn C. Altschuler points out that Freed was able to eliminate the racial stigma of rhythm and blues and as a result an R&B hit which at the start of the decade might sell forty thousand records because a rock 'n' roll smash hit that would sell over a million.<sup>6</sup>

America in the 1950s was still a very racially divided place and a time for very tense race relations. It was divided by law as segregation was legal due to the Supreme Court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). Segregation was the legal separation of races. The separate facilities were supposed to be equal according to the courts 1896 court ruling but they were often anything but equal. In 1954 the Supreme Court rescinded the "separate but equal" doctrine in its ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. Southern senators and congressmen openly opposed attempts at desegregating the south by the Supreme Court.

Due to this separation it was hard for black artists to break through and experience the level of success that a Frank Sinatra had a decade earlier. It was because of this that rhythm and blues music producer Sam Phillips states, "If I could find a white man who had

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 23.

the Negro sound and the Negro feel, I could make a billion dollars.”<sup>7</sup> He soon did so by discovering Elvis Presley and recording his first record in 1953. At the same time Bill Haley’s *Crazy Man Crazy* became the first rock ‘n’ roll song to enter the Billboard charts.<sup>8</sup> It is because of white artists like Presley and Haley that rock ‘n’ roll, a black music genre was able to be marketed to the white teenage masses. Artists like Presley knew that they owed gratitude to African Americans for the sound that made them famous, as Presley himself explained to a reporter in a 1956 interview, “The colored folks been singing it and playing it just like I’m doin’ now, man, for more years than I know... I got it from them.”<sup>9</sup> By being exposed to artists such as Haley and Presley, teenagers soon became fans of the genre and not just the artist. This helped open doors for black artists such as Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and Bo Diddley.

### **The Reaction to Rock ‘n’ Roll**

More recent research from historians such as Altschuler seems to spend more time on the public reaction to rock ‘n’ roll than did the earlier research of historians such as Belz. Works done in between the two such as *You Say You Want a Revolution* by Robert Pielke start to show more of an interest in the reaction to rock ‘n’ roll. As the popularity of rock ‘n’ roll grew, parents and teenagers were finding themselves increasingly at odds. The teenagers of the fifties were looking for an identity, and as a result many teens started rebelling by idolizing rebels such as James Dean, which also accompanied a developing negative attitude toward school. But as historians Michael Campbell and James Brody

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>8</sup> Piero Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music*. (Lincoln: iUniverse, 2003), 9.

<sup>9</sup> James Miller, *Flowers in the Dustbin*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 136.

point out, the most obvious rebellion against the status quo was seen with the embracing of rock 'n' roll.<sup>10</sup> Parents, the news media, and even the government all seemed to have many reasons for being opposed to rock 'n' roll music as well as the culture that it brought with it. Underneath it all rock 'n' roll was challenging the long held beliefs that African Americans and their culture was beneath that of whites. As a part of this it also challenged the idea that whites and blacks needed to be separate both in body and in culture. Sometimes these concerns about rock 'n' roll were shared amongst parents, the news media, and the government but sometimes they were distinct to the group raising the concerns.

The attitude that was held by parents, the news media members, and the government can be seen in a quote by pop singer Frank Sinatra,

“Rock 'n' roll smells phony and false. It is sung, played, and written for the most part by cretinous goons and by means of its almost imbecilic retardation and sly, lewd in plain fact dirty lyrics.... it manages to be the martial music of every side-burned delinquent on the face of the earth.”<sup>11</sup>

One of the first things that really worried the detractors of rock 'n' roll was the belief that is caused juvenile delinquency. This was showcased in the opening of the 1955 movie, *Blackboard Jungle*. The film began with a written prologue with the following as its first sentence, “Today we are concerned with juvenile delinquency-its causes-and its effects.”<sup>12</sup> After the prologue the theater would be filled with the sounds of Bill Haley’s, “Rock Around the Clock”. The song soon became the anthem of rock 'n' roll.

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<sup>10</sup> Michael Campbell and James Brady, *Rock and Roll an Introduction*, 52.

<sup>11</sup> Glenn C. Altschuler, *All Shook Up: How Rock 'N' Roll Changed America*, 6.

<sup>12</sup> James Miller, *Flowers in the Dustbin*, 87.

With the popularity generated by the movie *Blackboard Jungle*, “Rock Around the Clock” became a #1 Billboard hit in 1955.<sup>13</sup> The song combined elements of rhythm and blues and the sound of southern western music. This helped deejays in blurring the color line that had existed in radio. The line that had divided black and white radio was practically no more as the sounds of both black and white artists were similar and in many cases the songs were the same. Deejays such as Alan Freed saw that whites especially teenagers were very curious about the emotion, energy, and beat of rock ‘n’ roll. They saw the mix in the crowds that came about when they emceed dances or concerts.

The reaction to the movie was one of excitement from teenagers from Los Angeles to London. As historian James Miller points out, “They danced, they sang, they slashed seats.”<sup>14</sup> Rioting was likely to take place wherever *Blackboard Jungle* played, teenagers often attended just to join in.<sup>15</sup> The film itself was about an inner city school in which the students (both black and white) ran amuck over their teacher and dismissed the order and culture of the past. This left many concerned that rock ‘n’ roll was inspiring a spirit of anarchy and delinquency. Supporters of rock ‘n’ roll were worried about the genre being likened to the actions in the movie. Alan Freed expressed this sentiment when he later stated, “It was unfortunate that the song had been used in that hoodlum infested movie...[which] seemed to associate rock ‘n’ rollers with delinquents.”<sup>16</sup> This image was a far cry from the image that the adults in America were trying to portray in the 1950s in the midst of the Cold War with the communist USSR.

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<sup>13</sup> Marc Fisher, *Something in the Air*. (New York: Random House, 2007), 47.

<sup>14</sup> James Miller, *Flowers in the Dustbin*, 88.

<sup>15</sup> Robert G. Pielke, *You Say You Want a Revolution: Rock Music in American Culture*. (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1986), 29.

<sup>16</sup> James Miller, *Flowers in the Dustbin*, 92.

In the 1950s, America was trying to portray solidarity in the American family. They were trying to show America as being superior in morals and family structure. This could be seen in the television shows of the era such as *Leave it to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best*. Many adults saw rock 'n' roll as a threat to the American class value system in the fight against communism. Some even felt that rock 'n' roll was a communist plot to overthrow the government by inspiring delinquency.<sup>17</sup>

Ironically, both sides of the Cold War disapproved of rock 'n' roll. The Soviets were also adamantly opposed to rock 'n' roll as they feared that it was a part of a plot to thwart communism. The Soviets were right in a sense about rock-and-roll music being a capitalist business. Record producers like Sam Phillips of Sun Records in Memphis, Tennessee made millions of dollars and became incredibly powerful.

Most parents of the 1950s found themselves adamantly opposed to rock 'n' roll. One of the main complaints of parents had to do with the sexual nature of rock 'n' roll lyrics and of some of its performers. They feared that the lyrics of songs like *Great Balls of Fire* by Jerry Lee Lewis would inspire the destruction of sexual morals and abstinence. They feared that the music itself enticed sexual urges and looked to performances of such artists as Elvis for proof.

On June 5, 1956, Elvis Presley performed on *The Milton Berle Show*. He performed a song called "Hound Dog" that had been written for African American singer Big Mama Thornton. The performance caused quite a stir in the media and in homes across America

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<sup>17</sup> Richard A. Schwartz., *The 1950s: An Eyewitness History*, (New York: Facts on File Inc, 2003), 110.

because of Elvis' sexual gyrations while performing the song. These were the same moves that had been driving young women wild at his concerts across the country.

The New York Daily News was not impressed with Presley's national TV performance of "Hound Dog" stating, "He gave an exhibition that was suggestive and vulgar."<sup>18</sup> His performance was so controversial that even politicians were weighing in on it, Congressman Emanuel Celler stated that, "Rock 'n' roll has its place, among the colored people. The bad taste that is exemplified by the Elvis Presley 'Hound Dog' music, with his animal gyrations which are certainly most distasteful to me, are violative of all that I know to be in good taste."<sup>19</sup>

Elvis Presley was scheduled to appear on the *Steve Allen Show* on July 1, 1956. In response to the controversy surrounding Presley's performance on *The Milton Berle Show*, Allen pledged, "You can rest assured, I will not allow him to do anything that will offend anyone."<sup>20</sup> Allen kept his promise by having Presley perform the song to an actual hound dog and by only filming him primarily from the waist up. During the performance Presley was obviously holding back from dancing the way he typically did while performing the song. This was just one of the many ways that rock 'n' roll was censored during the 1950s.

Organizations like the North Alabama White Citizens Council also took a serious stand against rock 'n' roll music by trying to force it underground or at least make it harder to access. Asa Carter, who was the secretary of this organization, took one of the most public anti-rock stands. He demanded that rock-and-roll music be taken off of the

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<sup>18</sup> James Miller, *Flowers in the Dustbin*, 133.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

jukeboxes, which outraged owners anxious for big profits.<sup>21</sup> Carter stated, "Rock and roll is the basic heavy beat music of negroes. It appeals to the base in man and brings out animalism and vulgarity."<sup>22</sup>

The North Alabama White Citizens Council was not the only White Citizens Council that made anti-rock and roll statements. The chairman of the organization said, "We're setting up a twenty man committee to do away with this vulgar animalistic nigger rock and roll bop. Our committee will check with restaurant owners and cafes to see what bebop records is on their machines and then ask 'em to do away with 'em."<sup>23</sup> Songs were often labeled as being "smut" if they contained references to sex.<sup>24</sup> Such a label was a further attempt to get rock 'n' roll records banned from jukeboxes and radio stations around the country.

### **Rock 'n' Roll Becomes Integrated**

The possibility that racial mingling, sex, and juvenile delinquency would occur at rock concerts forced adults to take action. Rock concerts were segregated. In some parts of the country they were segregated by having separate music clubs. They had black music clubs and white music clubs. This measure did not always stop black performers from playing in front of white audiences and vice versa. Little Richard for instance molded his on stage persona in a way to make himself friendly to white audiences. He later explained

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<sup>21</sup> "Segregationists Would Ban All Rock, Roll Hits," *Billboard Magazine*, (April 7, 1956): 130.

<sup>22</sup> "White Citizens Council vs. Rock and Roll," *Newsweek*, (April 23, 1956): 32.

<sup>23</sup> Bertrand, *Race, Rock, and Elvis*, 161.

<sup>24</sup> Carl Belz, *The Story of Rock*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 57.

this in his memoir, "We decided that my image should be crazy and way out, so that the adults would think I was harmless."<sup>25</sup>

Some accounts of the history of rock 'n' roll tell the story through a series of crucial events. A book that does this is *Flowers in the Dustbin* by James Miller. In this book Miller covers things such as a screening of *The Blackboard Jungle* and influential performances. One of the first events that demonstrated that rock 'n' roll shows could be integrated was the Alan Freed sponsored Rock 'n' Roll Ball in New York City on September 2, 1955. The musicians for the show were all black. According to rock 'n' roll icon Chuck Berry the audience on the other hand, "seemed to be solid white." Berry elaborated on the feelings that he felt both during and after his performance,

"I doubt that many Caucasian persons would come into a situation that would cause them to know the feeling a black person experiences after being reared under old-time southern traditions and then finally being welcomed by an entirely unbiased and friendly audience, applauding without apparent regard for racial difference."<sup>26</sup>

Other artists were also skeptical of the new attitude exhibited towards African American artists by white audiences. Among these artists was the self proclaimed king of rock 'n' roll, Little Richard who explained his feelings towards the crowd reaction at his live shows, "It was hard for me, the white girls screaming for me and they (adult whites) did not like that, but I wasn't there for the girls or the boys. I was there to entertain them."<sup>27</sup>

Due to the fact that rock 'n' roll-music was associated with sexuality and it often brought together whites and blacks, many people were afraid that black men would take advantage of their white daughters. Rock 'n' roll concerts often drew a racially mixed

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<sup>25</sup> James Miller, *Flowers in the Dustbin*, 112.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>27</sup> Little Richard, *History of Rock and Roll: Good Rockin' Tonight*. Video Source



audience. Dancing was common place at rock shows. The thought of blacks dancing with whites was so threatening that steps were taken to prevent this from happening. Whites used segregation to prevent blacks and whites from dancing together. Whites were placed in the balcony and blacks were placed on the dance floor. This was not very effective because white teenagers would jump off the balcony and start dancing. A police presence to make sure that teens did not dance to the music was another way that whites regulated concerts.

Black musicians were not always welcome in different parts of the country during the 1950s due the long standing prejudices against them for their race. In another effort to regulate what their children heard and experienced, some cities passed ordinances that forbade black artists from playing in certain cities, especially in the south. Chuck Berry once booked a concert only to have it canceled on the day of the show when the promoters found out that he was not white. The steps white adults took to prevent dancing between the races were the foundation for many riots that took place in the 1950s.

Rock 'n' roll concerts were notable occasions for teenage riots during the 1950s. Newspapers such as the *New York Times* were quick to report any semblance of difficulty at a rock 'n' roll show. On April 15, 1957 they ran the headline, "Rock 'n' Roll Fight Hospitalizes Youth."<sup>28</sup> As Altschuler points out, event the absence of a riot was noteworthy to the *New York Times* with headlines such as, "Rock 'n' Rollers Collect Calmly."<sup>29</sup> When problems did occur the reports were quick to put blame on African Americans and on the music for inspiring the riot.

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<sup>28</sup> "Rock 'n' Roll Fight Hospitalizes Youth." *New York Times*. (April 15, 1957).

<sup>29</sup> Glenn C. Altschuler, *All Shook Up: How Rock 'N' Roll Changed America*, 3.

Despite all the attention and publicity rock concerts generated, riots were generally small and in the majority of cases not even riots at all. Most times the so called riots involved kids dancing in the aisles, not sitting in their seats, and being noisy. Authorities during the 1950s preferred the audience be seated and quiet during the performances. When authorities attempted to enforce this on the teenage concertgoers, they often reacted. The teenagers felt that their right to enjoy themselves was being restricted. They often ignored the attempts to get them to be seated and to be quiet by dancing and being loud. Numerous times the authorities responded with physical force. This is usually when the violence would occur. Police brutality was the main catalyst for any violence that took place at rock concerts during the 1950s.

In response to violence at rock 'n' roll shows many public officials started banning rock shows in cities all across America from Boston to New Haven. Even without applying official bans public officials were still able to keep rock shows out of their cities, one example took place in San Jose, California when they refused to give permits to concerts in public buildings. Or in Jersey City, New Jersey when they refused to give a permit for a Bill Haley and the Comets concert to take place. Soon laws went beyond just restricting concerts. In San Antonio, Texas, rock music was prohibited from jukeboxes at municipal swimming pools. The attacks against rock 'n' roll continued to mount in the print news media. In *Time* magazine they warned that the allegiance of teenagers to rock performers, "bear passing resemblance to Hitler's mass meetings."<sup>30</sup> In the New York Times, psychiatrist Francis Braceland called rock 'n' roll a, "communicable disease."

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 6.

Instead of blaming themselves or the kids, adults were blaming the music. Rock 'n' roll was blamed for violence and juvenile delinquency from its creation in the early 1950s. While doing this they seemed to overlook the reason why teenagers were rebelling against the established order. The reason was not the music. The reason was that they were rejecting the attempts by adults to keep them under control. This rebellion against the status quo only further aided the changing attitudes of Americas white youth toward African Americans as a part of the rebellion of what they were being told was the norm.

Public officials especially in the south were afraid that rock 'n' roll was aiding in the challenge against segregation in America. The challenge that had gained significant momentum with the Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954, the same year that rock 'n' roll got its name from Alan Freed. Rock 'n' roll was not directly tied into the civil rights movement in America it certainly aided in changing attitudes towards African Americans. This change was necessary in order for the civil rights movement to obtain its objectives among them integration. By listening to and watching black performers white teenagers gained a respect for many blacks as individuals, which raised the question of why society was segregated when music was not. Many of its detractors linked the music with race, and sexual and moral degeneracy.<sup>31</sup>

### **A Changing Attitude**

The radio is what first started this shift in attitude toward African Americans. Radio deejays such as Alan Freed made out handsomely by playing rock 'n' roll music. Sometimes radio deejays needed a little incentive to play rock music in the form of payments from

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<sup>31</sup> Michael Campbell and James Brady, *Rock and Roll an Introduction*, 52.

promoters. Regardless this airplay broke down the color barriers that had existed on the radio as rock 'n' roll went from being the music of just the blacks to the music of the baby boomers. Songs such as Bill Haley's "Rocking Around the Clock" were instrumental in turning on white audiences to rock 'n' roll. When black artists experienced hits with songs such as Maybelline by Chuck Berry or Tutti Frutti by Little Richard they were often covered by white artists like Elvis Presley. Even though the backgrounds of these artists were quite different, they were speaking a common language, rock 'n' roll. By first being exposed to these covers white teenagers often discovered the livelier version by the original black performer.

As the popularity of rock 'n' roll grew, both black and white rock 'n' roll artists performed shows together all across the country. Many of these performances went off without a problem but some of them especially in the south did not. Groups such as North Alabama Citizens Council picketed rock concerts featuring a mixture of white and black artists with signs that read things like, "NAACP says integration, rock & roll, rock & roll."<sup>32</sup> The actions of these groups helped create bans on integrated shows in cities like Birmingham. Regardless of such bans American teenagers across the country flocked to rock 'n' roll shows that they heard promoted on their local radio station. They went to these shows regardless of if the performer happened to be black and regardless of the fact that their might be black teenagers in the audience. These integrated performers and audiences were most obvious in the concerts sponsored by deejay Alan Freed.

Soon another form of media could no longer ignore the popularity of rock 'n' roll and that medium is the television. Regardless of attempts to censor rock 'n' roll as seen with

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<sup>32</sup> Glenn C. Altschuler, *All Shook Up: How Rock 'N' Roll Changed America*, 39.

Elvis Presley's performances on the shows of Steve Allen and Ed Sullivan, people tuned in. Soon other shows started to showcase rock 'n' roll music and even the integration that it was causing. The best example of this is the show *American Bandstand* that was hosted by Dick Clark. Starting in 1957 the rock 'n' roll inspired show became integrated. According to observers the show always seemed to feature a black couple dancing to the rock music with the white couples. It was always a black couple so they always had someone to dance with, each other.<sup>33</sup>

The television and the radio were not the only way that teens were being exposed to rock 'n' roll. They were also being attracted to it at the movies. The first movie to really help popularize rock music was *Blackboard Jungle* which featured Bill Haley's version of "Rock Around the Clock." The song which had already been released for a year quickly was propelled to number one on the Billboard charts. The movie attracted integrated audiences as well as featured an integrated school. This sparked the creation of other movies that specifically targeted teenage audiences with the theme of rock 'n' roll. The most prominent among these were *Rock Around the Clock* and *Don't Knock the Rock* both released in 1956. These films featured the music and performances of white artists such as Bill Haley and the Comets, and black artists such as Little Richard. Both films featured the familiar radio personality Alan Freed.

The exposure of black and white audiences to rock 'n' roll that helped force integration by changing the attitudes towards African American bringing on a much increased level of racial respect did not go unnoticed. The publication *The Cash Box* exclaimed that rock 'n' roll was affecting "the lives of everyone in our country." They felt

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 40.

that rock was helping lead to a cultural harmony among the black and white races in the United States. In a headline they exclaimed that, "Rock and Roll May Be the Great Unifying Force!"<sup>34</sup> This headline seems to be very much the case but rock 'n' roll was a mixed blessing to African Americans.

Even though rock 'n' roll on many levels was unifying force between the white and black races it certainly was not all positive for African Americans. During the 1950s it was the white performers and promoters that were gaining the lions share of the profits garnered by rock 'n' roll. In order to get many deejays to play records promoters would have to pay them to do so. This system gained the name payola. Often times these bribes would come in the form of song writers credits which came with a share of the royalties garnered by the song. One of the greatest examples of this was Chick Berry's song "Maybellene," which he had composed by himself. In order to get air play for the record promoter Leonard Chess gave song writing credits to deejay Alan Freed and Russ Fratto. So every time money was made from the song Berry would have to split the profits with these men. Berry was finally able to gain full ownership of his song in a lawsuit during the late 80s. Dick Clark did the same thing for airplay on the show American Bandstand and by the end of the decade he owned over 150 copyrights on songs.<sup>35</sup> Even though payola was not restricted to just black artists it hit them harder, as it often took more incentive to get airplay for a black performer. They also had fewer opportunities to make up the loss than white performers did.

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<sup>34</sup> "Rock and Roll May Be the Great Unifying force!," *Cash Box*, (March 17, 1956).

<sup>35</sup> Glenn C. Altschuler, *All Shook Up: How Rock 'N' Roll Changed America*, 55.

African American performers also lost out on money due to covers of their songs. Artists would be encouraged to record songs written by black performers that experienced a modest amount of success on the charts and often times made out handsomely for it. Songs like "Maybellene" and "Tutti Frutti" that were written and recorded by black artists were quickly recorded by white artists like Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, and Bill Haley. Some artists like Ray Charles were flattered by this but others were not. Among the less amused is LaVern Baker who quipped, "Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery but that kind of flattery I can do without."<sup>36</sup> Deejays and owners of radio stations both north and south often preferred to play white artists and as soon as a white version was available it often replaced the black artists' version. No matter what black performers seemed to be at a competitive disadvantage in terms of gaining airplay.

Regardless of the financial disadvantages faced by African Americans during the 1950s, rock 'n' roll was instrumental in gaining respect for African Americans with the youth of America. This respect and new attitude would help garner support for the civil rights movement that hit a high level of achievement in the 1950s and 1960s; although the rise of rock 'n' roll and the emergence of the civil rights movements happened at the same time. The rise of rock 'n' roll undoubtedly helped change the way many young Americans looked at African Americans. These young Americans were quickly becoming a part of the voting population in America. Their attitudes towards African Americans were soon reflected in the policies of politicians that helped garner support for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 55.

Even though many Americans attempted to stop rock and roll in its tracks, they were unsuccessful. Rock 'n' roll was not just fun to dance to and enjoy, but many artists and historians believe it played an important role in pointing out the injustices in American society. In an interview Carl Perkins said, "I was talking to Chuck Berry and he said, 'Carl, I think we might be doing as much with our music as our leaders are doing in Washington.' And he was right."<sup>37</sup> Whether or not America's youth were actively trying to make political change is debatable, but the music has not only survived but has thrived in the years since the 1950s.

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<sup>37</sup> James Miller, *Flowers in the Dustbin*, 105.



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The Ties That Bind:  
The Civil Rights Movement and Rock 'n' Roll

During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, rock 'n' roll music emerged as an important fixture within the American culture and on American society. Rock music did so by serving a prominent role in many of this time periods most memorable events. The extent to which rock 'n' roll music and the people associated with it impacted events such as the civil rights movement has been discussed by historians and social commentators since its inception. To say that this style of music just served simply as a backdrop to major events such as the American civil rights movement and consequently the country's racial integration would be a gross understatement. The extent that rock 'n' roll is tied to racial integration and to the movement to grant civil rights to African Americans is often left undefined by historians.

Rock 'n' roll is not a topic that is raised when discussing or teaching about the civil rights movement and the integration of America in the 1950s, yet it is a topic that at the very least should be a part of the conversation. It is more than a mere coincidence that the rise of rock 'n' roll and major civil rights achievements occurred at the same time in the United States of America. Many historians have said that rock 'n' roll owes its rise in popularity to the successes of the Civil Rights Movement in the early 1950s. Yet, you would be hard pressed to find a historian that said the opposite, that the Civil Rights Movement owed thanks to the popularity of rock 'n' roll for achieving some of its greatest achievements. Rock 'n' roll challenged the status quo in the United States by creating a music and a culture that blended races, something that many in America had been afraid of and opposed to since the abolition of slavery during the Civil War. By its very nature as a black originated

and dominated medium, rock 'n' roll promoted integration and opportunity for blacks while bringing black culture to America's white teenagers. When looking at the United States of America in the 1950s, it is no surprise that rock 'n' roll experienced a meteoric rise in popularity among America's teenagers at the same time that the country was begrudgingly moving towards integration.

Rock 'n' roll itself would become a symbol of racial unity and integration not only to many who were a part of the culture created by the music's popularity, but also to the many Americans that opposed racial integration. Rock 'n' roll would not only become a target, but also the focus of efforts to curb integration. Rock 'n' roll and the civil rights movement are undoubtedly linked by the same societal changes of the 1950s. Before understanding those links we first must look at what the background of the struggle for civil rights in America for African Americans and also the ties that it had with black music.

### **Early Struggles for Civil Rights**

Much like the origins of rock 'n' roll and other African inspired music, the foundations of the civil rights movement can be traced back to when Africans were first brought to the Americas as slaves. The aim to stop the practice of racial segregation can be traced back to 1787 in the United States of America. It was in 1787 that as a result of segregation and discriminatory practices within the Methodist church, the Reverends Richard Allen and Absalom Jones formed the Free

African Society in Philadelphia.<sup>1</sup> They, along with many agencies that would follow, provided economic aid, spiritual guidance to former slaves or freedmen, and advocated for ending the practice of slavery.

The movement to end slavery, the abolitionist movement, gained steam as the new nation continued to develop. Newspapers were published to support the cause such as the *Freedom's Journal*, published by Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm.<sup>2</sup> Although this was the first black owned and operated newspaper, it would certainly not be the last to attack the cruelties suffered by free and enslaved blacks. Some twenty years after the founding of the *Freedom's Journal*, Frederick Douglass published the *North Star* in Rochester, New York. On the masthead appeared the motto, which boasted the publisher's belief in equality, "Right is of no sex - Truth is of no color - God is the Father of us all, and we are all Brethren."<sup>3</sup>

As these important founding civil rights events were taking place, music was already playing a role in the movement to end slavery and to obtain rights for free blacks in America. In the cotton fields of the south slaves sang spirituals. To the slave owner and field masters this was a way to increase morale and as a result productivity.<sup>4</sup> To the slaves it was a way to dream and hope for freedom and escape while expressing anger and frustration. These Negro spirituals as they are often

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<sup>1</sup>Mabunda L. Mpho, *Reference Library of Black America Volumes I, II, III, IV, V*. (Detroit: Gale Research, 1997), 311.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm, "To Our Patrons," *Freedom's Journal*, March 16, 1827, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Douglass, *North Star*, December 3, 1847, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel A. Floyd, *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 50.

called would become one of the first ways that music worked to help advance the quest for civil rights for African Americans.

After the Civil War ended in 1865 slavery was abolished through a series of legal measures in the United States of America. Not abolished was the discriminatory ways in which freedmen were treated through out most of the United States. Unknowingly starting or perhaps just continuing a long-standing belief that education was a significant way to gain equality among whites, Fisk University was founded in 1866. As stated in its original charter, Fisk University sought to offer education to all, "young men and women irrespective of color" and to adhere to and adopt, "the highest standards, not of Negro education, but of American education at its best."<sup>5</sup>

Fisk University, a predominantly all black school soon ran in to financial problems shortly after it was founded. In an effort to raise the money needed to keep the doors open, the university's then treasurer and musical professor George White, ironically a white man formed a nine person all black choral ensemble to tour and raise money for the university once formed. The ensemble began touring in 1871 under the name the Jubilee Singers. The group performed many different songs including Negro spirituals throughout the United States and even to audiences of royalty in Europe. Although it sounds glamorous while looking at the surface, the start of the journey for the Jubilee Singers was anything but that.

The Jubilee Singers faced harsh treatment from town to town in the United States and were often referred to by city newspapers as just being "Nigger

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<sup>5</sup> "Fisk's Storied Past," Fisk University,  
<http://www.fisk.edu/AboutFisk/HistoryOfFisk.aspx>.

Minstrels". Minstrels, referred to popular live shows in which white performers often performed in black face. The ensemble pressed on and quickly began to attract not only black audiences but many white audiences as well. The Jubilee Singers were recognized for their talent with an invitation to perform at the White House for President Ulysses S. Grant in March of 1872.

Despite the successes of the Jubilee Singers, they still faced the realities of being nine young black people in the United States of America. They were often unable to find places where they could stay or eat food. This struggle is told by one of the founding members Maggie Porter, "There were many times, when we didn't have place to sleep or anything to eat. Mr. White went out and brought us some sandwiches and tried to find some place to put us up."<sup>6</sup> The Fisk Jubilee Singers not only faced discrimination when trying to eat or find a place to stay they were also the targets of violent threats. They were the targets of these threats for many of the same reasons that rock artists of the 1950s would be: they were trying to unintentionally bring aspects of black culture to white America.

W.E.B. Du Bois, one of Frisk University's most famous graduates tells us of the achievements the Jubilee Singers made in his work, *The Soul of Black Folks*. According to Du Bois the Negro spirituals were often ignored until, "The Fisk Jubilee Singers sang the slave songs so deeply into the world's heart that it can never wholly forget them."<sup>7</sup> Du Bois fails to mention that as a result this opened the eyes and

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<sup>6</sup> Andrew Ward, *Dark Midnight When I Rise: The Story of the Jubilee Singers Who Introduced the World to the Music of Black America* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2000), 132.

<sup>7</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, 1961), 187-188.

minds of white audience members to the culture and consequently the history of black Americans. Although many looked at the original Fisk Jubilee Singers as entertainment they were accomplishing something much deeper by crossing over the color lines and performing for white audiences in both the United States and Europe. The original Jubilee Singers of Fisk University did not have the mass appeal to young audiences and did not have the help of technologies such as the radio and television like the rock artists of the 1950s, yet they were still able to reach diverse audiences. Many of the spirituals that were sung by slaves in the fields and also by the Fisk Jubilee Singers became a part of Christian worship. These spirituals were used in Christian worship in the form of Gospel music and thus a major influence for many of the founding rock 'n' roll musicians of the 1950s.

### **Segregated America**

The popularity of the Jubilee Singers was not the only way that African Americans in the United States were making progress toward breaking down long standing racial barriers in the United States. After slavery was abolished in America, a series of three amendments were passed to bestow legal rights or status to those who had just been freed. During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Thirteenth Amendment formally abolished the practice of slavery in America, the Fourteenth Amendment provided citizenship, and the Fifteenth guaranteed the right to vote. In spite of these amendments and civil rights acts to enforce the amendments, between 1873 and 1883 the Supreme Court handed down a series of decisions that virtually nullified the work of Congress during Reconstruction.



Regarded by many in America as second class citizens, blacks were separated from whites by laws known as Jim Crow Laws. These laws separated blacks and whites by law in schools, private establishments, recreational facilities, and even in prisons. These laws, while more rampant and accepted in the South, were also present in parts of the North. Many felt that laws and policies promoting and entrenching segregation were a violation to the rights guaranteed to citizens through the Fourteenth Amendment but in 1896 the United States Supreme Court provided a reply to this claim that would shape life in America for almost a century after its ruling.

In 1869 the Supreme Court ruled that segregation of races was legal with the ominous phrase, "separate but equal." This ruling was made in the Supreme Court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The ruling in this case meant that separate but equal facilities did not violate the rights granted by the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution. The problem with this seemed to be that many people in America differed on their definition of the word equal. Most who championed this ruling had little intention of making separate facilities truly equal.

In 1909 a group of equal rights activists founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The NAACP was founded in the spirit of fighting for civil rights by championing against racial discrimination and segregation. It would take the vigorous work of the NAACP and its legal team comprised of members such as Thurgood Marshall to finally reverse the ruling of the Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). The NAACP would seek to do this by challenging the "separate but equal" doctrine as it pertained to schools. As the

NAACP exclaims on its website they believe that education is the key to full citizenship.<sup>8</sup> This was the same path that institutions such as Fisk University had been following for almost a century.

For years, the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) ruling negatively impacted the rights of African Americans in the United States. It allowed segregation to run rampant over the United States and thus Jim Crow's firm hand remained wrapped around the country, stifling hopes for racial integration. This all changed when the Supreme Court once again altered the momentum of the efforts to gain equal rights for African Americans. In 1954 the United States Supreme Court ruled against segregation in schools.

The Supreme Court finally reversed their stance for legalized segregation with its ruling in the case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954). The legal team of the NAACP had been systematically bringing forward cases to the Supreme Court in an effort to challenge the legality of separate schools on the basis of race while using the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment as its ammunition to seek the overturning of *Plessy*. In 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren led the Supreme Court of the United States. Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote the court's unanimous opinion in favor of desegregating the country's schools. In the court's opinion Warren stated in reference to the court's decision, "We conclude that, in the field of public education, the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> "1954 Separate and Unequal," National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, <http://www.naacphistory.org/#/detailmilestone/88/history>.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Supreme Court, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (Washington D.C., 1954), 7.

The Chief Justice did not stop there, in fact he went on to make the point that opponents of racial segregation had been trying to make since the Free African Society was formed in Philadelphia in 1787 when he stated, "To separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone."<sup>10</sup>

This feeling of inferiority cited by Chief Justice Warren is exactly what supporters of racial segregation wanted African Americans to feel. They wanted them to feel this because they believed it. It is because of this belief that many supporters of racial segregation were willing to go to great lengths to uphold the status quo. The status quo was the long established tradition of separating people of different races in many public places and institutions. The Supreme Court's unanimous decision in the *Brown* case was the ultimate blow to Jim Crow America. This meant the movement for racial integration and civil rights had momentum. A momentum that had to be stopped at all costs.

The ruling of the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) emboldened African Americans to challenge the long-standing social order in America that had treated them subserviently. These challenges would lead to a series of showdowns between those who wished to move forward with desegregating America and those who wished to stop it. Most of these incidents involved openly challenging the institution of segregation such as Rosa Parks's refusal to yield her seat to a white passenger, and the Montgomery Bus Boycott led

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 6.

by Martin Luther King Jr. after Parks was arrested. These incidents targeted a specific issue, segregation in public transportation. The Supreme Court struck down segregation in public transportation on December 20, 1956 giving the Civil Rights Movement another decisive victory.

Then of course are the events that occurred at Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas where nine black students were being denied admission despite a court order demanding they be allowed to attend the school. Governor Orval Faubus stood in their way with National Guard as President Eisenhower sent in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne to enforce the court order and to protect the students. These events were very planned out, calculated, successful attempts to challenge the legality of segregation in the American south. Many supporters of segregation focused on events like these, and leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. by reacting violently towards them and making every effort to stop them in their tracks. These efforts by Parks, King, and the Little Rock Nine held common ground in that they tried to gain Civil Rights through changing the laws in America. President Dwight D. Eisenhower once demonstrated his feelings towards efforts such as these when he exclaimed, "the final battle against intolerance is to be fought-not in the chambers of any legislature--but in the hearts of men."<sup>11</sup> Eisenhower effectively said that you could change as many laws as you want, but that simply changing laws won't change the way people look at people that are different than them.

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<sup>11</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, Address at the Hollywood Bowl, Beverly Hills, California, October 19, 1956, [http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/all\\_about\\_ike/Quotes/Quotes.html](http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/all_about_ike/Quotes/Quotes.html).

It is precisely because of the Supreme Court taking the first step to racially integrate America that rock 'n' roll would become a prime target of segregationists. The final battle, as Eisenhower referred to it, to change the hearts of men was already taking place amongst America's youth as the influence of rock 'n' roll spread over America. Rock 'n' roll artists were, most unknowingly, changing the way that young white Americans felt about black Americans through their music. By becoming a leading cause of racial integration in the eyes of many Americans, rock 'n' roll became an important institution willingly or not in advancing the agenda for civil rights. Rock 'n' roll seemingly threatened everything that many supporters of segregation were afraid of. It seemed to be creating a common culture, and even mutual respect, between white and black Americans. It is because of this that a very vocal and angry faction of segregationists would target and seek to destroy rock 'n' roll and all those that supported it.

### **Hail, Hail, Rock 'n' Roll, Deliver Me From the Days of Old**

While the Supreme Court cracked the foundation of the house of segregation in numerous places, by outlawing segregation in schools, rock 'n' roll along with other events more commonly associated with the Civil Rights Movement, would bring a sledge hammer to the walls of the same structure. As its popularity grew in the 1950s, rock 'n' roll faced opposition for many reasons. They disliked the sexuality of the lyrics and of the performers, they disliked the fact that the music came directly from African Americans regardless of if it was a white performer who recorded the song, and they disliked the rebellious nature that the music was

accused of inspiring. Rock 'n' roll faced the same style of opposition as did any of the more conventional factions of the Civil Rights Movement. People associated with the popularity of rock music found themselves the target of threats and warnings, violent attacks, and written about by anti-civil rights groups.

Prior to the monumental achievement of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) a music that would be branded as rock 'n' roll in 1954 by the esteemed disc jockey, Alan Freed, was already gaining popularity. The audience that was most enamored by the new style of music was the teenagers. The teenage population had been experiencing a rise in numbers due to the baby boom that followed World War II. According to the United States Census Bureau, within a five year span from 1958 to 1963, the number of students in America's high schools had risen over 17%.<sup>12</sup> This larger portion of population was also spending big money on entertainment to the tune of \$1.5 billion dollars a year and of that \$1.5 billion, \$75 million a year was being spent on music records by 1959.<sup>13</sup> When looking at these numbers in combination with the perceived threats of rock 'n' roll, it is no wonder that segregationists took notice of the music and lifestyles growing popularity. Rock 'n' roll was changing the value systems and social teaching that blacks were inferior to whites in every way. That something as simple as listening to the same music, or attending the same concerts as black teenagers, was viewed as ultimately distasteful.

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<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, *Population Characteristics*, P-20, 128 (Washington, DC: January 16, 1964), 1.

<sup>13</sup> "A New Ten Billion Dollar Power: The U.S. Teen-Age Consumer," *Life*, (August 31, 1959): 78.

To see the barriers still in place for blacks in America after the Supreme Court struck down segregation in schools, you had to look no further than to see how black rock musicians were treated while touring the United States during the second half of the 1950s. In many cities across the south, integrated shows were illegal. Some of these cities included Columbus, Chattanooga, Birmingham, Memphis, and New Orleans. These specific cities were stops on the 1957 fall tour, Biggest Show of Stars. (This same tour played an integrated show at the Rochester, New York on September 17, 1957.) This tour included prominent black artists like Fats Domino and Chuck Berry and at the same time included white artists like Buddy Holly and the Crickets and Paul Anka. For the performances in these cities the shows promoter felt that black artists were what the audiences wanted to see and sent the white performers home. It went so far that in Memphis the white bus driver was not allowed to watch the acts perform.

In various other cities the black artists were not allowed to eat in the same restaurants or stay in the same hotels as the white musicians. This led artists like Buddy Holly and Paul Anka to refuse to eat at these restaurants or stay in these hotels. In one particular incident after being told by a restaurant owner that they wouldn't serve the black artists Buddy Holly replied, "If you can't feed these fellas, we're not gonna eat here neither!"<sup>14</sup> This inevitably meant that on many occasions the artists would eat and sleep on the buses. This was the same thing that many white artists on tour with black artists faced throughout different parts of the

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<sup>14</sup> Rick Coleman, *Blue Monday: Fats Domino and the Lost Dawn of Rock 'n' Roll* (Cambridge: De Capo Press Books, 2006), 169.

country. These long standing policies of segregation and prejudice meant that many people in America looked down on black Americans, but not all of them did.

Despite the long standing laws against integration in many cities across the American south and even certain place in the north, a change in the mindset of the youth in America was underway. Even though the Supreme Court was slowly desegregating America through its rulings many remained opposed to the integration of races. This change was not done through laws but through emotions and the hearts of America's youth. A 1955 editorial in *Cashbox* magazine showed just how the rising influence of rock 'n' roll was changing these long held prejudices toward African Americans:

The whole movement has broken down barriers which in the ordinary course of events might have taken untold amounts of time to do. How better to understand what is unknown to you than by appreciation of the emotional experiences of other people? And how better are these emotions portrayed than by music?<sup>15</sup>

Just as President Eisenhower would state a year later that true change needed to happen through the heart, many including the editors as *Cashbox* magazine felt this may have already been taking place.

This change in how young Americans viewed African Americans in comparison to the generation before them could be observed at countless rock concerts across America. This change could even be observed in many concert halls across the Deep South. An observer of an integrated rock show in Houston, Texas

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<sup>15</sup> "Breaking Down the Barriers," *Cashbox*, January 22, 1955, 3.



during the summer of 1956 commented on how the two different races were being treated differently, "White teenagers are getting their first taste of discrimination and they don't like it. Some of them...know that most of the interracial taboos are a result of custom and not law."<sup>16</sup> Herbert Reed of the Platters acknowledged this change, "Wherever we go white kids beg us for autographs." Referring to a concert in Austin, Texas, Reed continued, "a rope was put up to separate Negroes and whites in the audience. When we started singing, the kids broke the rope and started dancing together."<sup>17</sup>

In other places in the south they didn't even try to keep the show segregated with such measures. In reviewing a concert stop of the Biggest Show of Stars that took place on October 2, 1957 the *Fort Worth Press* explained, "Whites and Negroes sat side by side. There was no attempt to segregate the races." Scenes like the ones mentioned by Herbert Reed and the *Fort Worth Press* were happening all across the country. Events like these were welcome sights to artists such as Chuck Berry who later admired, "We'd go in and see salt and pepper all mixed together."<sup>18</sup> It was clear to many at the time that rock music was changing how whites and blacks and interacted.

As early as 1955 people were witnessing these changes, including Columbia Records executive and Rochester, New York native Mitch Miller who theorized that young people were questioning these long standing racist attitudes, "By their new-

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<sup>16</sup> "Integrated Houston Dance Draws Four Thousand," *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 25, 1956, 21.

<sup>17</sup> "Rock 'n Roll Helping Race Relations, Platters Content," *Down Beat*, May 30, 1956, 14.

<sup>18</sup> Fred Stuckey, "Chuck Berry," *Guitar Player*, February, 1971, 23.

found attachment to rhythm and blues, young people might be protesting the southern tradition of not having anything to do with colored people.”<sup>19</sup> By 1956 even historians like C. Vann Woodward were recognizing the shift taking place in seeing, “evidence of a more liberal-or perhaps more indifferent-outlook on race among southerners who came of age during and after the Second World War than among their parents.”<sup>20</sup>

### **Segregation Now, Segregation Tomorrow, Segregation Forever**

The fundamental changes that were being caused by the increasing popularity of rock ‘n’ roll were not a welcome change to many in America. To the people that wished to preserve the social structure of white superiority over blacks, and to those that wished to keep segregation intact, this was an unwelcomed change. All across America and especially in the south, things were being done to stop racial integration as anyone could tell from watching the nightly news coverage of the many civil rights demonstrations across the south. These efforts represented a fear, a fear that things were changing. It was because of this fear that the attempts to stop racial integration were so massive, involving law enforcement, government officials, white supremacist groups, and everyday citizens.

By 1956 it was clear that the Jim Crow ways of the south was under attack from all sides, an attack that was launched with the force of the *Brown* ruling in 1954. With that in mind the south saw a concentrated effort by members of the

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<sup>19</sup> Mitch Miller, “June, Moon, Swoon and KoKoMo,” *New York Times Magazine*, April 24, 1955, 78.

<sup>20</sup> C. Vann Woodward, “The ‘New Reconstruction in the South: Desegregation in Historical Perspective,” *Commentary*, June 1956, 507.

NAACP and other civil rights organizations to make this change mandated by the Supreme Court a swift one. These groups also made strong efforts to expand integration, to broaden its impact to other areas of society including transportation. In 1956, 101 southern members of the Senate and the House of Representatives asserted their displeasure with the courts rulings against segregation by signing the "Southern Manifesto." In this document they charged the Supreme Court with abusing their power and as a result pledged not to obey their rulings which they felt were unconstitutional.<sup>21</sup>

It was in this vane that the Supreme Court was acting unconstitutionally by weakening the structure of segregation that citizens rallied to oppose it. After the *Brown* ruling in 1954 the Ku Klux Klan experienced a resurgence. The Ku Klux Klan would once again operate in the realm of violent and sometimes deadly scare tactics. The Klan would not be the only citizens group rallying against integration in the south. In towns and cities all across the south groups calling themselves the White Citizens' Councils were formed. These groups often omitted the "white" from their organization's name in an effort to broaden their appeal to those who were not typically thought of or did not think of themselves as being white supremacists. This effort can be observed by reading the first edition of the council's newspaper *The Citizens' Council* in which their mission is explained in a rather politically correct manner, "A much wider hope is that a wider understanding of the deadly attack upon our society will result, and that Council movement will gain added momentum

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<sup>21</sup> U.S. Congressional Record, 84th Congress Second Session, Vol. 102, part 4 (March 12, 1956),(Washington, D.C.: Governmental Printing Office, 1956).

among patriotic Americans.<sup>22</sup> The deadly attack was that of imposing integration on the south. Taking the lead from the Southern Manifesto, the Citizens' Council or White Citizens' Council declared this an issue of states rights. These groups would try to stop segregation from ending at all costs and it just so happened that one of the most aggressive factions of the Council saw rock 'n' roll as the primary threat.

The state of Alabama was a focal point for many events that took place as a part of the Civil Rights Movement. By the spring of 1956 the White Citizens' Council had over 40,000 members in Alabama and at least seven factions of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>23</sup> It was also from this state that the most organized attacks against rock 'n' roll would take place. These attacks would be led by one of the most outspoken segregationists, a man named Asa Carter. Carter was the leader of the White Citizens' Council of Northern Alabama. Carter was also a member of the Ku Klux Klan and later become the speechwriter of George Wallace and the architect of the slogan, "Segregation Now, Segregation Tomorrow, Segregation Forever."<sup>24</sup>

Carter's campaign against rock 'n' roll began within a few months of people such as Herbert Reed noticing the changes that were underway in the south as a result of rock 'n' roll. This meant that segregationists such as Carter were also noticing the changes that were taking place. Asa Carter was not afraid of gaining attention from the mainstream press, in fact he used to further his agenda. Asa Carter felt that, "Rock 'n' roll is a means of pulling down the white man to the level of

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<sup>22</sup> "To the General Public," *The Citizens' Council*, October, 1955, 1.

<sup>23</sup> *Birmingham News*, February 19, 1956.

<sup>24</sup> George Wallace, 1963 Inaugural Address. Montgomery, Alabama, January 14, 1963, [http://www.archives.alabama.gov/govs\\_list/inauguralspeech.html](http://www.archives.alabama.gov/govs_list/inauguralspeech.html).

the 'Negro'. It is part of a plot to undermine the morals of the youth of our nation."<sup>25</sup> In early 1956, *Newsweek* quoted Carter as stating that rock music was a plot by the NAACP to, "mongrelize America."<sup>26</sup> Carter exclaimed that the White Citizens' Councils had formed all over south, "to see the people who sponsor the music, and the people who promote Negro bands to play for teenagers."<sup>27</sup> The NAACP was in no way trying to tie themselves to rock 'n' roll as shown in executive secretary Roy Wilkins comment that, "Some people in the South are blaming us for everything from measles to atomic fallouts."<sup>28</sup>

This did not stop Carter's attacks and his feelings were elaborated on when the *New York Times* quoted him stating that the NAACP had already "infiltrated," Southern white teenagers with, "rock and roll music."<sup>29</sup> The same article reported that Carter and the North Alabama White Citizens' Council would be doing a survey of all jukeboxes in the Northern Alabama area. He felt that other factions of the group would follow their lead in asking that rock 'n' roll records and all records by "Negro" performers be thrown out. In other parts of the south factions of the Council followed suit. In Louisiana flyers were distributed by the Citizens' Council of Greater New Orleans that pleaded with the headline of, "Help Save the Youth of America, DON'T BUY NEGRO RECORDS!" The same signs asked that they call local music stores and radio stations to complain about this music. To further their point

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<sup>25</sup> *The Melody Maker*, 1956,  
<http://www.beyondthecommons.com/musquots.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> "White Citizens Council vs. Rock and Roll," *Newsweek*, April 23, 1956, 32.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> "Segregationist Wants Ban on 'Rock and Roll'." *New York Times*, March, 30 1956, 27

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

they also spelled out on the poster the exact “danger” that supporting these records could lead to, “If you don’t want to serve Negroes in your place of business, then do not have negro records on your juke box or listen to negro records on the radio.”<sup>30</sup> The *New York Times* reported just how unpopular this decision would be when it said that coin music distributors said that, “this would mean eliminating most of their hits.”<sup>31</sup> These thinly covered threats from the White Citizens’ Council against the people that supported and played rock ‘n’ roll were proven to be anything but empty.

African American musicians in the 1950s were often exposed to violent situations, but never were they so violently attacked as Nat King Cole was on April 10, 1956 in Birmingham. Cole was attacked while performing on stage when he was jumped by several angry white men. As it would turn out this was a premeditated attack by the White Citizens’ Council. Asa Carter had been in the audience but denied having any part in the attack. Cole was a jazz singer and not a rock ‘n’ roll musician. Yet to members of the White Citizens’ Council there was not much of a difference as Cole was also helping the cause of integration.<sup>32</sup> As Ray Charles put it, it didn’t matter that Cole wasn’t a rock ‘n’ roll artist it happened because, “the young white girls run up and say, ‘Oh Nat!’ and they say ‘No we can’t have that!’.”<sup>33</sup> The

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<sup>30</sup> Citizens’ Council of Greater New Orleans, Inc., Notice! Stop Poster, 1956.

<sup>31</sup> “Segregationist Wants Ban on ‘Rock and Roll.’” *New York Times*, 30 March 1956, 27

<sup>32</sup> Glenn C. Altschuler, *All Shook Up: How Rock ‘N’ Roll Changed America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003): 39.

<sup>33</sup> David P. Szatmary, *Rockin’ in Time A Social History of Rock-N-Roll* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 2004), 23.

pressure was on to stop rock 'n' roll as Council groups protested show all across the south with signs with slogans like, "NAACP says integration, rock & roll, rock & roll."

The threats to supporters of rock 'n' roll, the calls for it to be banned, the violence, and the protestors at shows were all ways that segregationists tried to get people to fear the idea of rock 'n' roll and what could happen if they supported it. This calculated process of instilling fear was faintly successful as in some cities it led to things such as bans and cancellations of rock 'n' roll shows. These bans happened in southern cities like Birmingham and New Orleans.<sup>34</sup> Bans were also instituted in northern cities like Boston, often citing possible riots and violence as a reason for the ban. Many places would cancel shows as would be the case in Connecticut when a Fats Domino show was canceled in 1956 for the fear of a riot.<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately for Asa Carter and the White Citizens' Council and other supporters of segregation the fear wasn't significant enough to stop rock 'n' roll and everything that it brought with it. Teenagers all across the United States continued to buy rock 'n' roll records and were quickly realizing that Pat Boone was no substitute to Little Richard or Chuck Berry. The common ground and understanding formed by rock 'n' roll music was too strong for this fear mongering to conquer, and the profits too large for promoters to turn away. As rock 'n' roll achieved success amongst the teenagers of America in the 1950s so did the goals of the Civil Rights Movement. Everyday touring Civil Rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. were confronted with the realities of segregation in America. Touring rock 'n' roll musicians were also confronted with this reality on a daily basis.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

<sup>35</sup> "Rock 'n' Riot," *Time Magazine*, May 19, 1958, 50.

The Civil Rights Movement and the ascent of rock 'n' roll do not just share a common time period, but they helped each other accomplish many of the same things by challenging the institution of segregation on a daily basis, in their own way. While the Civil Rights leaders were actively seeking to overthrow laws that supported segregation through acts of civil disobedience, rock artists were winning over the hearts of young Americans by just playing music about what they knew. It just so happened to be that the songs about girls and boys, cars, school, and even sex were things that not only black artists and black teenagers could relate to, it was also something that white artists and white teenagers could relate to.

This common ground brought forth opportunities for blacks and whites to embrace a common ground and this common ground was brought to them in many ways through rock 'n' roll music. By finally finding this common ground and with the help of the Supreme Court's stance against segregation, and the spread of the Civil Rights Movement, rock 'n' roll was able to erode the long standing tradition of hate and segregation through its music. Rock music did not rid all of America's youth of the prejudices held by the generation before them, but it did impact many of them and, in some, it may have just started the process. Soon these teenagers, the baby boomers, would reach voting age and it is no surprise that some of the most sweeping Civil Rights reforms took place as this happened. A great example of this is the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which effectively outlaws segregation in the United States of America by allowing the United States to enforce integration.

While the Civil Rights Movement would have continued without rock 'n' roll, the influence of the genre and its artists on the minds of the nation's young people



was vast. Without its influence it probably would have taken much longer to break down the barriers that rock 'n' roll helped break down. This is precisely why the story of rock 'n' roll after the ruling by the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) should be a part of American history curriculums in secondary schools.

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### Rockin' for Civil Rights:

How did rock music change the mindset of America and as a result lead to Civil Rights?

Rock 'n' roll and the Civil Rights Movement? Is there a connection between the two topics? At the surface the answer could go either way. Most people realize that rock 'n' roll music and its artists were impacted by institutionalized racism and segregation, in different parts of the United States. It was impacted in this way by segregated concerts and often times even the radio airways were segregated. However, the connection between the two goes much deeper.

### **Time Frame**

The unit on Rock 'n' Roll and the Civil Rights Movement will take seven class periods to complete. Five of these class periods are set aside for the students to complete a podcast for the summative assessment portion of the unit. The lessons are planned for seventy-two minute block classes but can easily be adapted to any class period length.

### **Student Objectives**

1. To identify connections between rock 'n' roll and the success of the Civil Rights Movement.
2. To analyze primary and secondary source documents through class work and research.
3. To communicate their knowledge in both a written and verbal format.

### **National Standards**

This unit encompasses various elements outlined in Era 9 on the postwar United States from 1945 to the early 1970's of the *National Standards for History*. The following national standards are addressed in this unit:

**Standard 1B:** The student understands how the social changes of the postwar period affected various Americans.

**Standard 4A:** The student understands the "Second Reconstruction" and its advancement of civil rights.

### **National Council for the Social Studies Curriculum Standards**

**Standard 2:** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

**Standard 5:** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.

**Standard 6:** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create, interact with, and change structures of power, authority, and governance.

### **Background**

In 1941, America entered World War II, and as it did, the long lasting impact of the Great Depression started to abate. After the war was over, many things in the United States changed when compared to the way life was prior to World War II. Among these changes were,

where and how families lived, which included most families moving to the suburbs. Moving from the cities wasn't the only change that families experienced, the roles of family members also changed in post World War II America. As the country found itself in the 1950s, the teenagers of America were experiencing a new phenomenon for them, leisure time. This led to an upsurge in movies, music, and advertising that targeted teenagers. In fact, some argue that the 1950s "invented" teenagers. As teenagers began to experience a dramatic increase in leisure time and American families continued moving to suburbs, the Civil Rights Movement in the United States began gaining serious momentum. During the 1950s the Civil Rights Movement saw many achievements. These achievements were in many areas including the court room with cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954). With *Brown* the Supreme Court was able to show that race relations in the United States needed to change. This led to other accomplishments through demonstrations such as the Montgomery bus boycott.

The changes within families during the 1950s along with the changes in race relations can both be linked to a common thread, rock 'n' roll. In New York State the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a focal point at the secondary level in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade year. The changes with families in the 1950s and the Civil Rights Movement are featured in the New York State core curriculum for 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade social studies. Rock 'n' roll isn't specifically named in the 8<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> grade American history curriculums in New York State, but it can easily serve as a common thread between the two subjects. The following lessons and project are best utilized after teaching about the Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954). It could also be taught after a traditional Civil Rights Movement unit. Due to rock 'n'

roll music, the attitudes of many white Americans, especially teenagers toward black Americans changed. These attitudes changed through interactions with people of the opposite race. Teenagers experienced this by going to rock 'n' roll concerts, listening to rock 'n' roll radio stations, and just listening to rock 'n' roll records. Rock 'n' roll helped build a common culture between the teenagers of white and black America. This new attitude of respect was different than what the older generation of whites demonstrated towards black Americans.

In the scope of American history, the Civil Rights Movement is not far from memory. However, as the years between the 1960s and the present grow farther and farther apart, students will have a decreasing amount of personal connection, to the events of the Civil Rights Movement. The number of people that experienced the personal and institutionalized prejudices first hand is starting to shrink. The same dwindling effect is happening to the number of people that were involved in various elements of the Civil Rights Movement itself. It is because of these events falling further into recorded history that we need find new ways to make the post World War II era, America, relevant to students at the secondary level.

A great way to make subjects such as, family relationships, and race relations of the 1950s relevant is by using rock 'n' roll as the focus. Many people, especially teenagers, can relate to music making them feel a certain way and they can also identify with having different views from their parents about what they should listen to, or about certain people they should or should not associate with. That is exactly what teenagers in the 1950s were experiencing. According to the learning theory of constructivism, one of the best ways to make students want to learn about a subject is to make it relevant to them. A historical subject is relevant to



students if they can relate to it or if they have had experiences involving similar problems or struggles.

### Procedures

#### Day One: Exposure to Rock 'n' Roll

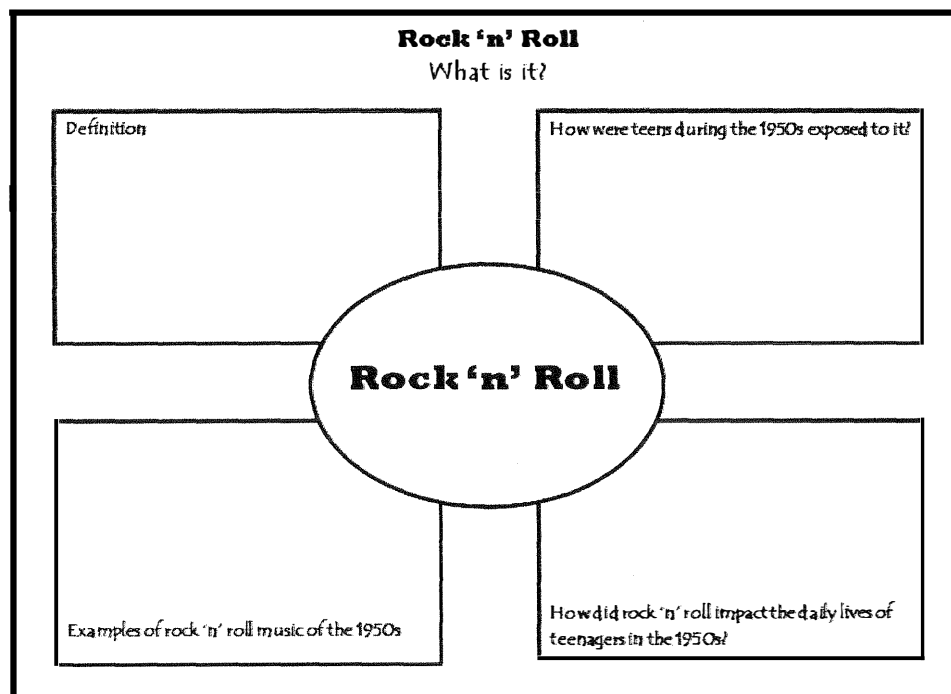
- 1.) As a warm up students will review the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) and discuss what the implications of this ruling are on the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) ruling and the institution of segregation. The students will complete the warm up questions on their own.

<b>Warm Up</b>
In your own words, what was the United States Supreme Court ruling in <i>Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka</i> (1954)?
_____
_____
_____
How was this ruling a departure from the ruling of <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> (1896)
_____
_____
_____

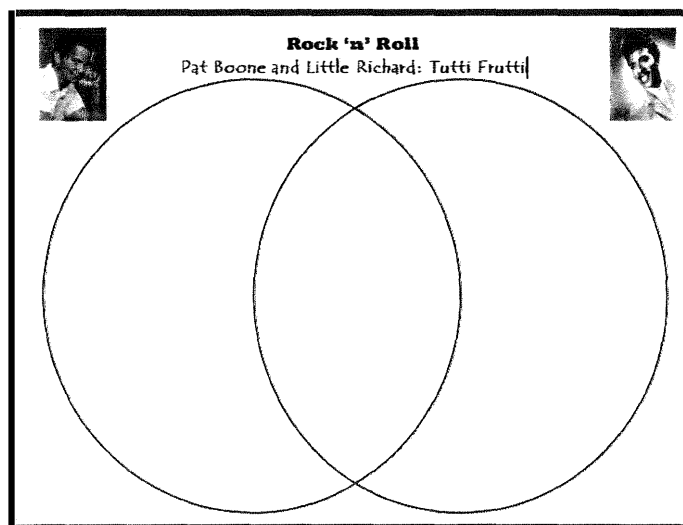
Document #1

- 2.) In groups of two or three, have the students discuss their answers to the warm up questions. After several minutes bring the discussion to the class as a whole. It is important to emphasize that many people were opposed to ending segregation especially after the *Brown* ruling.

- 3.) For an anticipatory set, tell the students you are going to write a term on the board and that you want them to write down the first thought that pops in to their head on the back of the warm up. Write the term 'rock 'n' roll' on the board. Discuss some of the things that came to the students minds when they thought of the term. Then ask them, how do you think this connects to Civil Rights and the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954)? Discuss this as a class.
- 4.) After discussing the question in procedure three transition to step four by stating that the class will be studying the connection by looking at different elements of rock 'n' roll and how it gained popularity during the 1950s. At this time complete the definition portion of the organizer on rock 'n' roll. The definition used should encompass the fact that rock 'n' roll music derived from African American genres such as rhythm and blues and that it gained popularity amongst white teenagers during the 1950s.



- 5.) To answer the question of how teens were exposed to rock 'n' roll, ask the students, how do you learn about new things? The students will be able to come up with many answers that would also be true of rock 'n' roll such as from their friends, the radio, movies, advertising, and the television. Use this to talk about the influence of the radio, records, movies, advertising, and television at the time.
- 6.) To address the portion of the organizer that asks for examples of rock 'n' roll music list artists such as Little Richard, Fats Domino, Bill Haley, and Elvis Presley. As an extension to this section have student listen to two versions of the song Tutti Frutti. The version written and performed by Little Richard and the version performed by Pat Boone. After the students have listened to each version of the song as a class fill out the venn-diagram identifying similarities and differences between the two artists and their versions of the song. In the venn-diagram you should address the mood of the song, how it made them feel, the energy, who wrote it, how parents of the 1950s may react to each version, what was the intended audience, and what was the race of both artists. For these questions to be most effective you may want to discuss/preview them before listening to the songs and perhaps list them on the board as questions to consider.



- 7.) After analyzing the two versions of Tutti Frutti using the venn diagram, have the students interpret the quote by Little Richard on Pat Boone recording his music. It may be best to have them do this in pairs and then discuss it as a class as well.

**Rock 'n' Roll**  
**Looking back: Little Richard**

They needed a rock star to block me out of white homes because I was a hero to white kids. The white kids would have Pat Boone upon the dresser and me in the drawer because they liked my version better, but the families (parents) didn't want me because of the image that I was projecting.

-Little Richard

1.) According to Little Richard, how did white kids view him?

2.) Why does Little Richard think that record producers had Pat Boone record his music?

3.) What does Little Richard's quote tell you about how rock 'n' roll changed the way teenagers viewed African Americans during the 1950s?

Document #4

- 8.) Complete the last part of the graphic organizer that discusses how rock 'n' roll impacted the daily lives of teenagers during the 1950s. This is a good time to talk about things like fashion and how they were influenced by what rock 'n' roll artists were wearing. Discuss the fact that in many parts of the country concerts were segregated. Many times a rope was put up between a white and black section of the audience. In some parts of the country black and white artists weren't allowed to play in the same venues. Many movies were of the 1950s had a rock 'n' roll influence including the movie *Blackboard Jungle* which sprung Bill Haley and the Comets to the top of the charts with

the song *Rock Around the Clock*. Rock music also influenced the relationships that teenagers had with their parents. In many cases parents weren't thrilled about their white children buying into what they observed as a black culture. They didn't like that they were listening to records made by African Americans and that in many cases holding these artists with a high level of esteem.

- 9.) At the conclusion of the day's lesson, engage the students with a concluding question for formative assessment. One possibility is to ask, how did rock 'n' roll change the lives of teenagers in the United States during the 1950s? Have the students take a minute to process the question and then share their response with a partner. Ask each pair to share what they discussed.

### **Day Two: Opposition to Rock 'n' Roll**

- 1.) To think back to the last class, have the student's list three things that they know about rock 'n' roll of the 1950s.

#### **Warm Up**

List three things that you know about rock 'n' roll during the 1950s.

1.

2.

3.

- 2.) For the anticipatory set ask the students to analyze the quote from President Dwight D. Eisenhower about civil rights. Discuss the questions that accompany the quote as a class. Have the students recall ways that the Civil Rights Movement fought against intolerance in America. Talk about the different ways that the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement fought for change.

## Rock 'n' Roll

### President Eisenhower on Civil Rights

The efforts of people such as Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, and the Little Rock Nine held common ground in that they tried to gain Civil Rights through changing the laws in America.

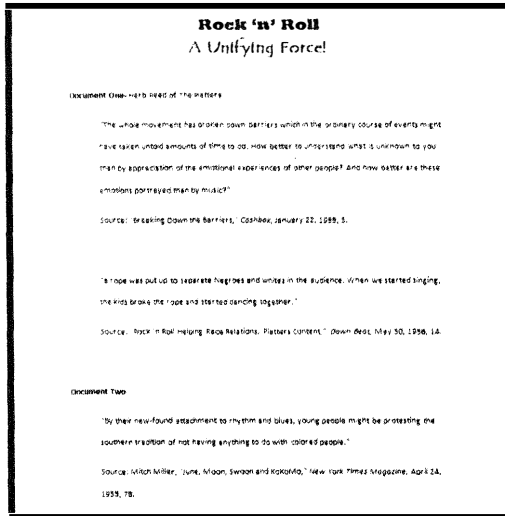
**President Dwight D. Eisenhower** once demonstrated his feelings towards efforts such as these when he exclaimed, "~~the final battle against intolerance is to be fought not in the chambers of any legislature—but in the hearts of men.~~"

Source: Dwight D. Eisenhower, Address at the Hollywood Bowl, Beverly Hills, California, October 19, 1956, [http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/all\\_about\\_ike/Quotes/Quotes.html](http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/all_about_ike/Quotes/Quotes.html).

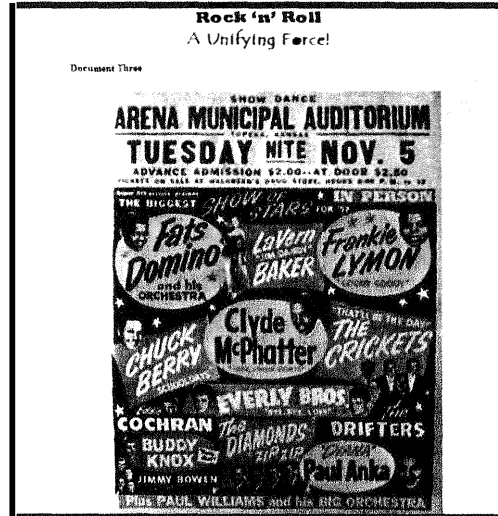
- 1.) What is President Eisenhower referring to when he uses the word intolerance?
- 2.) In your own words, what does President Eisenhower see as the final battle against intolerance?
- 3.) Do you think that rock 'n' roll played a role in erasing intolerance in the hearts of men? Why or why not?

- 3.) Ask the students to think for a second about the question was rock 'n' roll of the 1950s more of a unifying or dividing force. Identify this as the focus for the class.
- 4.) Split the class into groups of four. Have the groups take part in the following inquiry based learning activity using primary source documents. Half of the group will spend time analyzing documents that support rock 'n' roll as a unifying force and the other half will spend time analyzing documents that support rock 'n' roll as a dividing force. The documents provided are a mixture of quotes, newspaper articles, and visuals. Feel free to use these documents or any other primary source documents that meet the objective of showing rock 'n' roll as a unifying or dividing force. In their groups they will try to answer the question of whether rock 'n' roll was a unifying or dividing force by analyzing each of the documents. The students will be asked to pick out evidence from the documents to support the assigned view point.

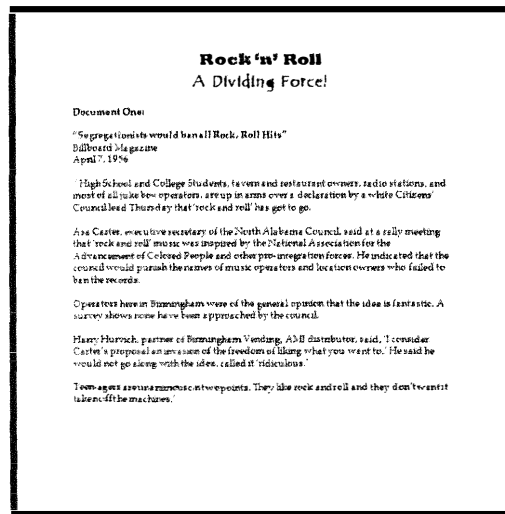
<b>Rock 'n' Roll</b>	
<b>Unifying or Dividing Force?</b>	
Unifying Force	Dividing Force
What is document one?	What is document one?
How does it show rock 'n' roll as a unifying force?	How does it show rock 'n' roll as a dividing force?
What is document two?	What is document two?
How does it show rock 'n' roll as a unifying force?	How does it show rock 'n' roll as a dividing force?
What is document three?	What is document three?
How does it show rock 'n' roll as a unifying force?	How does it show rock 'n' roll as a dividing force?
According to your documents, how was rock 'n' roll a unifying or dividing force?	



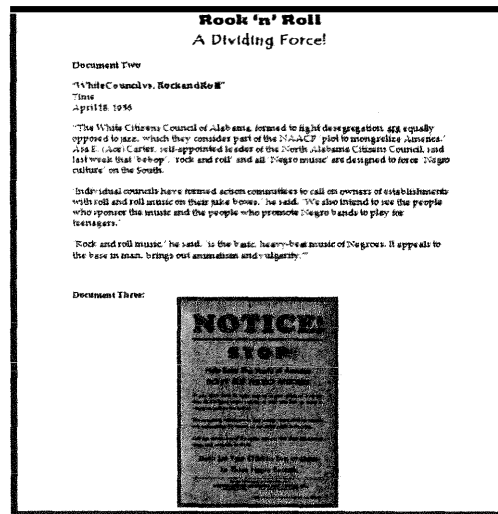
Document #8A



Document #8B



Document #9A





Document #9B

5.) Make sure students have enough time to analyze their documents for evidence and to respond to their assigned question. After the students finish this step, have the pairs combine with the other half of their group from the opposing view point. Ask the students to discuss their documents and how they depict rock 'n' roll music's roll in race relations during the 1950s. Have the students also share their answers to the questions with each other.



- 6.) As a class discuss the documents. During the discussion talk about the types of opposition that rock 'n' roll faced from groups and individuals. Discuss how this opposition could cause a rift between parents and their children.
- 7.) For closure ask the students to complete the "I see/I think/I wonder" activity.

 <b>Rock 'n' Roll of the 1950s</b> 
I see:
I think:
I wonder:

Document #10

### Days Three and Four: Project Introduction and Research

- 1.) Day three marks the start of the project portion of the unit. Students should be working with a variety of sources to complete the research portion of the project. The books from the further readings portion of this unit plan would be a great starting point. The project can be altered to fit your needs and time capacity. The handout allows the scope of the project to be very open ended. One option to focus it a little more is to ask students to focus on only one of the areas talked about in class. Some of these topics can also be compared to events and people of the Civil Rights Movement. Take the time

to go over the different aspects and the due dates for them. If you choose to use the guided note sheets, make sure to pass them out before the students start their research. The remainder of the third day and the entire fourth day have been set aside for independent student research.

**Rock 'n' Roll Podcast**  
Rockin' for Civil Rights!

**Historical Context**

The 1950s and 1960s were a time of great change in America. The Civil Rights Movement was a struggle for equality for African Americans. Many people were arrested and some were killed. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a landmark law that helped to end discrimination. The Civil Rights Movement was a time of great courage and sacrifice. It was a time when people stood up for what was right.

**Task**

You will be creating a podcast about the Civil Rights Movement. You will be interviewing a historical figure from the movement. You will be asking them questions about their life and their work. You will be recording their answers and editing them into a podcast. You will be using the information you have learned about the Civil Rights Movement to create a podcast that is both informative and entertaining.

**Interview Questions**

- What was your life like growing up?
- How did you get involved in the Civil Rights Movement?
- What were some of the challenges you faced?
- What were some of the successes you achieved?
- What advice do you have for young people today?

**Young People's Questions**

- What was your favorite part of the movement?
- How did you feel about the challenges you faced?
- What do you think young people can do to help?

Document #11A

**Rock 'n' Roll Podcast**  
Rockin' for Civil Rights!

**Task**

You will be creating a podcast about the Civil Rights Movement. You will be interviewing a historical figure from the movement. You will be asking them questions about their life and their work. You will be recording their answers and editing them into a podcast. You will be using the information you have learned about the Civil Rights Movement to create a podcast that is both informative and entertaining.

**Reflection**

How do you feel about the Civil Rights Movement? What do you think young people can do to help? How do you feel about the challenges you faced? What do you think young people can do to help?

Document #11B

**Rock 'n' Roll Podcast**  
Rockin' for Civil Rights!

**Interview Questions**

What was your life like growing up?  
How did you get involved in the Civil Rights Movement?  
What were some of the challenges you faced?  
What were some of the successes you achieved?  
What advice do you have for young people today?

**Young People's Questions**

What was your favorite part of the movement?  
How did you feel about the challenges you faced?  
What do you think young people can do to help?

Document #12A

**Rock 'n' Roll Podcast**  
Rockin' for Civil Rights!

**Reflection**

How do you feel about the Civil Rights Movement? What do you think young people can do to help? How do you feel about the challenges you faced? What do you think young people can do to help?

Document #12B

**Rock 'n' Roll Podcast**  
Rockin' for Civil Rights!

**Interview Questions**

What was your life like growing up?  
How did you get involved in the Civil Rights Movement?  
What were some of the challenges you faced?  
What were some of the successes you achieved?  
What advice do you have for young people today?

**Young People's Questions**

What was your favorite part of the movement?  
How did you feel about the challenges you faced?  
What do you think young people can do to help?

Document #12C

**Rock 'n' Roll Podcast**  
Rockin' for Civil Rights!

**Reflection**

How do you feel about the Civil Rights Movement? What do you think young people can do to help? How do you feel about the challenges you faced? What do you think young people can do to help?

Document #12D

**Days Five, Six, and Seven: Script Writing and Windows Movie Maker**

1.) By day five all of the research should be complete and students should be writing and finishing their script for the podcast. A great way for students to share the work load is to have one person write the script and one person assembles pictures and graphics to support the script. This is a great time to share the project rubrics with the students. By doing this the students will know exactly what is expected of them for their final product.

<b>Rock 'n' Roll Podcast Rubric</b>			
	5	3	1
<b>Word Choice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses vivid words and phrases that draw pictures in the viewer's mind.</li> <li>The choice and placement of the words seems accurate, natural and not forced.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses words that communicate clearly, but the podcast lacks variety, punch or flair.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses a limited vocabulary that does not communicate strongly or capture the viewer's interest.</li> <li>Jargon or cliché may be present and detract from the meaning.</li> </ul>
<b>Ideas (Content/Information)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevant, telling, quality details give the viewer important information that goes beyond the obvious or predictable.</li> <li>All content throughout the presentation is accurate. There are no factual errors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting details and information are relevant, but several key portions of the podcast are unsupported.</li> <li>The content is generally accurate, but one piece of information is clearly flawed or inaccurate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting details and information are typically unclear or not relevant to the topic.</li> <li>Content is typically confusing or contains more than one factual error.</li> </ul>
<b>Voice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seems to be speaking from knowledge or experience. The author has taken the ideas and made them "his own."</li> <li>Well rehearsed, smooth delivery in a conversational style.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seems to be drawing on knowledge or experience, but there is some lack of ownership of the topic.</li> <li>Rehearsed, smooth delivery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has not tried to transform the information in a personal way. The ideas and the way they are expressed seem to belong to someone else.</li> <li>Delivery is hesitant and choppy and sounds like the presenter is reading.</li> </ul>

Document #13A

<b>Rock 'n' Roll Podcast Rubric</b>			
	5	3	1
<b>Presentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The graphics/artwork used creates a unique and effective presentation and enhance what is being said in the podcast and follow the rules for quality graphic design.</li> <li>Makes excellent use of font, color, graphics, effects, etc. to enhance the presentation.</li> <li>Transitions are smooth and spaced correctly without noisy, dead space.</li> <li>Podcast length keeps the audience interested and engaged.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The graphics/artwork relates to the audio and reinforces content and demonstrates functionality.</li> <li>Makes use of font, color, graphics, effects, etc. but occasionally these detract from the presentation content.</li> <li>Transitions are smooth with a minimal amount of ambient noise.</li> <li>Podcast length keeps audience listening.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The graphics are unrelated to the podcast. Artwork is inappropriate to podcast.</li> <li>Use of font, color, graphics, effects etc. but these often distract from the presentation content.</li> <li>Transitions are abrupt and background noise needs to be filtered.</li> <li>Podcast is either too long or too short to keep the audience engaged.</li> </ul>
<b>Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Details are placed in a logical order and the way they are presented keeps the interest of the listener.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Details are placed in a logical order, but the way in which they are presented or introduced sometimes makes the podcast less interesting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many details are not in a logical or expected order. There is little sense that the podcast is organized.</li> </ul>

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Document #13B

- 2.) Once students have completed this they should begin following the Podcasting 101 directions for Windows Movie Maker to complete the project.

**Podcasting 101**  
**Windows Movie Maker**

**To open Movie Maker**  
Go to Start...Programs...Windows MovieMaker

**Save all the pictures, sound files and movie files in one folder. It will make them easier to find.**

**Import Pictures**

1. Click on import pictures under 1. Capture Video.
2. Find the folder where you saved the pictures and open it.
3. Click on the pictures you want to import. Hold down the control key and click to select more than one picture.
4. Click import.

**Add pictures to the Storyboard**

- The storyboard is the series of boxes on the bottom part of the screen. It allows you to see the pictures in sequence. The other view is the timeline view which lets you see the pictures with the timing.

1. Click and drag the pictures to one of the boxes in the storyboard.
2. You can click and drag pictures to change the order.
3. To delete a picture, click on it, go to edit and click on delete.

**Narration**

1. Make sure you are in the timeline view. You should see the button that says Show Storyboard.
2. Click the microphone button to start narration.
3. When you are ready to record, click the Start Narration button.
4. Speak clearly.
5. Click the Stop Narration button when you are done.
6. In the File Name box, type a name for your captured audio narration and click save.

**Length of Slides (Your pictures should align with your audio)**

1. Click Show Timings
2. Click on the picture you want to adjust.
3. Move the mouse to the right side of the picture. It becomes a 2-headed red arrow.
4. Click and drag to adjust the time of the picture.

**NOTE:** Click the magnifier with the plus sign to spread out the timeline. This does not change the timing. It just stretches it out to make it easier to see and adjust.

Document #14A

**Transitions**

- Transitions are how pictures move from one to the next.

1. Click on 2. Edit Movie to see the options.
2. Click on View Video transitions.
3. To preview a transition, double click on it and watch the screen area to the right.
4. To select a transition, click and drag the transition to the small box between the picture boxes.

**Titles and Credits**

- Titles are pages added to the beginning of the movie for the name of the movie.
- Credits are pages added to the end of the movie to give credit to the people who worked to make the movie.

1. Click on Make titles or credits pages 2. Edit Movie.
2. Click Add title at the beginning of the movie.

**Saving a Project (When you are unfinished)**

- This allows you to save current work to come back and make further changes.

1. Go to the File menu and click on Save Project.
2. In the file name box, type the name of your project and click save. It will automatically save it in the My Videos folder. You can change where it saves.

**Saving a Movie (When you are finished)**

1. Go to the File menu and click on Save Movie File.
2. Follow the movie wizard.
3. For movie location, select My Computer and click next.
4. Enter a file name. You can select where you want to save it or let it save in My Videos. Click Next.
5. Select Best Quality and click next. Your movie will be saved.
6. After it is complete open your movie to watch it.

Document #14B

- 3.) Day six and seven should be spent working with Windows Movie Maker and finishing the project.

## Further Readings

### Primary Sources

"Breaking Down the Barriers." *Cashbox*, January 22, 1955, 3-4.

"Rock 'n' Roll Fight Hospitalizes Youth." *New York Times*, 15 April 1957, 23.

"Rock 'n' Roll Held to Yield Millions." *New York Times*, 1 April 1957, 23.

"Rock and Roll May Be the Great Unifying force!" *Cash Box*, 17 March 1956.

"Segregationists Would Ban All Rock, Roll Hits," *Billboard Magazine*, 7 April 1956, 130

"White Citizens Council vs. Rock and Roll." *Newsweek*. April 23, 1956, 32.

### Secondary Sources

Altschuler, Glenn C. *All Shook Up: How Rock 'N' Roll Changed America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Bertrand, Michael. *Race, Rock, and Elvis*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Friedlander, Paul, *Rock and Roll: A Social History*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1996.

Scaruffi, Piero. *A History of Rock Music*. Lincoln: iUniverse, 2003.

Szatmary, David P. *Rockin' in Time: A Social History of Rock-N-Roll*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 2004.

## Biographical Statement

Eric Vaillancourt is a social studies teacher at Palmyra-Macedon Middle School in Palmyra New York. He is the 2009-2010 teacher of the year at his school. Mr. Vaillancourt is currently finishing his master's degree at SUNY Brockport.

Application to Teaching:  
Rationale

In the realm of education, current research is constantly shining light on the ways that children learn best. As a teacher it is important to consistently research the practices that are considered to be the most effective for the learners that we are teaching. Students today obtain information in many ways that were unheard of 25 years ago, and with innovations such as the internet, this is no surprise. As a result of these innovations we are preparing students for jobs that would have been unforeseen a generation ago. With this atmosphere of constant change and innovation the way that students are taught needs to constantly evolve. It is important that educators never become complacent with the way they teach their students. Like in many aspects of life a teacher needs to constantly ask themselves if they are doing the best that they can. The preceding unit plan has been designed to both utilize modern technology and to deliver instruction using techniques that are considered by researchers to be classroom instruction that works. One of the most heralded works on best teaching practices in recent years is *Classroom Instruction that Works* by Robert J. Marzano, Debra J. Pickering, and Jane E. Pollock. It is this research based publication that will be used to support the teaching strategies used in the preceding unit plan.

The first lesson of the unit plan looks at how American teenagers during the 1950s were exposed to rock 'n' roll music. The warm up asks students to recall information on the Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954). While doing so they are asked to compare it to the ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). One of the first strategies that is identified in the book *Classroom Instruction that Works* is identifying similarities and differences. In the chapter that focuses on this strategy, the authors state the key to an effective comparison is

the identification of important characteristics.<sup>1</sup> The second warm up question expects students to be able to identify the important characteristics of both Supreme Court cases by pointing out how they are different than each other. This is not the only time a teacher-directed comparison task will take place in the lesson. Later in the lesson students are exposed to the song *Tutti Frutti*. They are asked to compare two versions of the song and the artists that performed each version using a Venn diagram. The Venn diagram is one of the graphic organizers identified by Marzano as being highly effective for making comparisons.<sup>2</sup> A Venn diagram asks students to place similarities of two concepts or in this case people and their versions of a song in the intersecting parts of two circles. In the parts of the two circles that do not intersect, students are asked to identify differences between two concepts.

For the direct instruction portion of the lesson students are asked to record notes in an adapted Frayer Model style organizer.<sup>3</sup> This organizer asks students to identify important characteristics of rock 'n' roll during the 1950s by defining the term and answering several guided questions. The researchers behind the book *Classroom Instruction that Works* find that verbatim note taking is probably the least effective way to take notes.<sup>4</sup> This is because students need to be able to record information in a way that makes sense to them. The adapted Frayer model used in lesson one does just that. It keeps the idea of rock 'n' roll in the center of the organizer but it asks students to include information such as examples of how teens were

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Marzano and others, *Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement* (Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2001), 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>3</sup> Jane K. Doty and others, *Teaching Reading in Social Studies*, (Aurora: McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning), 2003), 84-85.

<sup>4</sup> Marzano, *Classroom Instruction the Works*, 43.



exposed to rock 'n' roll during the 1950s and examples of rock 'n' roll music during the 1950s. This organizer is an example of teacher prepared notes that allows students to put things into their own words while having a framework or objective to work with. It gives the students the power to determine the importance of the information that they include in their organizer.

To bring together the things learned using the Frayer model style organizer, the conclusions made from listening to the two versions of *Tutti Frutti*, and to reinforce the state of race relations during the 1950s, the students are asked to analyze a quote by rock 'n' roll artist Little Richard. The lesson plan calls for students to work in pairs to analyze the primary source document. The three questions are meant to force students to identify information from the document and relate it to information they have learned. All three questions focus on the idea of what the important information is. The first question simply asks students to pick out a particular conclusion made in the quote and fits the mold of a right there question. The second question asks students to use something that Little Richard said and compare it to what they know in order to draw a conclusion about the perspective that Little Richard is speaking from. This would best be described as an author and me style question. The questions that accompany the document lead up to a third question, which is designed to be a higher level questions that promote a deeper learning.<sup>5</sup> The third question asks students to use the quote to draw their own conclusion about race relations during the 1950s. This question forces the students to apply their knowledge in order to draw a conclusion. Both the second and third questions fall into the category of analytic questions that were outlined in *Classroom*

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 115.

*Instruction that Works.*<sup>6</sup> The closure of the lesson is a simple formative assessment questions that asks students to identify rock 'n' roll changed the lives of teenagers during the 1950s. This task allows students to generate a conclusion based on the lesson.

The second lesson of the unit is on opposition to rock 'n' roll in the 1950s. For the warm up students are asked to identify three things about rock 'n' roll during the 1950s. This task forces the students to summarize information from the previous class in their own words.<sup>7</sup> The anticipatory set for the lesson involves analyzing a quote from President Dwight D. Eisenhower. In the quote the students are presented with a hypothesis that they will be asked to evaluate the validity of. The style of questioning is similar to the questions used for the Little Richard quotes as each of the three questions has a different objective that culminates with a higher level thinking question.

The higher level question that accompanies the Eisenhower quote will tie in to the focus of the day's lesson which is whether rock 'n' roll of the 1950s was a unifying or dividing force. Students will be presented with this problem and will be asked to test the hypothesis of rock 'n' roll being either a unifying or dividing force by analyzing primary source documents. Through the investigation of primary source documents, the students will be asked to collect evidence from the documents that confirm the hypothesis. This method is known as investigation.<sup>8</sup> For this learning activity the students of the class are split into groups of a maximum of four. Through education research Marzano and his team have found that groups of three to four

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 109.

work most effectively.<sup>9</sup> These groups will be then split in half. Half of the group will work with documents supporting rock 'n' roll as a unifying force as the other half works with documents supporting rock 'n' roll as a dividing force. Each portion of the group will be responsible for describing the document and identifying how it supports their hypothesis. The students will then combine and share their findings. After being presented with both sides, the students will be asked to identify whether their given hypothesis was correct or not based on the evidence. This activity allows students to analyze opposing viewpoints and to draw conclusions based on evidence from both sides.

The remaining five days of the unit will be spent on a summative assessment in the form of research project culminating in the creation of a podcast. According to the research in *Classroom Instruction that Works* one of the most effective strategies is to engage student in the process of generating and testing hypotheses.<sup>10</sup> The students will be responsible for creating a hypothesis using inductive reasoning on whether rock 'n' roll had an impact on the integration of America and to what degree.<sup>11</sup> The project forces the students to complete further research on topics covered in class. Students will need to complete this research in order to support their hypothesis with regards the impact of rock 'n' roll on the integration of America. This project forces students to work with other students in true cooperative learning groups as the five defining elements of cooperative learning are present in this process of completing this project.<sup>12</sup> The objectives for the project are clearly spelled out in the project

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 85.

description sheet and the rubric for the project which together clearly meets the standards for setting effective objectives and goals.<sup>13</sup> The goal of the project is to further research topics learned about in class and to draw a conclusion based on that research. This goal allows for flexibility in how the students carry it out. The project rubric allows for corrective feedback as it lets students know where they are in terms of meeting expectations and where they can improve. The rubric also allows the feedback to be timely and sets forth specific criteria in which the project has been assessed on.<sup>14</sup>

The preceding unit uses highly effective teaching strategies as outlined in the research based book *Classroom Instruction that Works*. It meets the standards set forth by the book's authors in numerous strategy areas including the areas of identifying similarities and differences, summarizing and note taking, cooperative learning, setting objectives and providing feedback, generating and testing hypotheses, and questions cues and advance organizers. It uses a variety of primary source materials and offers a valuable way to use modern technology for a summative assessment. The unit also attempts to include all learners, as it targets learners of many different learning styles and multiple intelligences.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 94-95.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 97-98.

## Bibliography

Doty, Jane K., Gregory N. Cameron, and Mary Lee Barton. *Teaching Reading in Social Studies*. Aurora: McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning), 2003.

Marzano, Robert J., Debra J. Pickering, and Jane E. Pollock. *Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2001.

## Appendices

**Warm Up**

In your own words, what was the United States Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954)?

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How was this ruling a departure from the ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896)

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**Warm Up**

In your own words, what was the United States Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954)?

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How was this ruling a departure from the ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896)

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# Rock 'n' Roll

What is it?

Definition

How were teens during the 1950s exposed to it?

## Rock 'n' Roll

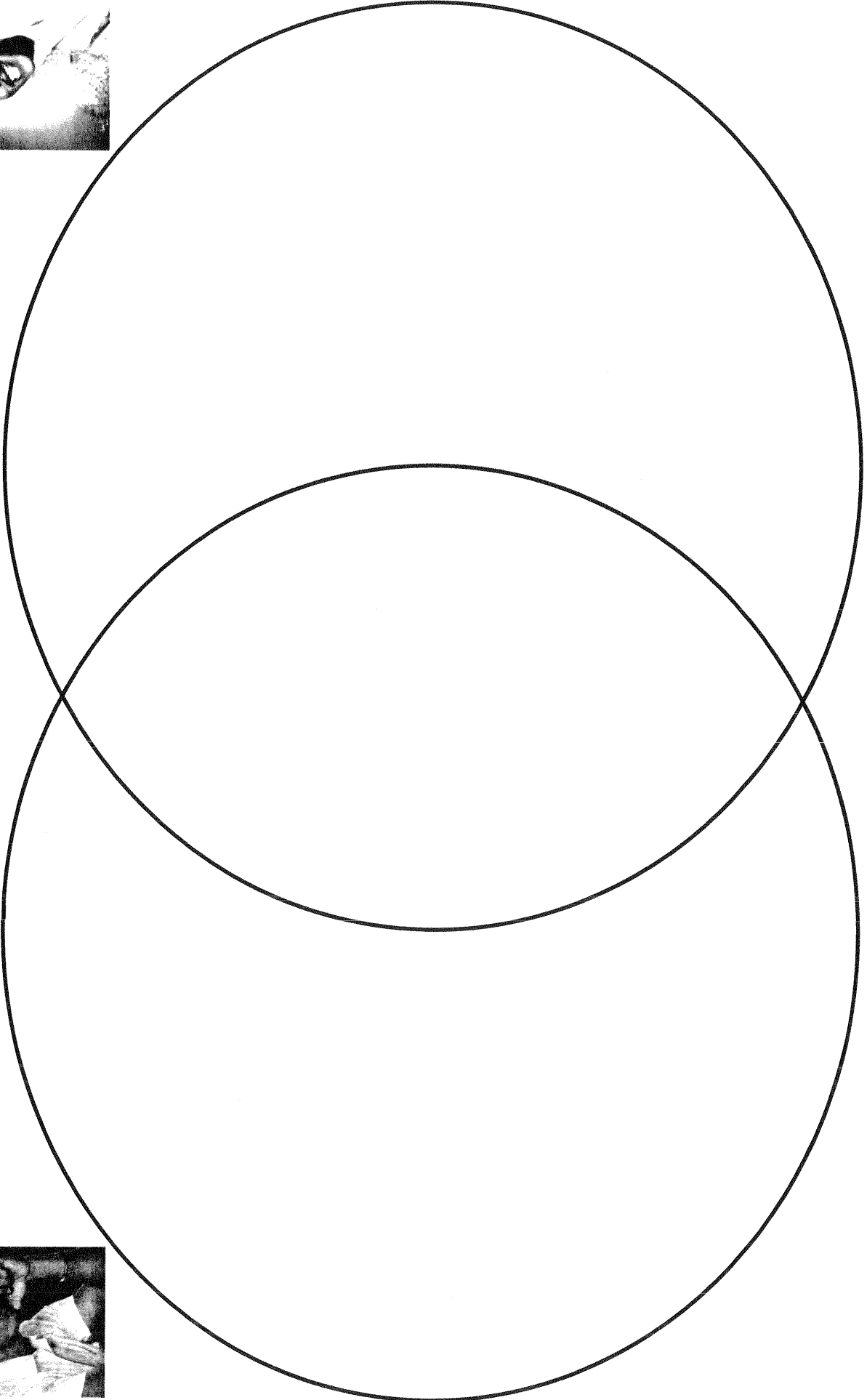
Examples of rock 'n' roll music of the 1950s

How did rock 'n' roll impact the daily lives of teenagers in the 1950s?



# Rock 'n' Roll

Pat Boone and Little Richard: Tutti Frutti



# Rock 'n' Roll

## Looking back: Little Richard

"They needed a rock star to block me out of white homes because I was a hero to white kids. The white kids would have Pat Boone upon the dresser and me in the drawer 'cause they liked my version better, but the families [parents] didn't want me because of the image that I was projecting."

-Little Richard

- 1.) According to Little Richard, how did white kids view him?
- 2.) Why does Little Richard think that record producers had Pat Boone record his music?
- 3.) What does Little Richard's quote tell you about how rock 'n' roll changed the way teenagers viewed African Americans during the 1950s?

**Warm Up**

List three things that you know about rock 'n' roll during the 1950s.

1.

2.

3.

**Warm Up**

List three things that you know about rock 'n' roll during the 1950s.

1.

2.

3.

**Warm Up**

List three things that you know about rock 'n' roll during the 1950s.

1.

2.

3.

# Rock 'n' Roll

## President Eisenhower on Civil Rights

The efforts of people such as Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, and the Little Rock Nine held common ground in that they tried to gain Civil Rights through changing the laws in America. President Dwight D. Eisenhower once demonstrated his feelings towards efforts such as these when he exclaimed, "the final battle against intolerance is to be fought--not in the chambers of any legislature--but in the hearts of men."

Source: Dwight D. Eisenhower, Address at the Hollywood Bowl, Beverly Hills, California, October 19, 1956, [http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/all\\_about\\_ike/Quotes/Quotes.html](http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/all_about_ike/Quotes/Quotes.html).

- 1.) What is President Eisenhower referring to when he uses the word intolerance?
- 2.) In your own words, what does President Eisenhower see as the final battle against intolerance?
- 3.) Do you think that rock 'n' roll played a role in erasing intolerance in the hearts of men? Why or why not?

# Rock 'n' Roll

## Unifying or Dividing Force?

Unifying Force	Dividing Force
<p>What is document one?</p>  <p>How does it show rock 'n' roll as a unifying force?</p>       <p>What is document two?</p>  <p>How does it show rock 'n' roll as a unifying force?</p>       <p>What is document three?</p>  <p>How does it show rock 'n' roll as a unifying force?</p>	<p>What is document one?</p>  <p>How does it show rock 'n' roll as a dividing force?</p>       <p>What is document two?</p>  <p>How does it show rock 'n' roll as a dividing force?</p>       <p>What is document three?</p>  <p>How does it show rock 'n' roll as a dividing force?</p>

According to your documents, how was rock 'n' roll a unifying or dividing force?

# Rock 'n' Roll

## A Unifying Force!

### Document One- Herb Reed of The Platters

"The whole movement has broken down barriers which in the ordinary course of events might have taken untold amounts of time to do. How better to understand what is unknown to you than by appreciation of the emotional experiences of other people? And how better are these emotions portrayed than by music?"

Source: "Breaking Down the Barriers," *Cashbox*, January 22, 1955, 3.

"a rope was put up to separate Negroes and whites in the audience. When we started singing, the kids broke the rope and started dancing together."

Source: "Rock 'n Roll Helping Race Relations, Platters Content," *Down Beat*, May 30, 1956, 14.

### Document Two

"By their new-found attachment to rhythm and blues, young people might be protesting the southern tradition of not having anything to do with colored people."

Source: Mitch Miller, "June, Moon, Swoon and KoKoMo," *New York Times Magazine*, April 24, 1955, 78.

# Rock 'n' Roll A Unifying Force!

Document Three

SHOW DANCE  
**ARENA MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM**  
TOPERA, KANSAS  
**TUESDAY NITE NOV. 5**  
ADVANCE ADMISSION \$2.00--AT DOOR \$2.50  
TICKETS ON SALE AT WALGREEN'S DRUG STORE, HOURS 9:00 P. M. to 12

Super Attractions present  
**THE BIGGEST SHOW OF STARS FOR '57** ★ **IN PERSON**

**Fats Domino** and his ORCHESTRA  
★ **LaVern "JIM DANDY" BAKER** ★ **Frankie LYMON** "GOODY GOODY"  
★ **CHUCK BERRY** "SCHOOL DAYS" ★ **Clyde McPhatter** ★ **THE CRICKETS** "THAT'LL BE THE DAY"  
★ **COCHRAN** "Eddie" ★ **EVERLY BROS.** "BYE, BYE, LOVE" ★ **BUDDY KNOX** ★ **The DIAMONDS** "ZIP ZIP" ★ **DRIFTERS** "DIANA" ★ **JIMMY BOWEN** ★ **Paul Anka**

Plus **PAUL WILLIAMS** and his **BIG ORCHESTRA**

# **Rock 'n' Roll**

## A Dividing Force!

### Document One:

#### **"Segregationists would ban all Rock, Roll Hits"**

Billboard Magazine

April 7, 1956

" High School and College Students, tavern and restaurant owners, radio stations, and most of all juke box operators, are up in arms over a declaration by a white Citizens' Council lead Thursday that 'rock and roll' has got to go.

Asa Carter, executive secretary of the North Alabama Council, said at a rally meeting that 'rock and roll' music was inspired by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and other pro-integration forces. He indicated that the council would punish the names of music operators and location owners who failed to ban the records.

Operators here in Birmingham were of the general opinion that the idea is fantastic. A survey shows none have been approached by the council.

Harry Hurvich, partner of Birmingham Vending, AMI distributor, said, 'I consider Carter's proposal an invasion of the freedom of liking what you want to.' He said he would not go along with the idea, called it 'ridiculous.'

Teen-agers are unanimous on two points. They like rock and roll and they don't want it taken off the machines."



# Rock 'n' Roll A Dividing Force!

## Document Two

### "White Council vs. Rock and Roll"

Time

April 18, 1956

"The White Citizens Council of Alabama, formed to fight desegregation, are equally opposed to jazz, which they consider part of the NAACP 'plot to mongrelize America.' Asa E. (Ace) Carter, self-appointed leader of the North Alabama Citizens Council, said last week that 'bebop', 'rock and roll' and all 'Negro music' are designed to force 'Negro culture' on the South.

'Individual councils have formed action committees to call on owners of establishments with roll and roll music on their juke boxes,' he said. 'We also intend to see the people who sponsor the music and the people who promote Negro bands to play for teenagers.'

'Rock and roll music,' he said, 'is the basic, heavy-beat music of Negroes. It appeals to the base in man, brings out animalism and vulgarity.'"

## Document Three:





## Rock 'n' Roll of the 1950s



I see:

I think:

I wonder:



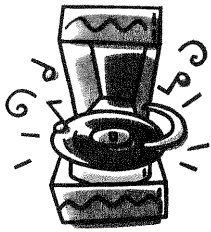
## Rock 'n' Roll of the 1950s



I see:

I think:

I wonder:



# Rock 'n' Roll Podcast

## Rockin' for Civil Rights?



### Historical Context:

During the 1950s and 1960s, **Rock 'N' Roll** took the United States by storm. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board* that segregation in public schools was illegal. This ruling was a very important step in desegregating the country and in attempting to bring the races together. Despite the fact that many people in America opposed the idea of racial integration, rock 'n' roll was extremely popular amongst both white and black teenagers. Rock 'n' roll music changed many things in the United States including fashion, radio, movies, relationships between teens and parents, and race relations.

### Task:

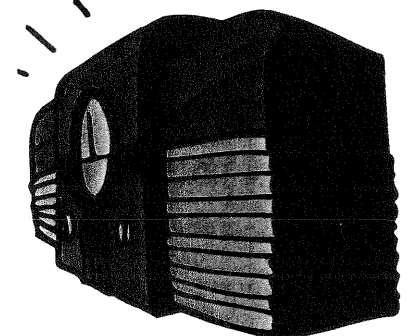
You and a partner are going to research and put together a podcast in the form of a three minute radio broadcast using Windows Movie Maker. The aim of your podcast is to discuss the impact of rock 'n' roll on race relations by further researching topics that were covered in class. Based on your research you must also decide whether or not rock 'n' roll helped achieve integration and thus helped African Americans in the United States gain Civil Right and why or why not. You will have limited time in the library to do your research and put together your podcast. You and your partner will probably need to stay after school or work on it in a study hall as well. You will be asked to include information from multiple sources.

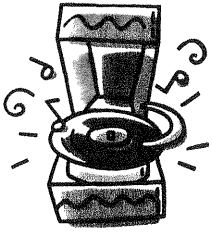
Your podcast must include the following:

- Title Slide (Includes the name of your show and your names)
- Background information on rock 'n' roll
- Did rock 'n' roll help achieve civil rights for African Americans?
- Pictures to support your research/script

You should focus your research on the following topics

- Exposure to rock 'n' roll
- Rock 'n' roll artists (Compare white artists to black artists)
- Groups and media opposition to rock 'n' roll
- Important rock 'n' roll events.





# Rock 'n' Roll Podcast

## Rockin' for Civil Rights?



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

This project asks you to gather a lot of information and then put it all together in a pod cast. You will only have limited time in class to learn and work with the pod cast technology, so it is crucial that you have all of your information gathered before then. Use this checklist to keep you from falling behind. I will check this sheet daily to see that you and your partner have the necessary information when it is due. If you do not receive a "teacher check off" you will have a zero in the grade book for that day's assignment.

Date due: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Check Off

- How were many American teenagers exposed to rock 'n' roll music?
- How did rock 'n' roll music influence the daily lives of American teenagers in the 1950s and 1960s?
- How were rock artists of different races similar or different? Were they perceived and treated the same way?

Date due: \_\_\_\_\_

- Why were many people opposed to rock 'n' roll music?
- What groups were most vocal in their opposition to rock 'n' roll?
- How did people show their opposition to rock 'n' roll music and musicians?
- Did rock 'n' roll help achieve desegregation and thus help African Americans in the United States gain Civil Rights? Why or why not?

Date due: \_\_\_\_\_

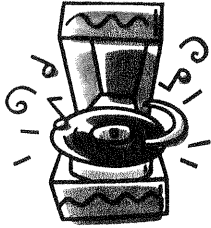
- Finish writing script
- Assess your script using rubric
- Turn in script for teacher's assessment
- Find pictures to support your script

Date due: \_\_\_\_\_

- Revise script if necessary (see teacher's assessment)
- Record script
- Import images

Date due: \_\_\_\_\_

- Finish podcast



# Rock 'n' Roll Podcast

## Rockin' for Civil Rights?



How were many American teenagers exposed to rock 'n' roll music?

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Source: \_\_\_\_\_

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How did rock 'n' roll music influence the daily lives of American teenagers in the 1950s and 1960s?

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Source: \_\_\_\_\_

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How were rock artists of different races similar or different? Were they perceived and treated the same way?

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Source: \_\_\_\_\_

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Why were many people opposed to rock 'n' roll music?

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Source: \_\_\_\_\_

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What groups were most vocal in their opposition to rock 'n' roll?

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Source: \_\_\_\_\_

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How did people show their opposition to rock 'n' roll music and musicians?

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Source: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Rock 'n' Roll Podcast Rubric

	5	3	1
Word Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Uses vivid words and phrases that draw pictures in the viewer's mind.</li> <li>○ The choice and placement of the words seems accurate, natural and not forced.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Uses words that communicate clearly, but the podcast lacks variety, punch or flair.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Uses a limited vocabulary that does not communicate strongly or capture the viewers' interest.</li> <li>○ Jargon or cliches may be present and detract from the meaning.</li> </ul>
Ideas (Content/ Information)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Relevant, telling, quality details give the viewer important information that goes beyond the obvious or predictable.</li> <li>○ All content throughout the presentation is accurate. There are no factual errors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Supporting details and information are relevant, but several key portions of the podcast are unsupported.</li> <li>○ The content is generally accurate, but one piece of information is clearly flawed or inaccurate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Supporting details and information are typically unclear or not related to the topic.</li> <li>○ Content is typically confusing or contains more than one factual error.</li> </ul>
Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Seems to be speaking from knowledge or experience. The author has taken the ideas and made them "his own."</li> <li>○ Well rehearsed, smooth delivery in a conversational style.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Seems to be drawing on knowledge or experience, but there is some lack of ownership of the topic.</li> <li>○ Rehearsed, smooth delivery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Has not tried to transform the information in a personal way. The ideas and the way they are expressed seem to belong to someone else.</li> <li>○ Delivery is hesitant, and choppy and sounds like the presenter is reading.</li> </ul>

# Rock 'n' Roll Podcast Rubric

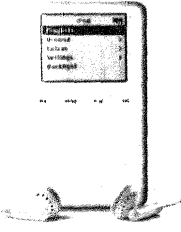
	5	3	1
Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The graphics/artwork used create a unique and effective presentation and enhance what is being said in the podcast and follow the rules for quality graphic design.</li> <li>○ Makes excellent use of font, color, graphics, effects, etc. to enhance the presentation.</li> <li>○ Transitions are smooth and spaced correctly without noisy, dead space.</li> <li>○ Podcast length keeps the audience interested and engaged.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The graphics/artwork relate to the audio and reinforce content and demonstrate functionality.</li> <li>○ Makes use of font, color, graphics, effects, etc. but occasionally these detract from the presentation content.</li> <li>○ Transitions are smooth with a minimal amount of ambient noise.</li> <li>○ Podcast length keeps audience listening.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The graphics are unrelated to the podcast. Artwork is inappropriate to podcast.</li> <li>○ Use of font, color, graphics, effects etc. but these often distract from the presentation content.</li> <li>○ Transitions are abrupt and background noise needs to be filtered.</li> <li>○ Podcast is either too long or too short to keep the audience engaged.</li> </ul>
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Details are placed in a logical order and the way they are presented keeps the interest of the listener.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Details are placed in a logical order, but the way in which they are presented or introduced sometimes makes the podcast less interesting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Many details are not in a logical or expected order. There is little sense that the podcast is organized.</li> </ul>

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

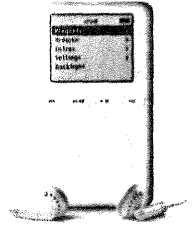
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# Podcasting 101

## Windows Movie Maker



### To open Movie Maker

Go to Start→Programs→Windows Movie Maker

Save all the pictures, sound files and movie files in one folder. It will make them easier to find.

### Import Pictures

1. Click on import pictures under 1. Capture Video.
2. Find the folder where you saved the pictures and open it.
3. Click on the pictures you want to import. Hold down the control key and click to select more than one picture.
4. Click import.

### Add pictures to the Storyboard

- The storyboard is the series of boxes on the bottom part of the screen. It allows you to see the pictures in sequence. The other view is the timeline view which lets you see the pictures with the timing.
1. Click and drag the pictures to one of the boxes in the storyboard.
  2. You can click and drag pictures to change the order.
  3. To delete a picture, click on it, go to edit and click on delete.

### Narration

1. Make sure you are in the timeline view. You should see the button that says Show Storyboard.
2. Click the microphone button to start narration.
3. When you are ready to record, click the Start Narration button.
4. Speak clearly.
5. Click the Stop Narration button when you are done.
6. In the File Name box, type a name for your captured audio narration and click save

### Length of Slides (Your pictures should align with your audio)

1. Click Show Timeline
2. Click on the picture you want to adjust.
3. Move the mouse to the right side of the picture. It becomes a 2-headed red arrow.
4. Click and drag to adjust the time of the picture.

**NOTE:** Click the magnifier with the plus sign to spread out the timeline. This does not change the timing. It just stretches it out to make it easier to see and adjust.

## Transitions

- Transitions are how pictures move from one to the next.
1. Click on 2. Edit Movie to see the options.
  2. Click on View Video transitions.
  3. To preview a transition, double click on it and watch the screen area to the right.
  4. To select a transition, click and drag the transition to the small box between the picture boxes.

## Titles and Credits

- Titles are pages added to the beginning of the movie for the name of the movie.
  - Credits are pages added to the end of the movie to give credit to the people who worked to make the movie.
1. Click on Make titles or credits under 2. Edit Movie.
  2. Click Add title at the beginning of the movie.

### **Saving a Project (When you are unfinished)**

- This allows you to save current work to come back and make further changes.
1. Go to the File menu and click on Save Project.
  2. In the file name box, type the name of your project and click save. It will automatically save it in the My Videos folder. You can change where it saves.

### **Saving a Movie (When you are finished)**

1. Go to the File menu and click on Save Movie File.
2. Follow the movie wizard.
3. For movie location, select My Computer and click next.
4. Enter a file name. You can select where you want to save it or let it save in My Videos. Click Next.
5. Select Best Quality and click next. Your movie will be saved.
6. After it is complete open your movie to watch it.