

# Pedagogical Community: Music Education as Social Movement

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## Abstract

In this article, I explore how three distinct contemporary sites deploy an activism of aesthetics through establishing pedagogical communities of music, networks that coalesce around the aims of teaching and learning as liberatory practice. The faculty of the Musical Arts Institute, unnamed protestors at a rally, and members of the Morehouse College Glee Club might initially seem unconnected, but they are related through their common use of music as an expressive force, imbued with the power to overcome structural and ideological barriers.

This is not a moment for us, Rev. This is a movement and a ministry.

Otis Moss III at Trinity United Church of Christ Chicago  
Sunday, November 30, 2014 (post-Ferguson sermon)<sup>1</sup>

In the months following the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, social movements erupted nationwide in protest as individuals struggled to articulate to one another shifting states of horror, fear, and disorientation. It was within this context that I heard the words of the epigraph—an attempt to capture the permanent sense of change, to assert the constant in the midst of the transitory. This response emerges from an ethos of community, held together by collective efforts to heal through the sonic. Music is often associated with social movements in a descriptive manner. When the civil rights movement is mentioned, songs such as “We Shall Overcome” are considered anthemic in a retrospective sense. However, music can and often does function in roles central to the aims and methods of social movements. One way that this centrality is achieved is through the practice of what I define as “pedagogical community.”<sup>2</sup> Pedagogical communities are networks that coalesce around the aims of teaching and learning as liberatory practice; the three described within this article define and reinscribe their lessons through techniques that are essential to their existence. In these cases, the social witness that is borne by pedagogical communities is experiential and takes place through sound as well as sight. These pedagogical communities unite through music and use music to address their most central concerns. Through the pedagogical use of music, each community featured here transforms sound into social movement, and participates in an everyday radicalism. Although the communities featured in this article

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<sup>1</sup> Otis Moss, III is the pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ, a congregation central to the geographical site matrix examined throughout this article. Readers may find the social justice focus of the church pertinent, and it should also be noted for the sake of the final case study that Moss is a member of the Morehouse College class of 1994.

<sup>2</sup> I have developed this concept of pedagogical community to describe networks and spaces of learning that are not necessarily confined to the physical classroom. As bell hooks writes in *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (New York: Routledge, 2003), education can function as a practice of freedom. It is with the goal of freedom in mind that I consider the vignettes in this article.

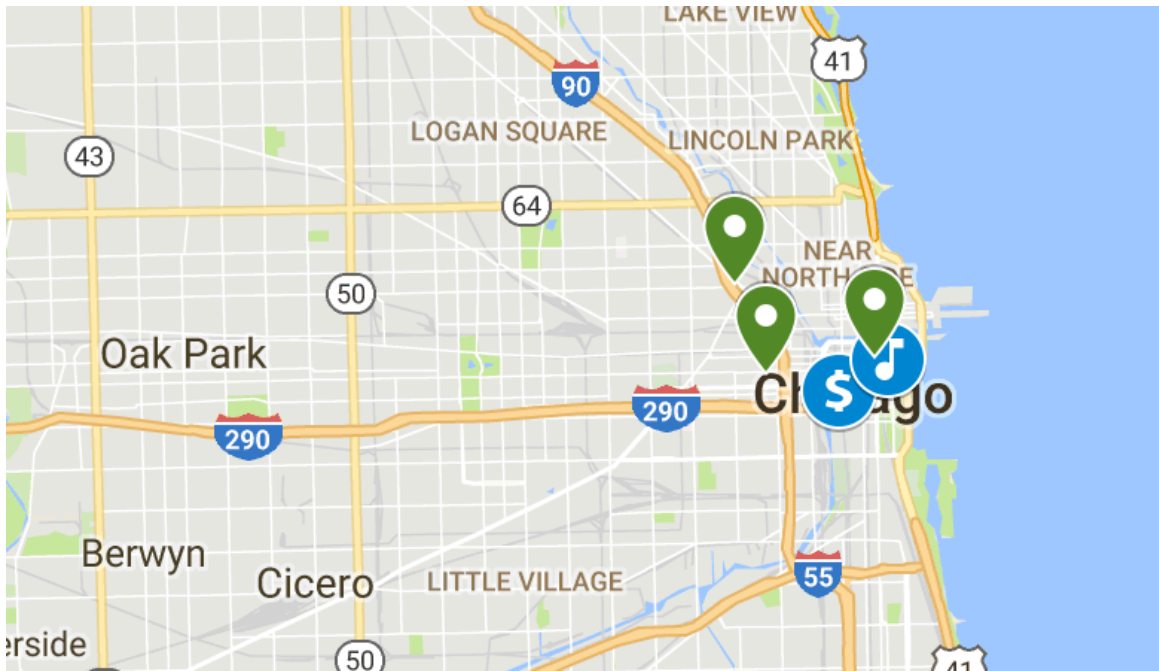
appear very different, they hold in common student-teacher relationships that use music as the means of inspiring social thought.

These social movements are essentially pedagogical. At the center of *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, Carter Godwin Woodson asserted, “the mere imparting of information is not education.” Originally published in 1933, Woodson’s text was a scathing indictment of the woeful standards of schooling to which racial minorities were subjected. Re-read today, Woodson’s claims resonate through a landscape buffeted by the violence of inequality. The Chicago Public Library branch named after him, couched in the city’s South Side, is surrounded by the evidence of failed integration. City of Chicago blue light cameras, boxes affixed to light poles in high-crime areas, police nearly every corner, including the corner of Halsted Avenue and Ninety-Fifth Street at the library’s entrance. From a high perch, the City tracks the movements of those entering to learn, casting a menacing blue light that typically deadens intersections in its presence.<sup>3</sup> A long, not necessarily misguided distrust of the actions and motives of police forces in neighborhoods like these steers people away from the blue light, and from the doors of a library whose denizens, given a choice, might choose to trade that resource in security for supplements to its Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American Literature and History. But as the residents of Washington Heights and its surrounding communities have come to learn, the mere imparting of resources is not equality.

Participants in three separate ethnographic fields in which I have also participated not only hold this belief in common, but also actively seek to correct the imbalances that position young families within food deserts and libraries under surveillance. Within this article, I consider the kitchenspeak at the Musical Arts Institute, an Occupy the Dream rally held in the Chicago Financial District, and a Morehouse College Glee Club concert as parallel event spaces. These three spaces feature participants striving to educate the young about music, centering their pedagogy on the legacy of a carefully constructed “black music.” In this way, youth are encouraged to hear beauty in themselves, and to hold the contributions of their race as an audible aesthetic ideal. Community is taught through music. These spaces are only connected by my presence; this article is a meditation on some means by which black people have used music pedagogies in politically aware ways. In 2012, as tensions continued to mount around the case of Trayvon Martin in particular and the fate of black youth in general, my perception of these spaces as ideologically distinct began to collapse upon one another. Education emerged as the ultimate concern when discussing inequality with interlocutors across these spaces. The practice of positing education as solution has a concern with deep roots in a politics of respectability. Idealized as a heal-all salve that is never properly and thoroughly applied to the wounds of discrimination, education has been presented as a solution since Reconstruction. The past failure of this technique, the way in which it can only advance the fortunes of a select few while leaving entire communities to languish under the burdens of discrimination, has not stopped the redoubling of efforts. In walking around Woodson Regional, I present a tour of three pedagogical communities utilizing music in their struggle for educational, economic, and socio-cultural parity and the power of these interactions to transform, temporarily, a space of disenfranchisement into black sacred space.

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<sup>3</sup> The presence of these cameras is reminiscent of Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon, a prison blueprint in which those jailed were always aware of the possibility of surveillance. This model, though rarely used, was highlighted in Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012).



**Figure 1:** Pedagogical Community Google Map

Link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0012.202>

A focus on education has, at times, been conflated with an engagement with the politics of respectability. For example, a sampling of contemporary progressive headlines profiling the Black Lives Matter movement<sup>4</sup> read as follows: “The Politics of Respectability is not Revolutionary;” “5 Ways ‘Respectability Politics’ Blame Black Women for Their Own Oppression;” and “The Definition, Danger and Disease of Respectability Politics, Explained.” It has even been extrapolated to fit a diasporic context, in *This is Africa*’s “Why Respectability Politics is Failing African Women and Girls.” However, the concept of respectability as constructed by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham is often misinterpreted. Higginbotham herself pushed back at the scapegoating of this phrase in an interview with the founder and editor-in-chief of *For Harriet*, titled “Wrestling with Respectability in the Age of #blacklivesmatter: A Dialogue.” She states that the objective of the subjects of *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* was not to quell protest, but rather to conduct themselves in a way that functioned as protest. The churchwomen at the center of that social movement were not always wealthy; actually, the majority were working-class. They behaved in dignified ways to demonstrate their humanity and pushed at the boundaries that their gender and racial positions proscribed. Education easily fits into this protest paradigm. Its essence—the acquisition of demonstrable knowledge—makes it attractive to a broad spectrum of social agents and opens it to critique because of its subtlety. Music education as demonstrated in the following examples allows for the expression of an everyday radicalism by individuals as they live: parents taking their children to piano lessons, citizens assembling for a demonstration, and young men performing old repertoire.

<sup>4</sup> More information on the Movement for Black Lives, which includes the Black Lives Matter network, can be found in Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #blacklivesmatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016); Christopher Lebron, *The Making of Black Lives Matter: A Brief History of an Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Patrisse Khan-Cullors and asha bandele, *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2018); and Marc Lamont Hill, *Nobody: Casualties of America’s War on the Vulnerable, from Ferguson to Flint and Beyond* (New York: Atria Books, 2017). These texts provide alternate viewpoints of a historian, a philosopher, a founder, and a public intellectual and cultural critic.

I assess the following events on an individual basis as social movements because black sacred space can exist outside of the walls of a church, and education beyond a standardized curriculum. In doing so, I conceptualize social movement as a verb, not a noun, pushing it beyond particular times and spaces. Although social movements undoubtedly arise from a set of circumstances which people hope to change, Ron Eyerson and Andrew Jamison state that

social movements temporarily transcend the specific situations from which they emerge; they create new contexts, new public spaces for addressing the particular problems of the time. They are not to be reduced to the organizations or institutions that they eventually become; what is central is their transience, their momentariness, their looseness.<sup>5</sup>

If the phrase “social movement” is taken literally, as movement that is social, we may arrive at a means of conjoining past and present. This understanding of the social movement as motion adds coherence to the actions of contemporary individuals who model themselves after the “race men” and women<sup>6</sup> of the pre-Civil Rights era. Linking past and present might aid in the analysis of public action and reaction in the wake of racialized violence, such as the shooting of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014. In the wake of #blacklivesmatter activism, the United States media has witnessed the transformation of social movements from historicized gloss of activity to a living, breathing realm of possibility. In addition to the situation of past within present, this article attempts to ethnographically profile disparate sites. The three spaces profiled in the following pages are of very different time spans. The first is the result of years of ethnography, the second, an afternoon, the third, a two-hour performance. As such, the length of each site visit is successively shorter. Through pedagogical community, the voices in the three following ethnographic vignettes claim, “I, too, sing America.”<sup>7</sup>

## The Musical Arts Institute

Now let’s begin our tour. From the Woodson Regional Library, I can walk a few blocks to the little schoolhouse where the Musical Arts Institute (MAI) is housed. For three years, I gave piano lessons on Saturday mornings here. MAI is a nonprofit music school founded by a husband and wife team. The school is located in a house next door to another location of the couple’s employment, St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church. St. James AMEC is ensconced within the South Side of Chicago, in the predominantly black Lilydale neighborhood. MAI is a site of potential re-education, so I will consider the concept of community in this particular context. The bonds of understanding that draw together parents, friends, and acquaintances concerned about education constitute social movement.

Robert F. Egan, author of *Music and the Arts in the Community: The Community Music School in America* (1989), defines the community music school as “an institution that offers music instruction of the highest quality for those who desire it, regardless of ability to pay.” Grant applications and policy briefs indicate a

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<sup>5</sup> Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, “Social Movements and Cultural Transformation: Popular Music in the 1960s,” *Media, Culture, & Society* 17, no. 3 (1995): 450, <https://doi.org/10.1177/016344395017003006>.

<sup>6</sup> St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton provided a typology of various black persons in relation to their tactical approaches to race matters in *Black Metropolis*, set in an abstracted Chicago termed Bronzeville (New York: Harper & Row, 1962). The authors list race leaders, race heroes, race men, and race women. Although the events profiled in this article do not take place in the actual Bronzeville neighborhood as presently bounded, “A Walk Around Woodson” is in many ways a descendant of this text.

<sup>7</sup> The poem by Langston Hughes, “I, Too,” begins by stating, “I, too, sing America.” This word choice is significant, given the poem’s context in mid-twentieth-century United States, a time before black music was widely accepted as representative of the nation.

general consensus around the existence of the community school, even if there is no agreement regarding operation, purpose, or any other aspect of it. Community music schools are inherently local, but nonetheless serve as important construction sites of musical being and opinion that point to and participate within larger discourses that transcend physical boundaries. MAI is an ideal site of inquiry regarding the performance of class, race, and culture. The quotidian interactions of faculty, parents, and students cumulatively represent the desires of a pedagogical community with religious and class-based aspirations. They also reflect wider trends in music education in America and globally, particularly in the African diaspora.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 2:** St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church

There are other Chicago area music programs that use the designation of community music school, including the Chicago Children's Choir, the Merit School of Music, Midwest Young Artists, Suzuki-Orff, and the Old Town School of Folk Music. As a part of my research, I routinely helped the MAI directors prepare grant applications. In order to do so effectively, I inquired about any points that would distinguish this program. Directors repeatedly claimed that the aforementioned community music programs are based either downtown, on the North Shore, or in the North and Northwest suburbs, where the majority of their constituents reside. MAI is positioned uniquely because it is located on the city's historically black South Side. The directors also asserted that, whereas other programs are profit driven, the mission of MAI prioritizes serving the local community.

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<sup>8</sup> Another article investigates the ways in which Afro-diasporans negotiate the boundaries around and the benefits of classical music education. For Haitian case studies, see Lauren Eldridge, "(Re)membering Haiti through Mizik Klasik," *Journal of Haitian Studies* 21, no. 1 (2015): 186–194, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jhs.2015.0002>.

Every Saturday morning, I taught a piano group class and several private lessons at MAI. After parking along Lafayette Street, I gathered my teaching materials and walked up the side steps of the single-family residence in which the school currently operates, often greeting parents in the midst of dropping off their kids and finding their own parking spaces. The school blends into the city block, a sentence of post-war bungalows punctuated by the church on the corner. The door opens into the kitchen, where a pot of coffee is ready for teachers and parents. There are two entrances into the living room, which has been repurposed as a reception area. A television is usually playing a DVD of *Darin Atwater's Soulful Symphony*, a fifty-three-piece orchestra and twenty-four voice chorus composed of visibly black musicians in a typical attempt to model a particular sort of black musical success to students (and waiting, paying parents), but on another day, it could be *Charles Mingus: Live at Montreaux* or *Quincy Jones: The 75th Birthday Celebration*. Maybe the TV is off, and CDs by Esperanza Spalding or Ledisi serve as background for the strained scales of soloists struggling through a lesson. These decisions are made by the receptionist, a young vocalist who maintains a lively conversation with the parents, grandparents and musicians who enter the school. This genre selection is indicative of a broader statement at MAI, articulated by the founders: Western European art music is presented as a means more than an end. Black music is considered a viable aesthetic goal, and the definition of success in its genres is appropriately broad. The receptionist is held up as a model, and some parents enthusiastically attend her local neo-soul concerts and late-night jam sessions. Each teacher represents a sort of success, a sort of career made possible by the knowledge of music. Playing in a church, composing film music, and teaching high school band are among the several revenue streams demonstrated by teachers. Although job descriptions are diverse, they all hold in common a gig-juggling act perfected by many musicians. Often, this juggling act causes absences, and some teachers have intimated to me that they prefer teaching at MAI to managing their own private studios because of the opportunity to request a substitute instructor should other engagements arise.

Younger siblings color and scribble in books or play with electronic toys, while parents and guardians read books, create small talk, or gaze out the wide front window onto the Dan Ryan Expressway. A music theory station set up on an Apple computer is often used by all for purposes other than learning music theory, and a gently worn baby grand piano attracts small, pudgy hands unable to take formal lessons yet. Armchairs rim the room. Upstairs, the three bedrooms have been converted to lesson studios, containing eighty-eight key electronic keyboards, electronic workstations, and multiple music stands and theory teaching aid posters. Downstairs from the kitchen is the office of the directors and the converted den or family room where I taught class piano on seven keyboards. At any point, the unacquainted visitor may be startled by the sound of the percussion studio, housed in the basement, thundering through the floorboards. This flurry of activity may seem social, but not quite political in the manner of the more static conception of a social movement. However, behind the scenes activity proves otherwise.



**Figure 3:** The Chicago-style raised ranch home that houses the Musical Arts Institute

The directors of MAI profess a desire to perform a sort of outreach to the geographic community, but arts education is a tough sell. In order to effectively service the geographic community, MAI registered with the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Office of Arts Education as a “pARTner,” a type of approved vendorship through which MAI can service schools. Successive CPS reforms have resulted in a school system that allocates a predetermined and limited amount of funds to arts education. The most recent round of budgeting cuts encouraged local principals to spend these funds on programs offered by vendors such as the Chicago Children’s Choir, Merit School of Music, and now, MAI, instead of hiring individual subject teachers who would require full-time employment and benefits. The pARTner sends a predetermined number of instructors in for 10–12-week modules, during which the school’s children rotate through the guest program in addition to their regular classes.

Ideally, MAI would be able to service the geographic community from its residence in the geographic community, but the directors have identified at least two hindrances to the success of this implementation, hindrances that are to some degree relatable across every ethnic and socioeconomic group, and thus have much to teach us about the function of contemporary music education in the United States. First, parents must be convinced that music education is necessary and beneficial. Research observing the *value* of arts education is currently a trend, no doubt because current American cultural

tenets demand it.<sup>9</sup> However, the arts often play second fiddle to “core” subjects, such as mathematics and science. This subject hierarchy becomes a problem when a shortage in funding dictates the cutting of resources, such as the number of hours in a school day or the teachers at a learning center. The problem is compounded by the nagging belief that arts education is only for some people, namely, the elite. MAI families map onto a broad socio-economic spectrum, but very few hail from a class position that would encourage music for music’s sake at the expense of future earning potential. The school directors constantly practice and refine their “principal” and “parent” sales pitches to address these impediments. They encourage principals to consider the social benefits of music education, education as a means to healthier community. Meanwhile, they demonstrate to both parents and principals the broader educational value of music, tying music education to achievement in STEM fields.

A second issue is that of parental participation, a particular sensitive sticking point due to the aforementioned politics of respectability. As popularized by the Suzuki method of music education, many teachers both inside and outside that pedagogical brand encourage parental supervision of individual practice time. This assumes, however, that a parent, usually a mother, has the disposable time to enforce this—perhaps she has a nine-to-five position, or works from home. Although these narratives are well worn in mainstream American media discourse (see the “can women have it all?” debates, alternately titled the ongoing mommy wars), they require a particular class position that many MAI parents cannot enter. This disconnect becomes a self-inflicted racial branding, for example, faculty berating parents for the lackluster performance of students in lessons by gesturing towards the back of the hand and saying “you know how we do.” Sometimes this point is elaborated upon in a comparison with North Side and north suburban music programs.

The pedagogical community at the Musical Arts Institute presents a prototype for a black community music school, a “race school,” to riff off Drake and Cayton. Although racial advancement may not be the explicit mission of those who enter the building on the banks of the Dan Ryan, that goal is as present as the sounding of the tonic during Hanon keyboard exercises; it is an ethical cornerstone, and a point of constant and consistent return. This pedagogical community demonstrates the negotiation of ideals and objectives through curriculum and parent-teacher communication. For its participants, believing in students, pushing them towards the unfamiliar, towards the excellent, in short, re-educating is a political act.

## **Occupy the Dream**

I continue my consideration of education’s impact with an ethnographic sketch of a protest, the traditional site of a social movement and a commonly understood political act. After I exit the school and merge onto the expressway, I will arrive downtown in a few minutes. On January 16, 2012, I circled the downtown Chicago financial district, looking for a metered parking space. As I approached the intersection of West Jackson Boulevard and South LaSalle Street, I passed sporadic clusters of two and three people moving in the same directions. Some carried crutches, others carried signs. They strolled easily on an unusually warm winter day, past banking institutions and the retailers that clothe their employees—Allen

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<sup>9</sup> For example, see the recent publication of the report *Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America’s Future Through Creative Schools* by the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. While it is easy to agree that programming should focus on “reinvigorating the creativity and innovation that has made this country great,” (v) methods for attaining creativity are not quite as simple to agree upon.



Edmonds, Brooks Brothers, Ann Taylor. When I cleared the intersection, the Federal Reserve Bank on my right, I finally witnessed the result of several planning meetings and patient, weekly prodding from the pulpit—Occupy the Dream.

Several prominent black ministers and politicians organized Occupy the Dream, a series of simultaneous demonstrations on the national holiday commemorating the birth of civil rights icon Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>10</sup> Borne of the contemporary sociopolitical climate in urban America, the name is a direct derivative of the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement, though their consonances were ultimately superficial.<sup>11</sup> Occupy Wall Street has been criticized in the popular press as a monochromatic movement, lacking the minority participation necessary in order to be able to represent their stated 99%. The rhetoric and reputation of the OWS movement repelled many church-going African Americans, particularly those who identify as socially conservative. OWS is socially liberal, in keeping with its primary millennial demographic. This issue of differing values is in part exemplified by the crucial, yet divisive use of language. Anti-racist activist Tim Wise has spoken about the difficulty of the Occupy language for minority participants, noting that the very word “occupy” may offend descendants of groups that have been historically disenfranchised.<sup>12</sup> Even this Monday, on a day conscientiously set aside for the careful engagement of black people, I saw a few older Occupy the Dream protestors cringe when the popular chant—“The banks were bailed out, and we were sold out”—was raised.<sup>13</sup>

Based on the concerns of their congregants, a coterie of African American church leaders formed a separate movement that not only looked different, but that operated differently and articulated different central concerns. Occupy the Dream added a racial dimension to the class concerns of OWS.<sup>14</sup> Actions included the occasional physical, in-person protest, but also included virtual protest, for example, moving money from so-called “Wall Street banks” into minority-owned banks and credit unions. Leaders focused on mortgage and student lending reform, respectable issues for a broad black religious community with middle-class aspirations. Middle-aged men wearing fraternity letters and union jackets mingled, representing both trade school and college educations in the same milieu. Although not all attendees were educated in the same manner, education served as an ideal rallying point for this spontaneous community and unusual combination of diverse congregations. They were aware of the access that education provides, and actively engaged a politics of respectability in their offensive toward these goals.

Nostalgia reigned supreme on that crisp afternoon and transformed the protest into a pedagogical community. Visiting OWS protestors were excited to take advantage of the Dream protestors’ knowledge

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<sup>10</sup> A series of articles at the *Huffington Post* profile the leadership and stated intentions of Occupy the Dream. Leaders named include Benjamin Chavis, Jamal Bryant, and Russell Simmons. See Michael Carmichael, “Occupy the Dream,” *The Huffington Post*, December 16, 2011, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-carmichael/occupy-the-dream\\_b\\_1152329.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-carmichael/occupy-the-dream_b_1152329.html).

<sup>11</sup> Sarah van Gelder describes the Occupy Wall Street movement as being inspired by the Spanish indignado movement. More information about the impetus and operation of OWS can be found her reader *This Changes Everything: Occupy Wall Street and the 99% Movement* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2011). Also helpful is the compilation *Dreaming in Public: The Building of the Occupy Movement*, edited by Amy Schrager Lang and Daniel Lang/Levitsky (Oxford: New Internationalist Publications, Ltd., 2012). This collection of “texts and images” devotes a section to the analysis of race in OWS.

<sup>12</sup> See Tim Wise and Melissa Harris-Perry, “Tim Wise on Rachel Maddow, 10/21/11—Discussing Race in the #Occupy Movement,” *The Rachel Maddow Show* video (6:13), October 21, 2011, <http://www.timwise.org/2011/10/tim-wise-on-rachel-maddow-102111-discussing-race-in-the-occupy-movement/>.

<sup>13</sup> Occupy the Dream rallies were held nationwide the February after OWS began. At this point, OWS protestors were still active, and some attended the Occupy the Dream rally.

<sup>14</sup> I want to note that the class politics of Occupy the Dream were not subsumed in the racial politics, at least not at a grassroots level. Although these demonstrations were engineered from the top down, multiple “conversations” were being held simultaneously at an official level and among the crowd at the actual demonstrations. The Dream organizers may have been governed by a politics of respectability, but I do not consider it a mono-class pedagogical community.

of the Civil Rights catalogue of marching songs. Dream protestors themselves were enthusiastic about pulling them out and participating in a legacy of social activism that many claim has been forgotten. Others claim that the style of protest has simply changed, from linked-arm marches to online petitions. Monday's protest was held on the Martin Luther King, Jr. commemorative holiday. Attended by elders stooped over walking sticks and young adults furiously chronicling the event on their smart phones, it was reminiscent of old Civil Rights photographs that some of the young teenagers present might have studied in their history textbooks.<sup>15</sup> This crowd was not so homogenous as those older historicized images, this multitude not nearly as dapper as civil rights was at midcentury. These protestors no longer follow, nor are held back by a single sign. The manner in which current media culture, powered by social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, has usurped the ability to construct and maintain a narrative has been a public-relations nightmare for those who might wish to mobilize a politics of respectability in order to coerce acknowledgment of their complaints. These tensions have come to the fore in the aftermath of the recent rash of fatal black youth clashes with older white men.<sup>16</sup> Occupy the Dream shows how models of protest have evolved from the mid-twentieth century yet are still impacted by nostalgia and memory.

Occupy the Dream echoes in sound, sight, and purpose the 1963 Chicago Schools Boycott, recently documented by Kartemquin films.<sup>17</sup> In this way, the first site (MAI) appears closer to the second site (Occupy the Dream), with a shared focus on liberation. Note below the consonances between 1963 and 2012, the first drawn from the '63 Boycott archive, the second from my footage of Occupy the Dream. Both use communal song as an anchor as they march around the same blocks of the downtown financial district with the articulated aim of "freedom." Occupy the Dream may feel easier than a small local music school to associate with traditional static conceptions of a social movement. In keeping with my introductory thought experiment, I challenge the reader to imagine the physical mobilization of this set of ideals. Hundreds of people gathered that MLK holiday to embody a pedagogical community that used music in protest. Occupy the Dream was a community formed in an instant. An amalgamation of several churches, it was held together by an event. When the event ended, the crowd dispersed and became individual family units and peer units. The coffee table at MAI, on the other hand, is a recurring community. Every Saturday, the same parents mingle and learn about issues in adjacent school districts. Both the single event and the recurring community serve as examples of the manner by which pedagogical communities may enact social movement. My third site is a concert that demonstrates the potential ambiguity of community.

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<sup>15</sup> Tanisha Ford writes about the heavy representational mediation of these images in *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Soul* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.5149/northcarolina/9781469625157.001.0001>.

<sup>16</sup> The coverage of the killings of Trayvon Martin, Jordan Davis, Renisha McBride, and Mike Brown were preoccupied with race, but certainly had overtones of class analysis, i.e., focus on occupation at time of shooting.

<sup>17</sup> For more information on this documentary, visit [63boycott.kartemquin.com](http://63boycott.kartemquin.com). The site draws clear connections between the 1963 Chicago School Boycott protesting school segregation and the contemporary under-resourcing and disproportionate closure of black and Latinx schools. This resource was brought to my attention by Elizabeth Todd-Breland, whose forthcoming monograph cites cultural elements such as the Bud Billiken Back to School parade as indicative of a robust culture around education in the black Chicago community.



**Figure 4:** "63 Boycott -Today is Freedom Day"

See video: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0012.202>



**Figure 5:** "Don't You Let Nobody Turn You Around -Occupy the Dream Rally, 1-16-2012"

See video: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0012.202>

## Morehouse College Glee Club

A few blocks away from the Federal Reserve, out of the economic district, are the institutions of “capital-c” Culture, such as Symphony Center and the Joffrey Ballet. On March 6, 2012, I went to the Harris Theater in order to see what some might term “the dream occupied.” The Morehouse College Glee Club was on tour, and here in Chicago, in conjunction with the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, they celebrated their centennial.<sup>18</sup> Morehouse College is a historically black men’s institution founded in 1867. It has been canonized as a cornerstone of African-American history through its esteemed alumni, which include theologian Howard Thurman, actor Samuel Jackson, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. MCGC concert tours are an annual opportunity for alumni scattered nationwide to express pride in their affiliation with this institution and gather to support it financially. Subsequently, concert attendees are an eclectic mix of alumni of Morehouse College and their families, as well as other HBCU (historically black college and university) alumni familiar with the touring spectacle. Pre-college youth are a consistent presence at these types of events, and touring ensembles often serve as a recruiting tool.

With roots in the jubilee singer movement post-Emancipation,<sup>19</sup> the repertoire performed during these tours responds to Woodson’s assertion that blacks have been mis-educated to the point of believing in their own inferiority by centering composers in the art music genre of African descent. Like the students at MAI, the MCGC is taught to uphold the cultural production of Afro-descendants. As Terrance McKnight, a MCGC alum writes, “In Glee Club, we were taught that being on time meant being a few minutes early and that our singing was a gift to the community. We were constantly reminded that some people in our audience may never have seen a group of black men in tuxedos, and so it was our duty to represent the highest standards of the college and of ourselves.”<sup>20</sup> These tours are flashpoints of contrasting versions of black male respectability.

The community that the young men themselves formed was diverse, consisting of several different factions that group members articulate. From a picture on the glossy concert booklet, or the distance between stage and audience seat, the men appear homogeneous. Neat blazers and slacks, elegant posture, and a dramatic, yet efficient entrance ritual all contribute to this initial perception. However, as the concert continues, individuals emerge from the mass. Tall and short, thin, sturdy, and stocky, the men become easily identifiable. Under a close, persistent gaze, some further articulate their personal identities. A ponytail here, straightened hair there, and occasional long fingernails raise some eyebrows among older alumni. Queering themselves in capacities that frustrate simple description, they contribute all the more to this complex portrait of black masculinity. Yet that is merely the visual. The sound emerges, confident and tremulous, in sweet tenors, rumbling bass-baritones, and startling falsettos.<sup>21</sup> On this occasion, there is a certain comfort in uniformity. However, my observations indicate that it is the sense of pedagogical

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<sup>18</sup> A Morehouse alumnus and past president of the college, Dr. Walter Massey, was the current president of SAIC, thus establishing an institutional connection.

<sup>19</sup> The Fisk Jubilee singers toured America, and subsequently the world in order to raise funds for Fisk University. Their self-presentation was a cautious negotiation of the comportment and repertoire expected from former slaves. For more information, see Toni Anderson, *“Tell Them We Are Singing for Jesus”*: *The Original Fisk Jubilee Singers and Christian Reconstruction, 1871–1878*, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009) and Tsitsi Ella Jaji, *Africa in Stereo: Modernism, Music, and Pan-African Solidarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199936373.001.0001>.

<sup>20</sup> See the NPR article “The Morehouse College Glee Club is 100” for more of McKnight’s contextualization of the Glee Club and performance clips.

<sup>21</sup> For further explanation of gendered and racialized sound, see Alisha Lola Jones, “Singing High: Black Countertenors and Treble Timbres of Transcendence.”

community that comforts. Uniformity engenders a silence regarding difference, and it is this uniformity that makes community possible in this space.

The last half of the concert was titled “African-American heritage.” I include below the lyrics from that evening’s performance of “Who’ll Join the Union?” arranged by the choir’s director, Dr. David Morrow, a past president of the National Association of Negro Musicians. This particular Civil War-era freedom song has lived, and continues to live, several lives. It is a freedom song in work song format, gesturing for each voice and each ear to fall into the rhythmic grooves. It is a song indicative of several moments, of Union armies, labor unions<sup>22</sup>, and present unity. The question bounces between each line, “Who’ll join the Union?”

My lovely brethren, how ye do?  
Oh, does your love continue true?  
Ever since I have been newly born;  
I love to see-a God’s work go on;

If you want to catch that heavenly breeze,  
Go down in the valley upon your knees,  
Go bend your knees right smooth with the ground  
And pray to the Lord to turn you around

Say, if you belong to the Union band,  
Then here’s my heart, and here’s my hand,  
I love you all both bond and free,  
I love you if you don’t love me.

Now if you want to know of me,  
Just who I am, and a-who I be,  
I’m a child of God with my soul set free  
For Christ has bought my liberty.

Who will join the union? If social movement is read as a verb, this pedagogical community moves socially by singing racial pride through diverse voices. As the final destination on our walk around Woodson, the MCGC shows us both the negotiation of ideals that MAI represented and the evolution of models that Occupy the Dream presents. Taken as a collective, these three sites of pedagogical community reconfigure the possibilities of social movements.

In summary, each of the sites featured on this tour, on this walk around Woodson Regional Library deals with a legacy of disenfranchisement by generating pedagogical community. Respectable sound may take the form of piano etudes, freedom songs, or glee club choruses. It is a disciplined configuration of self that colors within certain lines so that other lines may be obliterated.

The three black spaces described here are multivalent in their descriptions of education, social movement, and musical meaning. If the mere imparting of information is not education, actors within these theaters (social witnesses) intervene in order to create pedagogical community that actually does teach. In concert, the spaces and their inhabitants collectively assert that education has the potential to

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas Turino explains the connection of many civil rights era songs with earlier labor movements in a discussion of the politics of participation (*Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008]).

liberate, that it should be considered a human right. Human rights discourse involves seeking affirmation outside of federal judicial structures in order to meet popular needs or demands. In this case, the communities that I have observed are not necessarily looking abroad for these ideals, or utilizing human rights language; rather, they self-determine through private collective actions, drawing together to complete tasks that government and the broader society have not yet finished.

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