Gregory Freeland

MUSIC AND BLACK COMMUNITY IN SEGREGATED NORTH CAROLINA

"It's All Right..."

Black Studies

Collection Editor
CHRISTOPHER MCAULEY

LIVED PLACES
PUBLISHING

Music and Black community in segregated North Carolina

Dr Gregory Freeland, PhD

Music and Black community in segregated North Carolina

"It's All Right ..."

The Black Studies Collection

Collection Editor
Dr Chris McAuley

LPP

First published in 2023 by Lived Places Publishing.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

The authors and editors have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of information contained in this publication, but assume no responsibility for any errors, inaccuracies, inconsistencies and omissions. Likewise, every effort has been made to contact copyright holders. If any copyright material has been reproduced unwittingly and without permission the Publisher will gladly receive information enabling them to rectify any error or omission in subsequent editions.

Copyright © 2023 Lived Places Publishing

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 9781915271211 (pbk)
ISBN: 9781915271235 (ePDF)
ISBN: 9781915271228 (ePUB)

The right of Gregory Freeland to be identified as the Author of this work has been asserted by them in accordance with the Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988.

Cover design by Fiachra McCarthy
Book design by Rachel Trolove of Twin Trail Design
Typeset by Newgen Publishing UK

Lived Places Publishing
Long Island
New York 11789

www.livedplacespublishing.com

Abstract

This book discusses how music created and maintained community strength and solidarity during legalized segregation in Durham, North Carolina. Music, with its rhythms, repetitive phrases, and lyrics, gave Black community members survival strength and symbolic images rooted in traditional spirituals, jazz, rhythm and blues, and gospel music. These diverse musical forms evolved and interacted in relation to the complex ideological, historical, and economic forces that formed Black communities, like Hickstown, in West Durham. By examining and reflecting on segregation between 1957 and 1963 in North Carolina and the parallel musical forces, this book finds that the complex interrelationship between music and the Black community both inspired and responded to the Black peoples' survival and collective experience. Memories of segregation are replete with moments in which the power of music provided courage, inspiration, and unity.

Keywords

American history; jazz; rhythm blues; autobiography; 1950s; southern United States; segregation; Jim Crow; African American culture; community; hidden transcripts, call and response; Hayti; Sam Cooke; WLAR; Rhythm and Blues; integration; Black Wall Street; Black religion; 1963; Crest Street; music of Black origin

Contents

Learning objectives		**ix**
Introduction		**1**
Chapter 1	Music and community	**3**
Chapter 2	Durham, North Carolina	**9**
Chapter 3	Musics in Durham: from rhythm and blues to gospel	**17**
Chapter 4	The church and gospel music	**33**
Chapter 5	Intersection of music and everyday life in segregated society	**49**
Chapter 6	Music in the Civil Rights Movement	**59**
Chapter 7	Hayti: the Black Wall Street	**71**
Chapter 8	Dining in Durham	**85**
Chapter 9	Roots in slavery	**93**
Chapter 10	Women in Hickstown; women in North Carolina; women in the struggle	**101**
Chapter 11	A change is going to come	**107**
Chapter 12	Reflections on music and dance	**117**
Chapter 13	Radio and WLAC	**129**
Chapter 14	Music as a transcendent force	**141**
Chapter 15	School days	**157**

Chapter 16 Segregation in; segregation out **163**

Chapter 17 Sam Cooke takes it to another level **169**

Chapter 18 Improvisational survival **183**

Chapter 19 The music encompasses the struggle **193**

Chapter 20 Back to the Movement and out **201**

Conclusion **209**

Activities and learning objectives **215**

Notes **226**

Bibliography **231**

Index **241**

Learning objectives

1. Students will develop the ability to carry out interdisciplinary study in Black civil rights that is informed by theories and practices of Black life and survival from slavery to the Civil Rights Movement.
2. Students will develop an understanding of the relational nature of music and Black struggles for equality and justice.
3. Students will develop an understanding of the ongoing changes associated with contemporary racial relations as products of historical processes.
4. Students will understand how Black people's struggles for equality and justice reconstitute configurations of community unity to their advantage.
5. Students will develop the ability to interrogate the dominant political and cultural categories used to frame survival processes.
6. Students will learn how to identify the larger system in which they are rooted, utilizing critical theoretical and methodological approaches from Black people's struggles, like nonviolence, music, religion, and social networks.

Introduction

It's Saturday night, around midnight, at the Square Club. You hear rhythmically vibrating rhythm and blues (RnB), generating a celebratory atmosphere for the crowd of Black folks who enjoy a release from everyday stress, caused by the social, economic, religious, and political problems in Durham, North Carolina. Heat from the summer night and the closely packed dancing bodies do little to dampen the stylish clothes and hairdos of the dancers, moving in rhythm to vibrations created by Durham's top-notch Black musicians. This was where it was *at*. You got there, whether you drove, walked, or rode in an automobile, from the top-tier Cadillac right on down to the most unreliable banger. The temperature in the club matched the energy of the people, the driving of the musicians, and the atmosphere of the sultry humid summer nights; nights made for good feelings and the unconscious strengthening of community.

This scenario, played out time and again, is part of the foundation of my exploration of music and the emotional, communal, and celebratory effect that it had on a Black community in Durham. It mirrors numerous stories and similar scenarios that took place throughout southern Black communities, but this emphasis is on a small Durham community called Hickstown in the late 1950s, and what it was like for me living there during that time when the United States was on the verge of rescinding segregationist laws, practiced in the South—an event that for me and my community was celebratory in itself.

For people who are living in situations where injustice and inequalities are on display on a daily basis, emotional courage is the tie that binds. What tempers the experience of injustice is the experience of community and emotional courage that bring the community together. It is an underestimated and understudied yet critical characteristic for successful lives in Black communities, in the segregated and unjust South. This courage was summoned in several ways, but the one I remember the most is the celebratory aspect of the Black rhythm and blues, jazz, and gospel music, which lent a feeling of "it's all right" to everyday life. This story, reflecting on a period of my life in a segregated community in North Carolina, can add to the collection of a history that shaped tight Black communities in an unequal and unjust society. My story explores this history through examples of music—in the household, at church, and in clubs, parties, and schools. It looks at how music facilitated the development, mobilization, and realization of Black life. Because music was an all-encompassing presence, rhythms and lyrics played a central role in supporting Black life.

1
Music and community

It is well known that music is an intrinsic part of human life that can make you feel good, bad, nationalistic, transcendental, and/or informed. Music can inspire these feelings and thoughts, without you being aware that it is happening. The only requirement is to be in the presence of music. Music can be created to enhance the outcomes sought in fighting injustices, like during the Civil Rights Movement, which has been talked about, written, and recorded for decades. Given this, we can begin our story of what it meant to Black people to survive segregationist politics in the late 1950s and early 1960s, after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which set in motion action to end segregationist policies. There was community-wide elation. It was similar to the feeling of when Barack Obama was declared winner of the 2008 presidential election. Mix this feeling with what the music was doing, and you have a population that is primed for elevated consciousness, based on togetherness. There is a continual enactment of the dialectical relationship between the Black music and Black survival in this scenario. This is part of the venue for the creation of Black culture that was not defined by the dominant white culture. These are questions that this book seeks to illuminate: What does it take to hold a community together?

Does integration weaken Black communities? How does music, and the arts in general, strengthen Black communities? Is music essential to Black identity? This means integration in all levels of society—integrated music, integrated athletics, integrated schools, and integrated businesses.

A thorough study of music and community unity in North Carolina requires an understanding of how racial segregation has operated in North Carolina and how it manifested in Durham and a small Black community, Hickstown. Shared cultural identity was a critical aspect of life in Durham. For example, Black people in Durham, by virtue of African ancestry and a common historical experience of slavery, situated them into an overall togetherness (Bolduc, 2016). Black togetherness is rooted in the thought that Black people's struggle is to overcome the white social, political, economic, and cultural domination that was exemplified by the segregationist politics of the southern United States. There are several cities closely identified with and known for activism during the Civil Rights Movement action of the 1950s and early 1960s—Selma, Birmingham, and Nashville—but Durham should be in that pantheon of well-known sites. Martin Luther King Jr. was aware of Durham's importance in economics, politics, religion, and culture. King spoke at the Black Hillside High School in 1956, encouraging students to demand rights. By then, King was a recognized leader in the drive for desegregation. His first visit to Durham had come when he was just emerging in the Movement. It was October 15, 1956, and the Durham Business and Professional Chain—the local Black chamber of commerce—had invited the young pastor to speak during its annual "Trade Week." King, who was gaining notice for guiding

a boycott of segregated city buses in Montgomery, Alabama, spoke at Hillside High School. "If democracy is to live, segregation must die," he said, and predicted, "Doors will be open to you now that had never been open in the past" (The Durham Civil Rights Heritage Project, ND). Durham was the site of another King visit in 1957. After visiting the Durham Woolworths, which had closed its lunch counter after demonstrations the previous week, King addressed a standing-room only crowd, estimated at 1,200 people, at White Rock Baptist Church (*The Carolina Times*, 1960). "Let us not fear going to jail, if the officials threaten to arrest us for standing up for our rights. Maybe it will take this willingness to stay in jail to arouse the dozing conscience of our nation" (ibid). The statement, calling for a rejection of the racist institutions and values of this society, appears to indicate that nonparticipation in the movement would be synonymous to accepting it, and is also related to organizing around Black goals, as an effective strategy to enter the existing system and begin making changes.

Community unity, based on the idea of being a community, or more specifically, of being a member of communities like Hickstown sustained a common identity rooted in a common history and culture. An important component of this common identity was music, which enhanced the sense of community that Blacks had and formed an identity which was based on a common idea of Hickstown-ness. Music represented a medium through which community members expressed their satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction with the political and cultural priorities of mainstream politics practiced in Durham, the state, and the nation. Musicians evoked in community members an awareness of their socio-structural realities, cultural traditions,

and prospects for the future, while the people, in turn, imbibed the messages and rhythms from the music into their everyday lives. My experience in Durham exemplifies a fundamental link between culture and people that is rooted in their historical experience—a link that numerous scholars and observers have found to exist.

Most of the musical references in this book stem from songs which explicitly refer to Black culture, like gospel and RnB, because they best typify the thesis that music played a major role in transmitting communal ideas and general excitement. This does not imply that those who did not listen to Black music would not gain increased cultural awareness or extra survival traction, but that they would miss a crucial part of the total community experience. There were other active forces including literature, drama, dance, political mobilization, and general education. Contrariwise, some Black people listened to country music all day instead of RnB, but they were more communally aware than those who did not expose themselves to music at all. The locally produced music ignited a consciousness among the people that this was their music, a local music that was written and performed by Durham's community members.

Southern RnB music between 1955 and 1963 did not intone calls for political action or Black recognition. Rather, it focused on themes that stimulated excitement at dances and/or parties. There was a mainstream/commercial element present in the music, but it did not detract from the power of community building. This period also commended to Durham, and nationally, that a unique style of music was arising and solidifying in North

Carolina that would be essential for defining and galvanizing a Black identity that would demand recognition.

Although much of the popular music of the era was not influenced by political ideology and anti-segregationist themes, the celebratory nature of the music was influential without including those type of lyrics. The most compellingly relevant fact is that melodies and rhythms were inspirational and celebratory. The seeds of community unity were sown during the historical struggle of forced relocation to the United States from Africa, and the subsequent centuries of racial oppression. One way that such suffering and trauma imprinted a deep and collective (un) consciousness in everyday life was through cultural retention and everyday expression. The horrible atrocities committed on enslaved Blacks led to an inner will to survive.

Hickstown coped, survived, and resisted racist subjection by drawing from the creative stream and ethos of Black music and the cosmological roots of Black arts and aesthetics for their inner courage and endurance. This was required to cope with this era of oppression and racism, which formed the painful remembrance and backdrop that fueled the influence of music that served as the binding force in individual identity, and consequently, community identity.

2
Durham, North Carolina

Speaking in 1966, Stokley Carmichael could have been referring to Durham, which had a history of a sense of community, especially economically and culturally. In *Black Power*, for example, Carmichael and Hamilton note that Black Power is "a call for Black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community. It is a call for Black people to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations and to support those organizations. It is a call to reject the racist institutions and values of this society" (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967).

The economic complexities of life in Durham indicate that not only the intangible components of life in Durham had an impact on the response to and creation of political openings by a significant portion of the Black community (Du Bois, 1912). The Black community was a mirror image of the white community except for scale. For example, there was a Black upper class, middle class, working class, and poor/lower class just as there was in the white community (Brown, 2008). The Black upper class was comprised of doctors, lawyers, merchants, and businessmen. They lived in well-kept communities with larger homes and bigger lots. In comparison to the white upper class,

it was considerably smaller, but the imagery was the same. On the other hand, there was intermingling and friendships across class lines in the Black community because everyone went to the same high school and the same clubs. There were color distinctions within the Black community that I will not treat here.

Music was inescapable in Durham. It was heard in church, at parties, at political meetings, and in jailhouses. The music scene in Durham created a sense of belonging among community members which, in turn, led to tighter social cohesion and collective action. Social cohesion theorists, such as Robin Dunbar, suggest that endorphins in individuals are heightened and released by music, which may enhance the subjective feeling of bonding and thereby create stronger social cohesion (Dunbar, 2003).

The music of the late 1950s created metaphorical and emotional, as well as spiritual meanings, through lyrics and rhythms that helped to frame the community members to be greater than an image of Black poverty and anti-white rhetoric, as it is sometimes characterized. With the application of the music metaphor to the representation of Black pride in the community at-large, connected to the desires of Blacks for justice and equality, there is a more unified force for cultural strength. Leroi Jones, for example, addressed the primary role that music had in the raising of Black consciousness and noted that Black music constituted a place where Black people lived and moved in almost absolute openness and strength. Jones found Black music to be a place of refuge for Black people. He saw spirituality and religion as another influence. The religious metaphor, along with the secular references in Black music, could presumably lead to a sense of

power that would elevate Blacks out of a sense of powerlessness and place them consciously and physically on par with whites (Jones, 1967).

In order to fully understand the dynamics and the power of the music of Hickstown and how it contributed to a strong community, it is necessary to not only address the function of the intangible components of music, such as lyrics and mood, but also to determine what interrelationships there are between specific music genres, such as jazz, gospel, and RnB, and whether any one of these genres of music was more effective for specific community bonding. The implication is that people who listened to music with explicit lyrics with references to romantic awareness and religious power had their understanding of cultural and political opportunities elevated which, in turn, influenced their decisions and choices in support of civil rights. For example, harmonies, whether sacred or secular, coupled with the lyrically metaphorical message of not giving up when life and/or situations get difficult, make songs widely accessible and extremely appealing. A fundamental assumption here is that music can ignite repressed desires in individuals, to resist external barriers to political freedom and cultural expressions.

Hickstown

Hickstown was (it no longer exists) the name of the community that I lived in from birth to high school. Hickstown community members often got teased about the name—a hick town on the outskirts of town. A friend from across town claimed to have seen tumbleweeds rolling across the street during his visit to Hickstown. The name Hickstown came from Hawkins Hicks, a white woman

who inherited the property in 1863 from her common-law husband Jefferson Browning. Hicks was the landowner and the settlers were African American. Land in Hickstown was cheap and African Americans could purchase it due to its relative undesirability, as with other Black settlements in Durham. New Bethel Baptist Church, organized by Rev. John Scales in 1879, became the focal point for the community. Hickstown was incorporated in 1887, the year of Prohibition in Durham, and two of Durham's popular downtown taverns relocated to Hickstown after Prohibition. Bootleg liquor was still a sales point in several Hickstown locations well into the 1950s. The establishment of Erwin Mills, on the north side of the railroad tracks, to the east-northeast of Hickstown in 1892–1893, provided a nearby source of employment. Streets were named for the circuses that visited nearby (Barnum, Bailey, and Ringling Streets) and encamped west of the city limits and north of the railroad tracks.

Hickstown was a lower middle-class, poor and working-class neighborhood. There may have been a working-class tinge to the crowd, although during segregation, all Blacks, regardless of class, were regulated to the same geographical locations that included homes, schools, doctors' offices, restaurants, and so on. Durham had a major working-class population that worked in the cotton mills, tobacco factories, and in service jobs. A class of Black professionals emerged out of the need to take care of these workers.

Music, particularly that produced between 1957 and 1963, created metaphorical, emotional, as well as community meanings, through lyrics and rhythms that brought all community members into the idea of life in Hickstown and survival. A major test for survival occurred in 1959 when the

pathway of the Durham Freeway was set up by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and an exuberant Durham business community to pass through the tight-knit Hickstown community. The freeway construction through Hickstown/Crest Street became a galvanizing moment that would strengthen community identification. A neighborhood coalition was formed that could stand up to the foregone conclusions of NCDOT and the business community. A newly organized group, The People's Alliance, was formed and helped fund the opposition.

Hickstown/Crest Street versus North Carolina Department of Transportation

This plan involved the relocation of the entire neighborhood, except for the New Bethel Church and the former Hickstown School, which would become the WI Patterson Community Center. Those buried in the New Bethel cemetery, located to the west of the church, were disinterred and reinterred in three separate cemeteries: the New Bethel Memorial Gardens, 2619 West Pettigrew Street; the Glenview Cemetery at the intersection of NC 55 and Riddle Road; and the Beechwood Cemetery at the intersection of Fayetteville Street and Cornwallis Road. The case study notes that this was necessary, in part, because the City of Durham rezoned part of the target land during the process to allow a health club (the later Metrosport) to be constructed, reducing that area available for relocation. Prior to relocation, 22 percent of dwelling units were owner-occupied. Sixty-five houses were moved from their existing locations to open land to the southwest, and multiple new single family and apartment

units were constructed. At project completion, 56 percent were owner-occupied.

The community successfully argued that replacement housing should be provided as a means of preserving the family relationships and social fabric of the Crest Street neighborhood (United States Court of Appeals, 1985). This reasoning permitted the neighborhood to be treated as a whole and enabled some Crest Street residents outside the highway footprint to be included as part of the mitigation. In addition, based on 23 U.S.C. 109(h) of the 1970 Federal-aid Highway Act Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is required to consider fully not only the direct impacts but also secondary and cumulative impacts of proposed federal-aid highway projects. This further buttressed the idea that the entire Crest Street neighborhood, not just that portion of it within the project footprint, should be included in the mitigation and enhancement plan. The Crest Street neighborhood feels a bit like a place apart today, at least to my perception. Given its easy-to-overlook entrance off Fulton Street or Douglas Street, many folks in Durham likely don't even know that the neighborhood exists.

When city and state leaders sought to push the Durham Expressway through mostly African American neighborhoods, the People's Alliance helped organize a citywide coalition (1978–1980). The coalition included NC Legal Assistance, students, concerned citizens, and residents of the threatened community who worked to save the Crest Street neighborhood. This community cohesiveness led to one of the most important court cases and decisions in the US legal history. It's the one and only case to recognize a community

solidarity, so solid that it was declared illegal to break it up, under laws like imminent domain, which has been used historically and continues to be used to break up minority communities. This practice hit a glitch in *NCDOT v. Crest Street Community Council, Inc.* The Crest Street Community Council represented residents of the Hickstown/Crest Street community. The proposed extension was a federal-aid highway project, with approximately 75 percent of its costs paid by federal funds. The proposed highway extension would have broken up Hickstown into isolated sectors. New Bethel Baptist Church, the lifeblood of the community, and the community park would have been removed and, in general, all residents would have been scattered throughout the county (Rohe & Mouw, 1991).

The legal process began with the Council deciding to file an administrative complaint in 1977 with the US Department of Transportation that challenged petitioner NCDOT's proposed extension of the freeway through an established, predominantly Black neighborhood, as a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Council retained the North Central Legal Assistance Program in March 1977 in opposing the NCDOT proposed extension of a highway through Hickstown. This majority federally funded project fell under the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance from discriminating on the basis of race, color, or national origin, and that any person who believes themselves to be subject to the type of discrimination, prohibited by Title VI, can file a complaint with the US Department of Transportation. In 1977 and 1978 Hickstown residents actively expressed their opposition to construction of the freeway and after five years of negotiation, a

final mitigation plan was executed by petitioners, respondents, and the city, which resolved the controversy. Simultaneously, highway construction was enjoined by the federal district court concerning violations of certain federal statutes that did not include any civil rights laws. Respondents, in the instant case, moved to intervene in that action and filed a proposed complaint asserting Title VI violations. The district court entered a consent judgment which dissolved the injunction and dismissed the action and the respondents' Title VI claims on the condition that the petitioners implement the final mitigation plan.

Under the terms of the final mitigation plan, the Council agreed to withdraw its administrative complaint provided that the City of Durham and NCDOT mitigated the negative impact of the highway extension on the Hickstown/Crest Street community. The NCDOT agreed to relocate the highway right-of-way and to modify a planned interchange so as to preserve the community church and park. In addition, a new community center was approved for development, all of which allowed the Hickstown/Crest Street community to remain intact while simultaneously improving the quality of housing and streets. Community members were given the option of selling their houses through NCDOT and relocating outside of Hickstown/Crest Street or of moving their homes near the planned freeway.

This campaign resulted in a $10 million settlement for the Crest Street community that was negotiated by legal services attorneys. This settlement was the first time in US history that highway relocation funds were used to benefit an entire neighborhood instead of individual homeowners.

3

Musics in Durham: from rhythm and blues to gospel

I want to tell a history that has not yet been told and relates to me, personally, to educate people on Black stories, as one way to inspire and survive. These stories follow the example of an experience I had with my uncle. He woke me at 3:00 a.m. on a Saturday morning to accompany him and his buddies to the annual hog killing in the local woods, when the hogs were penned. I usually wake up to music from the radio to relax and become fully awake, but at that early time of the morning there is no broadcasting. Once we reached the pigpen, I did not need music, because I became fully awake. The sounds of the hogs, the chatter, and the wooded breeze filled in for the lack of music. Soon the first hog was pulled out, held, and shot. The bullet was supposed to go between the eyes to kill quickly, for the hog's sake, but the bullet was a little off and the hog took off into the woods. He was captured and put to rest. It was cleaned and gutted, and by 8:00 a.m. the parts were ready to be taken downtown for cutting and parting. By noon, the smokehouse out back was stocked with ham, sausage, bacon, and every other edible part of the hog. Grandpa brought a piglet to the

pen to start all over again. I opted out for the next session. It is hard to believe that I lived through that, considering how we had evolved in the twenty-first century. When I see students walking around campus with their headphones on, I get it. If only they had existed on that Saturday night, I would have participated in the ceremonial taking apart of that hog.

The music that I wanted to hear for inspiration, during that early morning ceremony around the pigpen, was broadcast primarily on a Black deejay-led radio station. Whites historically owned and managed the vast majority of the radio stations and record labels which serviced the Black consumer market. Few of these individuals or corporations showed much inclination to use their power and influence to spearhead or even assist the Black struggle for freedom and equality of opportunity.

WSRC, the Black station available in Durham County, began broadcasting in 1954 as the first so-called Negro-oriented station in North Carolina, but it was owned by white people. Announcers made the station popular by playing RnB and soul music and staying active in Durham's Black community. However, music recorded by white musicians was not played in the Black clubs or on the local Black AM station, WSRC. By the 1960s, some Black Durhamites objected to the fact that the station was owned by whites.

What of the all-encompassing influence of the church, the pillar of the community? One reason I wanted to go to church was to hear the bass lines of Willie McCoy. That bass voice was the best. Deep and moving, it helped to set the tone for the entire service; a good mood for absorbing the message, whether consciously or unconsciously. The music flowing from the church was a

powerful force, and everyone sang from the children to senior citizens. You sang whether or not you could carry a tune.

What were Christmases like? Celebratory. Christmas programs at local churches were excellent.

The Black Christmas music flowed. "White Christmas," the version by The Drifters, defined that song, not Bing Crosby's, and The Drifters' soloist with the falsetto was Clyde McPhatter from Durham. This song elevated the spirit of Christmas and strengthened community bonds through parties and other ceremonial events. Other songs that served this time well were Charles Brown's "Please Come Home for Christmas" and "Merry Christmas Baby" by Nat King Cole and Mahilia Jackson.

During a conversation with a local woman, who experienced the Durham music scene in the late 1950s, she told me how she and her friends would dress up to go clubbing even on Saturday nights with church the next morning. She sang in the choir at church quite a few years and, yes, she was religious, and is still religious, but back then, going to clubs and church was not a contradiction. The only thing that was happening at the clubs was that they might have had some beer, but no cursing and fussing. And what she and her girlfriends did, before she was married, was just go and dance the entire time. It was what they called natural dancing.

One interesting conversation about the importance of music in our lives revealed that not all Blacks listened to Black music. E.M. recalled that her very strict daddy would only let them listen to country music at home. "No rhythm and blues or nothing." E.M. remembers one time he called her in to set the table, and as she

was scooting around the table humming something, "I don't remember what song," her daddy came to the door and said, "You know better than that," since it was not country music. E.M. still likes country music (2022).

Some reflections on the music forces

Community spirit, neighbor helping neighbor, and the drop-in-anytime-no-need-to-call attitude exemplified the small Hickstown/Crest Street scenario of 1950s. Exploring the musical currents, from the late 1950s, reveals how intertwined and symbiotic life and art were in forming a Black movement to address the inequalities of land grabs and relocation, and the drawbacks and the advantages to living under white segregationist policies. While the success of music to unify communities has been underappreciated and eclipsed by more politically engaging aspirations, the overall influence of music continues to exist, and this influence is kept alive by scholars of politics and culture. Music optimized the political opportunities that began to open up for Black people in post *Brown vs. Board of Education* America. Music is a critical part of the restoration of history and the resistance to negative images, and the links between residential environments and music reflect the desire for Black people to shape their own identity and their own future.

Rhythm and Blues: 1957–1963

The years 1957–1959 and 1960–1963 have their own subheadings, but the interconnections between developments inside and outside theses subheadings result in an intermixture