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Music and Leadership

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MUSIC AND LEADERSHIP

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My initial insight into the role of music in leadership came from a quote by James MacGregor Burns: "The leader’s fundamental act is to induce people to be aware or conscious of what they feel - to feel their true needs so strongly, to define their values so meaningfully, that they can be moved to purposeful action."¹ This is what music does to me. It reveals, clarifies, creates, deepens my senses, gives potential to my ideals. My experiences with music have helped me see farther than I aught to be able to see. However, I have only rarely experienced leadership through music, that is being "moved to purposeful action" through my experience of it. This limited experience has been either with a person exercising his or her leadership through a song or acting as a leader with a song. The musical context is primed for this "fundamental act" of leadership, whatever form it takes. Music and musicians create a place where these two intensely human practices can build on one another to meet shared purpose.

Music reveals and intensifies energy. It lays out a person's inner experience for all to see and feel; it synchronizes and magnifies feelings, thoughts and movements within an individual and between individuals. In some people emotion and thought burst out into every imaginable action, in others they barely seep through the cracks of their daily habits. Regardless of the degree, there is inevitably some kind of expression of these inner experiences. The creation of music is one of the most powerful and common type of this expression. When people make music, they channel and transform internal energy into external energy. The human spirit is set free from the confines of the body and goes wherever it is accepted. If it is unleashed among a group of people, any number of them may take in some of this spirit and make it part of their own. If the music is recorded or written down, the human energy it carries can inspire people throughout time and the world.

Like music, leadership comes in many forms and degrees. It can occur anywhere people are doing the things of life; whether its working, playing, making war, or making love. Where ever there are people with aspiration there is the potential for leadership. While few people really agree on what leadership is, it is clear that it is something intensely human. Since music is drenched in the human spirit, it provides a context rich in potential for leadership. It is remarkably egalitarian in that anyone can use it as a tool for change and inspiration. Among musicians, "those with stronger and clearer motivations and purposes\(^2\) can gain social and political influence. Music can be used both as a tool for leadership and a means through which people gain leadership potential.

Music is so conducive to the exercise of leadership in part because inspiration is central to both. Like a large part of music, leadership is also much about inspiration. In communicating a vision, more than information must be conveyed. A sense of potential, possibility, hope, and excitement must be felt. It is an emotional thing as much as (if not more than) it is an intellectual thing. For commitment to be mobilized, people need to "catch the spirit" of what is going on. Often, people must feel something before they act on what they know. For example, people might mentally know the statistics on the number of deaths related to AIDS. However, until someone close to them is stricken by it and they truly feel how horrible this disease is, they probably will not be motivated to get involved and try to do something about it. Inspiration is central to both leadership and music. It makes music an effective tool for leadership and it makes the musical environment ripe for the action and process of leadership.

Inspiration is the movement of the human spirit. We are able to sense the energy of this movement like we can see or smell. This sense of energy is a basic part of human existence. It is both something we do and something we have. It

\(^2\)Burns, p. 429
can be experienced in nature and in all of life. It is often chaotic, like blowing wind or swirling emotions, and is always present. Our sense of energy is our connection to ourselves and to the world; a kind of consciousness. In terms of leadership, this sense of energy is crucial because it is the foundation of meaning, which fuels the entire leadership process. Beyond meaning is a sense of energy. Meaning is making sense out of energy. "Making sense out of" is the process of realizing, putting into perspective, judging, accepting, and focusing. It feeds off the energy of a moment to give itself life. In my experience, meaning has usually come after the experience of some kind of energy. It is only after something is over that I realize what a sacred moment it was.

Schachter & Singer\(^3\) (1962) did an experiment in emotion which demonstrates the relationship between meaning and energy. They wanted to find out if both cognitive labeling and physiological arousal were necessary for the experience of emotion. Usually, the two occur simultaneously. If someone just nearly misses a head on collision, the mind knows to interpret the accelerated pulse, shakiness and sweating as sudden fear. What Schachter & Singer's research dealt with was how would the mind interpret similar physiological conditions if it did not know what environmental stimuli caused them. They went about this by injecting some subjects with a drug called epinephrine which arouses the body systems (eg. speeds up heart rate) and other subjects with a placebo. Some subjects knew what the effects of the drug would be while others did not. The subjects were then put into environments where either euphoria or anger was being experienced by someone who was a confederate of the experiment. The results of the experiment were that those who did not know what the effects of the drug would be were more likely to "feel" anger or euphoria than those who did know. Their perceived environment made sense of their internal

emotional experience. Even though the two groups went through the same changes in physiological energy, the experiences meant different things to them because of what they thought. Meaning comes as a realization about an experience. It is secondary to the experience itself. It is by making sense of some experience of energy that the experience becomes meaningful.

Once again, music reveals and intensifies energy. It incarnates the substance of meaning. It also helps create meaning by giving words to experiences and feelings. It helps us empathize with other people's humanity, feeling their experiences as our own. Leadership is intensely human also. It is created out of people relating to one another and working together. It relies heavily on this human energy, so it finds fertile ground in music.

Since music interacts with this undercurrent of energy, it is powerful. It can both deeply disturb us and act as a catharsis, magically washing away some of our deepest pain. It can give us emotional and intellectual insight into our own and other situations. It helps us to be intensely present and centered in the moment. In the Republic, Plato wrote, "Rhythm and tone ... enter right into the inner recesses of the soul ... and lay powerful hands upon it, imparting grace and making the man graceful who is rightly trained and disgraceful the man who is not." The power of music is not a new or uncommon phenomenon.

This powerful medium gives a great amount of potential influence to its crafters, musicians. Influence is a concept central to any definition or idea of power. Power is attractive because it is the capacity to alter or preserve oneself or something else. According to Burns⁴ the two essentials to power are motive and resource. Both of these are necessary for the exercise of power. Even if a musician has a huge following (resource), he will not have much influence without a driving reason (motive) behind his music. People might enjoy listening to his music, but if it moves them to "purposeful action" it will

⁴Burns, pg. 12
be by complete accident. Also crucial to the effectiveness of power is its purpose. What does a musician intend to do with her music? How does she want it to effect people? Without purpose, the intensity of music as a social force will be defracted in a hundred directions. There is an important distinction to make. The purpose of much music is to entertain. It is not intended to change people. It is powerful in that it can do what it wants and can accomplish its purpose (to entertain). However, some music directs its power at change. It intends to make some kind of human difference. One is not good and the other bad; they can both be used for varying degrees of good or bad. Also, there is rarely a clear differentiation between the two. If a song that seeks some kind of change is not also entertaining, no one will listen to it, which short circuits any change effort. In addition, what is entertaining and inspiring to one person might be boring and old news to another. The degrees to which a song is entertaining and inspirational are not mutually exclusive and are highly subjective.

The power of music is different from the potential for leadership through music. It is at first a subtle difference, but with the passage of time becomes blatant. Leadership requires a degree of "engagement" between people. Joseph Rost defines leadership as "an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes." Mutual purpose is central to his definition. Without that, influence simply becomes power wielding. If a musician stands for a cause such as homelessness and uses the emotive power of his music to inspire people to do something about it, this is not necessarily leadership. Making people do something without regard to their purposes is manipulation. This kind of power wielding only intentionally benefits (i.e. meets the goals of) the person with the power, while leadership

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5 Burns, p. 18

intentionally benefits both leaders and followers. Leadership recognizes the humanity of the other people involved. It humbles itself to that humanity by not seeking to control it. It does not treat them as means to its goals, but as ends in themselves. This is perhaps where the differences between leadership and simply exercising power come into sharp contrast. Power is having a degree of control. People who are controlled today will have to be controlled tomorrow because it is a one way relationship. Leadership is a two way relationship. This means that there is a tension between where a leader wants people to go and where it would best serve their mutual purpose to go. Ideally, both are the same but the reality is something different. Since human beings are far from omnipotent, we need to be in constant check with our environment. The purposes of a group are a crucial part of this environment. People who are acting in roles of leadership must constantly keep the goals of where they think group should be going in sync with the purposes of the people in the group. It is not one person imposing his or her will on others, but is a complex interaction among people. "Engagement" defines leadership and sets it apart. It is a tension which helps leadership avoid becoming manipulation and power wielding. This is "mutual purpose" and it gives synergy to the entire leadership process. Leadership is a kind of power that seeks for others what it seeks for itself. This limits what it can do, but magnifies what it can get done.

Mutual purposes are created by shared needs. If two people

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7This is a specific example of what Ron Heifetz (p. 39, unpublished document) calls reality testing. He writes, "I am promoting the value of reality testing -- the process of testing one interpretation of a problem and its sources of evidence against others. I believe that without this process, the quality of problem defining is jeopardized. Conceptions of leadership that do not value reality testing risk encouraging people to realize their vision, however faulty their sight." (p. 39) For me, this concept has been very fruitful in analyzing leadership.

8Burns, p. 12
have the same need, they both intend to fulfill that need. Burns\textsuperscript{9} describes "needs" as objective necessities. No one will argue against the need for good nutrition. It is accepted by all as a necessary part of human existence. He contrasts this with "wants", which he describes as subjective interests or wishes. The reason this is so important to leadership is that needs are not necessarily felt, whereas wants are felt often strongly. Burns writes that "it is in the transformation of human wants into needs that leadership first occurs."\textsuperscript{10} One challenge of leadership is to transform people's individual wants into unifying needs. This combined with the needs that are already held in common is what gives people mutual purpose and is often what makes them a group. Instead of using these needs to reach its own goal or simply ignoring them and replacing them with its own purpose, leadership seeks to meet and find some kind of unity in these needs.

Being in a position of leadership gives musicians more responsibility than it would at first seem. Something that has always amazed me about music is that it attracts people, which is key to its power. Whether there are musicians playing in a concert hall, in a bar, or even on a street corner, their music draws people in and holds their attention. In our fast-paced and convenience-driven society, people are still very willing to give up their time and money to experience it. This creates a kind of contract between the people and the artist.\textsuperscript{11} For some this means that they have to give people exactly what they want. A person pays twenty dollars to go to a concert to have a good time, so that is exactly what they should get. For other musicians the same responsibility is felt, but so is the additional responsibility of giving people more than they want. Concerning this, Stephen Addiss, a folk musician and Professor of

\textsuperscript{9}Burns, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{10}Burns, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{11}Stephen Addiss, personal interview, February 17, 1994.
the Humanities at the University of Richmond, said, "the leadership role is to say, 'There's more in people than they know'." He feels very uncomfortable with using the term "leadership" along with music because to him that falsely gives it a sense of hierarchy. So, in putting the same idea into different terms, he said that a musician definitely has the responsibility to give people what they want, but on what level? Part of the responsibility of a musician is to help people get in touch with their deeper selves. In Burns' language, this is reaching past people's wants (to be entertained) to their needs, or even fulfilling people's wants by meeting their needs.

At this point it is tempting to make a parallel to transactional and transforming leadership. However, upon further thought, the relationship is not as clear as it first seems. This is a problem I have experienced several times in trying to integrate the two ambiguous fields of leadership studies and music. It is not an uncommon problem, though. In his book *Man, Mind, and Music*, Frank Howes writes regarding ethics and music, "Yet, as in the similar affinity between music and mathematics the more one presses for clarity in the definition of their relations the more vague and insecure does the connection become." (p. 58) Taking a walk through this fog would perhaps be time better spent elsewhere, but it is comforting to know that I have companions. However, despite these theoretical problems the reality remains that people and conditions are changed by music.

My first contact with the work of Ruben Blades was in the barrios of Caracas, Venezuela. There, I met a group of men drinking in the streets. After a few minutes of joking around, they broke into a song familiar to them that I had never heard. One person led the song and others filled in the words as they knew them, until they got to the chorus when everyone joined in and sang, "sueña las campanas" (ring the bells). The song was called "El Padre Antonio y el Monanguillo Andres" (Father Antonio and the Alter boy Andres) by Ruben Blades. It was about an
outspoken pacifist priest and an altar boy who were gunned down in their church. The following week I was having a conversation about Latin American politics with a Venezuelan friend. Mid-conversation he used a phrase that stuck in my mind: "Latinoamerica mata la gente, pero no mata la idea" (Latin America kills its people, but it can’t kill the ideas of its people). Several months later, I found out that this phrase originated from the same song "El Pradre Antonio y el Monanguillo Andres".

Ruben Blades' influence on salsa music is comparable to John Lennon's on rock. He has furthered it both musically and socially. Throughout the seventies and eighties he was on the musical forefront of salsa with such bands and the Willie Colon Combo and his own group, Ruben Blades and Seis del Solar (Six from the Tenement). He did not write "easy" songs about sexy women or the loss of his "baby" like many other salsa composers, but wrote about common people and their common problems. For example, in 1980 he released the hit song "Metiendo Mano" which portrays the life of a tired working man. He often criticized anyone in politics through his music who worked against the people. His song "Tiburon" (Shark) depicted the United States’ imperialistic tendencies in Latin America as a marauding shark. This song branded him (falsely, he contends) as a communist and put him at odds with many people, including the exiled Cuban community. To this day, Miami latin radio refuses to play any of his music. In another song "Plastico", off his "Siembra" album, Blades yells out "Nicaragua sin Somoza" (Nicaragua without Somoza). Because of that, Anastasio Somoza Debayle’s right wing government prohibited the album from entering Nicaragua. With his popular arrangements and controversial social and political lyrics, Ruben Blades gained the audience and respect of much of the international hispanic community.

Ruben Blades is a renaissance man. In addition to singing and composing, he is an accomplished actor. He has appeared in such movies as the Milagro Beanfield Wars, Two Jakes, and Predator II. In 1985 he continued on his original educational
path and got his masters of law from Harvard Law School. He did this to increase his legitimacy and competency for his intended political career. In 1990 he returned to his native Panama after 18 years of being in exile in the United States. There, he created and led a new political party called Papa Egoro (from the Embera indian language roughly meaning "Mother Earth"). In November of 1993, Ruben Blades accepted the nomination of the Papa Egoro party to run for President of Panama. He is currently third in the opinion poles for the May elections.

Ruben Blades' music has played an integral part in his political and moral leadership. It provides him with the medium of salsa, an original latin american art form which deeply resonates with the people he tries to communicate with. This music embodies the latin american spirit and energy. This energy taps directly into the beings of many hispanics. In this way the music communicates a deep though unspecific message to its listeners\textsuperscript{12}. On top of this powerful, nonverbal and nonspecific energy, Blades puts pointed lyrics. He believes that his substantive lyrics answer a deep need in the Hispanic community. In a lecture, poet Sam Himill talked about the "rage of the inarticulate", which may be similar to the need the hispanics felt. If a person has been wronged in some way, and she is unable to express it (either because of a lack of words or the repercussions of any words she may use) a silent anger will build up inside of her. It is when she describes and names that experience that she can begin to release that anger. For Sam Himill it was the voice of poetry and music that "freed [him] from the rage of being inarticulate"\textsuperscript{13}. Similarly enraged is the speaking of important words but nobody listening. The people of latin america have historically been ignored by the domestic

\textsuperscript{12}In my interview with Prof. Addiss, he emphasized how in the short run this deep but unfocused message seems to be a weakness of music, but in the longrun it is a strength.

\textsuperscript{13}Sam Himill, class notes, Beyond Words. University of Richmond, April 7, 1994.
"How will you slay the dragon? I will name him." - Unknown
"descended"\textsuperscript{18} into politics to try to realize his ideas and make a concrete contribution.

This switch in focus has its problems. First, he has been in exile for 18 years. While he has kept up with the situation in his country (e.g. as a political columnist for a Panamanian paper), he has not lived there. He feels like this has benefited him because he has not been tainted by years of authoritarianism and corruption. However, many Panamanians see it differently. In referring to the US invasion, one man said, "Where the hell was he when the going was really tough? When we were under our beds and the bombs were dropping?"\textsuperscript{19} Similarly, former party Secretary General of Papa Eguro Guillermo Moncada Luna said that it distressed him that Ruben had drawn up a plan to reestablish an army in Panama, which after 22 years of military dictatorship sounded crazy to him.\textsuperscript{20} Ruben does not intuitively understand sentiments like this because of his long absence. It is possible that his success and leadership in music are letting him go beyond what he is capable of handling. An example of this is two months after Ruben formed Papa Eguro it was thrown into turmoil when two of its leaders quit and criticized him. They accused him of meeting secretly with Noriega allies and US officials, abandoning the party to record two new albums and go on tour, and that he was putting too little of his own money into the party. Perhaps Ruben Blades has risen to his level of incompetency.

Ruben Blades' leadership role up until the start of his political career was that of an advocate. He was a leader of social and political change through his pointed words and truthful ideas. With the start of his political career, he is putting his words into action. He is leaving the idealistic sidelines and "embracing the tension between the pure and the

\textsuperscript{18}Lopetegui, p. 5


\textsuperscript{20}Johnson, p. 8.
applied." Now his ideas are judged by the effectiveness of the actions they inspire rather than just by the hope they produce or the psychological release they provide. However, this move from moral to political leader is difficult for Ruben. He wants his party and presidency to be a movement of the people. To him, this means he cannot have an ideology that will sway him. He said, "I don't have an ideology, but I do have a sense of what's right and wrong." However, this sense of right and wrong is not enough to lead a country. Very few people will argue against the evils of Panama's problems of poverty, drug abuse and corruption. Where the difference of opinion comes is with how to address, solve and prevent those problems. Ruben's lack of an ideology is perhaps functional for party leadership, but not for presidential leadership. About this, one x-Papa Eguro party member said, "Ruben is like Noriega. He doesn't have any ideology. He grabs on to whomever extends him a hand." Blades intends to adopt the ideology which is created by the consensus of all the different interest groups in the country. He said, "Something is going to come up in the middle - I don't know what it is." Without knowing what "it" is, Blades will be unable to provide clear direction to his country. While his guiding concept of right and wrong provided him with direction in his moral leadership, it will not help him sift through the layers of social and political forces acting upon him in the presidency. Ruben Blades' music gave him many opportunities to effectively act in roles of moral leadership. He sang along with the unheard voices of many in the hispanic community, raising consciousness and encouraging hope. He is now using his success in moral leadership to jump into political leadership. Even though he is struggling to make the transition between two different

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21Burns, p. 143.
22Lopetegui, p. 5.
23Johnson, p. 8.
24Johnson, p. 8.
leadership contexts, his competence will either be put to the test or become a moot point after the May elections.

Leadership in music is more than just a function of position. It is often fluid. Different people can act as leaders at different times. The influence relationship is multidirectional. If there is a hierarchical system, influence can come from subordinates as well as superiors. A person in a position of power might sometimes act as a leader, and other times just hold a position. In a group without hierarchy, influence comes from many people, though from some more than others. As influence shifts in strength and direction among them, their function in the leadership relationship also changes. The roles of group members constantly change between that of leader and follower. Foster (1989) wrote:

The idea that leadership occurs within a community suggests that ultimately leadership resides in the community itself... Leadership, then, is not a function of position but rather represents a conjunction of ideas where leadership is shared and transferred between leaders and followers, each only a temporary designation. Indeed, history will identify an individual as the leader, but in reality the job is one in which various members of the community contribute. Leaders and followers become interchangeable.25

At first, this seems like an extreme position. It is difficult to conceptualize how music fits into this fluid kind of leadership. Part of this is because of our restrictive assumptions of music and art in general. The arts are generally seen as something that only professionals do while everyone else watches. It is not seen as a basic human capacity, but as something special. Those who play music are seen as "gifted" or "talented", which make them different and able to do what they do. In reality, almost anyone can learn this expression. Some may be naturally better than others, but the ability to play is not unique to certain people.

25Rost, p. 49.
Looked at from this perspective, the leadership of individual musicians fades while music as a tool for leadership increases. A musician's leadership becomes less something that person possesses and more something anyone can exert through the use of song. Anyone is able to act in a role of leadership through the use of a song. This tool could be used by a picketer starting off a chorus of a familiar song or a someone who knows an old melody making up new words describing their struggle. In this context, some people consistently exercise leadership through music, but it is also very common for people to lead with music. A person might start off a song that people really need to hear at a particular moment to maintain motivation. This person has momentarily stepped into a role of leadership with a song. The role of leadership is not just filled by those we call "professional" musicians, but by anyone with a spirit and a song.

Music can play a tremendous role in change efforts. Charlie King calls it a "pragmatic tool" \(^{26}\) for moving the change process along. It can help unite, motivate, and direct people. Change efforts sometimes take the form of social movements, which are masses of people attempting to remedy a widespread problem. They usually are reacting to the indignity suffered by themselves or others. Social movements are very painful though intensely human struggles. They intend to change people's behavior, and therefore their minds. However, before people change their minds they must feel and imbalance in their thoughts.\(^{27}\) Leon Festinger\(^{28}\) put forth the idea of cognitive dissonance. People attempt to maintain the consistency of beliefs, attitudes and opinions with their behavior. When there is inconsistency between two thoughts we experience friction between them (*cognitive dissonance*) and are motivated to alleviate it by changing our thoughts, behavior, or by rationalizing it in some


\(^{27}\)Burns, p. 43

way. Songs can clarify the contradictions between the values and practices of a society, thereby creating some degree of cognitive dissonance in those listening. An example of this is the chorus of a song by Larry Norman:

> Well, your money says "In God We Trust" but its against the law to pray in school... You say we beat the Russians to the moon, I say we starved our children to do it. You say all men are equal, all men are brothers, then why are the rich more equal than others?

Larry took something of national pride like being first to the moon and looked at its underside, prompting us to consider if the sacrifices made were really worth it. Songs which are used as tools for leadership in change may "exploit tension and conflict"\(^\text{29}\) which is inherent in any diverse society.

Song can create cognitive dissonance by letting a person experience another reality. A person can gain intellectual and emotional insight into another person’s experience, a social condition, or into him or herself. This gives music moral value. When it is so easy to emotionally shut ourselves off, music can bring the fullness and depth of one person’s emotional experience into that of another person. Enabling people to empathize and experience different parts of the human experience are a foundation of the moral power of music. This is the leverage that music has as a tool for leadership. In talking about servant leadership and its role in changing society, Greenleaf writes, "The basics [of individuals dealing with massive problems] are the incremental thrusts of individuals who have the ability to serve and lead - the prime movers."\(^\text{30}\)

Widespread social change does not occur all at once, but person by person. Song has an incredible potential for individual impact. Through this, it becomes an effective tool for those who seek to better our society.

As well as being a gate way to the conscience, music binds

\(^{29}\)Burns, p. 44.

\(^{30}\)Greenleaf, pg. 5
people together. It can communicate on such a deep level that it helps create both mental and emotional solidarity. A song can communicate the emotional substance of a movement. This is crucial because social movements can be scary and dangerous. A song can answer questions like why am I doing this or what’s the point? in a way that a person can feel. Charlie King said that people do not usually "make the kind of commitments or arrive at the kinds of conviction that inspire them to take courageous or inconvenient stands based on logic or reason or just an intellectual perspective. I think that people really need to be moved from the heart to make that kind of a commitment." The song *We Shall Overcome* provides a great example:

*We shall overcome, we shall overcome,*  
*We shall overcome some day.*  
*Oh deep in my heart I do believe oh*  
*We shall overcome some day.*

This song originated from the gospel song *I’ll Overcome*. It started its evolution in a 1945 strike by black female tobacco workers in Charleston, South Carolina. One of the workers loved to sing this song slow and substituted the words "We will" for "I’ll". After passing through much time and many people, it became the unofficial song of the Civil Rights Movement. This song resonated with the people in the movement. It enabled them to share the feeling of the possibility of something which must have seemed impossible much of the time. Bernice Johnson Reagon calls music a vehicle for the transportation of a culture[^31], in this case of the values, attitudes and actions of a social movement.

Music in social movements is often a communal experience. When people sing together, it becomes a "democratic act"[^32] which tells people that they can work together and have strength as a group. About the civil rights movement, Cordell Reagon said, "...music was what held the movement together.... There was music

[^31]: *The Songs are Free*, with Bill Moyers.  
[^32]: Charlie King, personal interview
in everything we did.... if there were bad feeling, a painful
discussion, tension, anybody, not a singer or anything, just
anybody at the meeting or in the office, would open up with a
line of a song, and somebody else would take it over, and
somebody else would add a verse, and by the end, everybody would
be hugging each other and loving each other. You can't have a
movement without that." Song allows people to get beyond
themselves and their hang ups. It helps people move through the
difficult process of working as a group by reminding members of
the intensely human element of their process and goals.

All of these functions of music in social movements fit the
conception of a free space. A free space is a "setting between
private lives and large scale institutions where ordinary
citizens can act with dignity, independence, and vision." They
are places where values are taken seriously and histories
preserved; where people can be rejuvenated, try to figure out
what is going on and take stock of where they are. Music is a
free space which binds people together in the experience of being
human in the face of adversity.

Another way that music moves a group of people toward change
is through defining their situation. A song may highlight a
crucial aspect of a situation to form people's conception of a
problem or bring out a moral principle which could give direction
to change efforts. Music can expand people's understanding of a
situation by making "conscious what lies unconscious among
followers". It can bring the complexity of a situation down to
a basic level which gives people a sense of commonality, creates
achievable goals, and gives direction. This gives musicians lots
of potential for influence. This is in part what has put Ruben
Blades in such an influential position. He kept an emphasis on
the common people when it was so common do define a situation in

33Everybody Says Freedom, p. 84
34Evans and Boylton, p. 17
35Burns, p. 40
ideological terms like communism, capitalism, authoritarianism and democracy. He recognizes that these are crucial elements to the situation, but the most basic elements are people's everyday lives and futures. The lyrics of many of his songs shaped how people viewed the Latin American condition and therefore had some influence on how they acted towards it.

Ultimately, definition must come from those within a situation. When it comes down to effective action, people cannot fall into the paternalistic Latin American dictatorship syndrome and simply follow the person who promises the best future. People like Ruben Blades can act as a voice for the voiceless to a certain degree, but sooner or later people must speak for themselves. Charlie King emphasized this point: the important thing in music is not that it is a voice for the voiceless, but that it creates a forum in which people can find their own voice.36 When people start defining their own situation in their own words (through the arts, the press, etc.) they take ownership of that situation. They take the responsibility of resolving it onto themselves instead of waiting for someone else to do something about it. Burns wrote that "Only the followers themselves can ultimately define their own true needs."37 People chose what songs speak to their condition, but also create or modify songs to fit their situation. This was a common occurrence in the Civil Rights Movement. People would use an existing melody and words and modify them to fit their situation. For example, to the song We Shall Overcome, people added verses like:

We'll walk hand in hand... (some day)
We shall live in peace...
The truth shall make us free...
We are not afraid... (today)

36When he was talking about this, he quoted an unknown communist leader in the former Soviet Union, "If I could lead you into the promised land, someone else could lead you out." The paternalistic tendency of a leader to "know what's best" for other people must be avoided.

37Burns, p. 36
Black and white together... (now!) 
The whole wide world around... (someday)\textsuperscript{38}

People created new words to fit whatever their situation may be. Music gave them one more medium to portray and define their situation the way they saw it.

The human energy which music transports and evokes creates possibility; it can center us on what is truly important. This creates the potential for leadership to the degree to which it can direct actions towards achieving mutual purpose. This mutual purpose could be anything from bettering individual relationships (eg. inspiring a person to get in touch with a far away friend or family member) to bettering the relationship between nations or races. Leadership in music happens through musicians creating songs and through people using songs as tools for moving things along. Both of these interrelated roles can be temporary as well as continual. Since both leadership and music are two intensely individual practices and experiences it is difficult to make generalizations about their relationship. Yet, the fact remains that people provide direction and impetus with and through music.

\textsuperscript{38}Everybody Says Freedom, p. 9
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