# The Protest Music of Nina Simone and Buffy Sainte-Marie: Trauma, Gender-Based Violence, and Minority Feminisms

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**Abstract**

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s Nina Simone and Buffy Sainte-Marie contributed many protest songs to the civil rights movement and indigenous rights efforts respectively. Much of their protest music told stories about the specific racialized and gendered oppression women of color faced during this time. In particular, both musicians foregrounded gender-based trauma narratives from the perspective of women of color. I position Simone and Sainte-Marie's protest songs about gender-based violence at the intersection of black and indigenous feminist theory, social trauma scholarship, and transnationalism in order to understand the ways in which gender-based violence informed their respective protest music. Rooted in a historical context pertaining to colonial violence against women of color, I begin my study with Simone and Sainte-Marie's autobiographical accounts of violence and abuse in their own words. In doing so, I create a trauma-informed foundation in which to understand how their personal experiences with trauma inform their protest music about gender-based violence. Using Simone's "Four Women," "Go Limp," "Blues for Mama," and "Backlash Blues" and Sainte-Marie's "Cod'ine," "The Incest Song," "Rolling Log Blues," and "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues" as points of departure, I examine their usage of both folk and blues stylistics as a means for consciousness-raising about gender-based violence in their protest music.

**Résumé (Abstract translated into French)**

Durant les années 1960 à 1970, Nina Simone a contribué plusieurs chansons de manifestations au mouvement pour les droits civils, tout comme Buffy Sainte-Marie, qui a contribué sa musique manifestante au mouvement activiste pour les droits autochtones. Leur musique raconte des histoires d'oppressions liées à la race et au sexe. En particulier, les deux femmes ont mis de l'avant la violence sexiste à travers la perspective des minorités visibles comme thèmes majeurs. Pour comprendre comment leur musique manifestante a été influencé par la violence sexiste, je vais situer la musique de Simone et Sainte-Marie au centre intersectionelle de la théorie féministe, noire et indigène, l'érudition du traumatisme social et le transnationalisme. Ancrée dans le contexte historique coloniale de la violence contre les femmes de minorités visibles, je vais commencer mon étude avec les anectodes autobiographiques de la violence et de l'abus subit par Simone et Sainte-Marie. Ainsi, j'utilise ce contexte personnel pour expliquer comment le traumatisme a influencé la création de la musique manifestante qui s'adresse à la violence sexiste. En utilisant les chansons « Four Women », « Go Limp », « Blues for Mama » et « Backlash Blues » par Simone et les chansons « Cod'ine », « The Incest Song », « Rolling Log Blues » et « Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues » par Sainte-Marie comme points de départ, je peux examiner l'usage des styles de folk et de blues par les deux musiciennes afin d'attirer l'attention à la violence sexiste qui est au centre de leur musique manifestante.

Translation by Andrea Adorjan McGill University U2

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Lastly, I would like to dedicate this project to all survivors and victims of gender-based violence. Our stories deserve to be told. I believe you. You are not alone.

**Content Warning**

In this project I will be discussing sexual, domestic, and racial violence. My goal is to write this thesis through a trauma-informed perspective, meaning I do not intend to re-traumatize, trigger, or re-victimize anyone who reads further. I want to analyze the complexities of trauma and violence's connection to Nina Simone and Buffy Sainte-Marie's music; however, I recognize that we cannot be healthy, productive, or effective readers or people if we do not take care of ourselves first and foremost. Because of this, I want to provide resources after this content warning for people to be able to practice the best self-care they possibly can before, during, or after reading this thesis.

- Rape Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN): 1-800-656-4673
- Toll-free Helpline in Quebec: 1-888-933-9007
- Sexual Assault Center of the McGill Student's Society: 514-398-8500

## Introduction

During the 1960s and 1970s, singer-songwriters Nina Simone and Buffy Sainte-Marie were widely hailed for their performances and recordings in support of social justice movements of the period, in particular the civil rights movement and indigenous rights efforts. Simone and Sainte-Marie's music often told stories about the particular racialized and gendered struggles women of color faced during this time. In the mid-1960s, Simone released a string of recordings— "Four Women," "Go Limp," "Blues for Mama," and "Backlash Blues"—that shed light on a different facet of black women's subjectivity, addressing black women's traumatic experiences of gender-based violence. During this same period, Sainte-Marie recorded and released songs such as "Cod'ine," "The Incest Song," "Rolling Log Blues," and "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues," that also grappled with these difficult themes, yet from the perspective of indigenous women. These recording foregrounded gender-based violence and trauma narratives from the viewpoint of women of color. While previous studies have focused on their dual roles and identities as singer-activists—or protest singers—little attention has been paid to the ways in which Simone and Sainte-Marie's personal experiences of sexual and domestic violence shaped their music and informed their musical activism relating to gender-based violence and trauma. Using these songs as a point of departure, I investigate how Simone and Sainte-Marie's own experiences with gender-based violence informed the ways in which they foreground gender-based violence and trauma narratives in their music.

This thesis examines the historical contexts of Simone and Sainte-Marie's experiences of gender-based violence and the ways in which they used music as resistance in the face of marginalization. I position Simone and Sainte-Marie's many biographical accounts and musical output at the intersection of feminist theory, social trauma theory, and transnationalism in order to understand their racialized and gendered musical activism. Historically, women of color have

turned to music and other expressive practices as a means of both coping with trauma, as well as to facilitate consciousness-raising through storytelling (Berglund, 2016). In addressing these complicated histories and power structures, I draw on black and indigenous feminist scholars and historians to situate Simone and Sainte-Marie's music as part of a larger transnational black and indigenous history of women of color's participation in musical and sonic resistance to violence in the United States. While black and indigenous feminist and transnational approaches help orient the historical context of my study, my analyses also build on the work of social trauma theorist to explore how Simone and Sainte-Marie's experiences with varying forms of violence, trauma, and suffering informed their song lyrics and sonic participation in the aforementioned social movements. Trauma theory aims to trace the inexhaustible shapes of all types of human suffering, memory, and temporality. For the purposes of this thesis, trauma theory serves as a hermeneutic tool in connecting Simone and Sainte-Marie's individual experiences of gender-based violence to larger collective and generational acts of violence against women of color.

Before addressing existing scholarship solely about Simone and Sainte-Marie, we must first turn our attention to protest music scholarship and the ways in which Simone and Sainte-Marie's music fits within this area of research. Simone and Sainte-Marie's music both consciously and unconsciously participated in musical resistance that, in turn, challenged dominant power structures through the public centering of women of color's lived experiences of collective and individual violence and abuse. Scholar Deena Weinstein classifies protest songs into three different dimensions: first, a song that points our authority that is deemed "unjust," second, a song that highlights a specific injustice, and third a song that has a lasting political and social impact. [1] In the most general sense, protest songs, in the realm of popular music, incite

[1] Ian Peddie, *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest* (Routledge, 2017), 3.

different kinds of social change through various sonic elements, lyrical content, and performativity. [2] Eyerman and Jamison build upon this broad concept in their exploration of musical "exemplary actors" participating in twentieth-century social justice movements. They define "exemplary action" in this context as: "music, to the extent that it becomes a source of empowerment, education, and consciousness-raising." [3] "Exemplary actors" use "exemplary action" as a means of expressing individual and collective beliefs of particular social justice movements. [4]

> It is within [social justice] movement spaces that artists, singers, and songwriters uncover a new dimension of their work. In and through their role as artist-activist or activist-performer such individuals help constitute the cognitive praxis of social movements and at one and the same time revitalize and revise tradition, creating the possibility of transforming the wider, dominant culture. [5]

Furthermore, exemplary actors are typically participants of a movement yet are not necessarily the identified leaders of that movement.[6]

In taking Weinstein, Eyerman, and Jamison's theorization of music and social justice movements to a more specific context, scholar Kathanne Greene speaks about "exemplary action" within the framework of anti-rape and anti-domestic violence popular music.

> Neither the anti-rape or anti-domestic violence movements relied upon music as a source of identity, solidarity, or mobilization, yet their existence opened a space for musicians, especially women singer-songwriters, to empower, educate and raise the consciousness of women and men—that is, to engage in exemplary action around the issues of rape and domestic violence. [7]

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[2] Peddie, *The Resisting Muse,* 4.
[3] Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 78.
[4] Eyerman and Jamison, *Music and Social Movements,* 78.
[5] Eyerman and Jamison, *Music and Social Movements,* 164.
[6] Eyerman and Jamison, *Music and Social Movements,* 164.
[7] Kathanne W. Greene, "Women Singer-Songwriters as Exemplary Actors: The Music of Rape and Domestic Violence," *Music and Politics* XI, no. 2 (2017): 2.

Greene examines notions of "exemplary action" through a feminist and gendered lens. In doing so, she expands the definition of "exemplary action" to include women's participation in social justice spaces, and in particular women telling stories of gender-based violence through music. Throughout her text, Greene uses female singer-songwriters from the 1990s to the 2010s to support her argument about women's exemplary action. However, I believe that Greene's contributions to gendered exemplary action and actors is relevant to women's musical participation in 1960s social justice movements as well.

For instance, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the freedom movement for racial justice (as in the Freedom Summer, the freedom rides, and the slogan "Freedom Now") were "inextricably linked to song." [8] Sullivan notes that "the major musical currents shaping contemporary jazz, folk, and rock were beginning to converge in a powerful new strain of freedom music." [9] Freedom music created a foundation of sonic protest within the civil rights movement. Kernodle argues that the Student Nonviolence Coordinating Committee (SNCC) "redefined the public use of music" during the start of the civil rights movement. [10]

> Freedom songs conveyed key values and tactics of the movement in verses that progressed from freedom in its most abstract form to specific assertions about measures that would be used to achieve it. Performance of freedoms songs became one of the ways in which grassroots leadership emerged. [11]

Nina Simone and Buffy Sainte-Marie are exemplary actors in the sense that their musical contributions to their respective social justice movements exhibit Eyerman and Jamison's

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[8] Denise Sullivan, *Keep on Pushing: Black Power Music from Blues to Hip-Hop* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2011), 5.
[9] Sullivan, *Keep on Pushing,* 7.
[10] Tammy L. Kernodle, ""I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free": Nina Simone and the Redefining of the Freedom Song of the 1960s," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 2, no.3 (2008): 297.
[11] Kernodle, ""I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free," 297.

definition of exemplary action. Simone and Sainte-Marie's exemplary action is informed by both their personal realities and the collective histories of women of color's experiences with gender-based violence. In her gendered analysis, Greene notes that: "exemplary action in the form of music is not limited to any particular genre…music dealing with rape or domestic violence covers all genres."[12] Folk and the blues are the two genres in which Simone and Sainte-Marie engage the most with these difficult themes. Their use of folk and blues idioms will be discussed at length in chapter two and three respectively.

Existing scholarship about Simone and Sainte-Marie's 1960s and 1970s music and the ways in which they participated in social justice movements serves as an academic starting point for this project. The life and music of Nina Simone has been the subject of numerous critical and scholarly studies, most recently are Malik Gaines, Daphne A. Brooks, and Ruth Feldstein. Gaines and Brooks focus on the ways in which Simone's popular protest music suggests her multiple layers of consciousness. More specifically, Brooks argues that Simone's phonic, lyrical, and generic modes of disturbance of the narrow expectations of the "black sound" is something aligned with "triple play."[13] In this context, triple play speaks to three distinct layers of Simone's own consciousness in navigating the racialized and gendered spaces when performing her most popular protest songs. Songs like "Mississippi Goddam!" "Four Women," "Blues for Mama," and "Go Limp," are used to argue Simone's combinatory approach to race and gender in her music. Using similar repertory, Gaines builds upon Brooks' analysis by adding a fourth layer to Simone's consciousness. He argues that Simone combined "textual approaches and transformational uses of persona, costume, and voice" in order to mobilize into an expressive

[12] Greene, "Women Singer-Songwriters as Exemplary Actors," 3.
[13] Daphne A. Brooks, "Nina Simone Triple Play," *Callaloo* 34, no. 1 (2011): 179.

mode of quadruple consciousness.[14] The fourth layer of Simone's consciousness speaks to the ways in which she transforms the negativity within her protest music into active resistance.[15] Simone's intertextual borrowing from "a wide variety of sources, ranging from her own compositions to traditional folks songs of three continents, to pop music, show tunes, and European art music"[16] suggest that Simone's sonic modes of delivery contain several layered techniques, most impossible to categorize by one singular genre of music.

Compared to the critical and scholarly literature on Simone, much less has been written about Sainte-Marie. Scholar Kimberli Lee investigates the ways in which Sainte-Marie's protest music blends indigenous music with mainstream folk traditions to tell stories of harsh realities for indigenous peoples in North America. In doing so, Lee examines Sainte-Marie's most popular and controversial songs; "Universal Soldier," "Now that the Buffalo's Gone," and "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee." Looking at scholarship that focuses on Simone and Sainte-Marie's layers of consciousness and intertextual borrowing in popular protest songs together suggests that both musicians used similar consciousness-raising strategies. However, sometimes these sonic forms of resistance were often characterized as too radical or controversial.

A commonality among existing scholarship about Simone and Sainte-Marie addresses their erasure from the historical memory of the aforementioned social justice movements. Ruth Feldstein notes that the overt sexual content in Simone's "Go Limp" and the ways in which she did not embrace non-violence ideology in "Mississippi Goddam!" "became something other than

[14] Malik Gaines, "Nina Simone's Quadruple Consciousness," *Black Performance on the Outskirts of the Left*, 2017, 248.
[15] Gaines, "Nina Simone's Quadruple Consciousness," 259.
[16] Gaines, "Nina Simone's Quadruple Consciousness," 253.

authentic freedom songs" for they implicated the United States as both racist and sexist. [17] Because of this, Simone's most iconic protest songs were left out of the socially constructed canon of 1960s freedoms songs. [18] Like Simone, Sainte-Marie's erasure from historical memory had to do with her harsh criticism of the United States' domestic and foreign policies. "Fewer people still are aware that some of Sainte-Marie's songs were considered so controversial for the times that her music was "black-listed" and refused air-play." [19] Sainte-Marie mentioned the most extreme example of this kind of racialized and gendered censorship in many of her interviews after her song "Universal Soldier" was interpreted as so "un-American" that the FBI created a dossier tracking all of Sainte-Marie's activities. [20]

Building on and expanding this body of work, my thesis brings forth a feminist and trauma-informed approach to Simone and Sainte-Marie's musical attention to gender-based violence. Organized into three chapters, chapter one centers Simone and Sainte-Marie's life stories as conveyed in autobiographical and biographical materials. I first consider Simone and Sainte-Marie's musical upbringings, family dynamics, early experiences of racism, and their later relationships with the civil rights movement and indigenous rights efforts respectively. These biographical experiences provide the context through which I explore Simone and Sainte-Marie's stories of abuse and trauma as conveyed in autobiographical texts. In doing so, I aim to honor Simone and Sainte-Marie's own words when publically sharing their stories. I follow Simone and Sainte-Marie's trauma narratives with a historical discussion about the ways in

[17] Ruth Feldstein, ""I Don't Trust You Anymore": Nina Simone, Culture, and Black Activism in the 1960s," *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (2005): 1377.
[18] Feldstein, ""I Don't Trust You Anymore," 1377.
[19] Jeff Berglund, Jan Johnson, and Kimberli A. Lee, *Indigenous Pop: Native American Music from Jazz to Hip Hop* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016), 64.
[20] Berglund, Johnson, and Lee, *Indigenous Pop,* 64.

which women of color, like Simone and Sainte-Marie, respond to individual and collective traumas. Chapter one establishes both the importance of autobiographical story-telling as it relates to trauma and violence as well as a historical overview of violence against women of color and their responses to that violence. The purpose of chapter one is to set the foundation for my larger discussion and analysis of Simone and Sainte-Marie's specific sonic resistance to gender-based violence against women of color in the subsequent second and third chapters.

The second chapter of my study examines four original songs that directly address gender-based violence: Simone's "Four Women" (1966) and "Go Limp" (1964); and Sainte-Marie's "Cod'ine" (1964) and "The Incest Song" (1964). Through both lyrics and musical analyses, I aim to uncover the ways in which Simone and Sainte-Marie's experiences with violence inform their musical story-telling, in particular, their use of folk stylistics. I argue that through various means of textual and musical multivocality, these musicians were able to speak to larger systematic issues of violence against women of color. The black feminist storytelling modes of Simone's "Four Women," for example, brought forth a new gendered narrative to the Black Arts Movement through calling attention to the contradictory and oppressive hetero-patriarchal expectations of blackness and beauty projected onto women color's appearances during this time; while in "Go Limp," Simone uses of multi-layered consciousness to convey different social agendas for black women in the United States. A similar set of social-musical dynamics are at work in the two Sainte-Marie songs. My analysis of "Cod'ine" and "The Incest Song" show how Sainte-Marie addresses, respectively, indigenous peoples (and specifically indigenous women's) experiences with addiction, substance abuse and the mistreatment of indigenous children, and the politics of both public and private abuse of indigenous women and girls.

The third chapter looks at a specific shared song type in the work of Simone and Sainte-Marie, namely the blues. During the late 1960s and early 1970s both artists recorded songs in the blues idiom. In my analysis of their contributions to this genre, I argue that their blues songs served as particularly resonant vehicles for the two artists to address generational trauma for black and indigenous girls. Indeed, situating Simone and Sainte-Marie within the blues tradition highlights the cultural exchange of ideas between black and indigenous communities during the beginning of the blues era and, more specifically, calls attention to similarities within the lived experienced of black and indigenous women during this time. To understand fully how Simone and Sainte-Marie participated within and against particular blues idioms, I will also look to the social imaginary of an idealized African past of musical lamenting and traditional practices of North American indigenous music making in order to show how instances of historical trauma informs individual experiences of violence and artistic output. Throughout this chapter, I draw connections between the lyrics and blues stylistics of Simone's 1967 songs "Blues for Mama" and "Backlash Blues" and Sainte-Marie's 1966 song "Rolling Log Blues" and her 1974 song "Sweet, Fast, Hooker Blues" to black and indigenous feminisms, because these songs exemplify shared historical traumas embodied in the idiom of the blues. Finally, I will conclude the thesis with a brief discussion connecting Simone and Sainte-Marie's musical contributions and experiences to contemporary conversations surrounding sexual violence. In doing so I hope to advocate for a trauma-informed research approach to researching, writing, and speaking about sexual violence narratives in popular music.

## Chapter 1: Eunice Kathleen Waymon & Beverly Jean Sainte-Marie

In 1944 at age eleven, Nina Simone took the stage at the Town Hall in her hometown of Tryon, North Carolina for one of her first classical piano recitals, a rare opportunity accorded to African American girls in midcentury America. The story of this event—in particular the traumatic memory of seeing her parents physically removed from their front-row seats in favor of two white audience members—plays a pivotal role in Simone's 2003 autobiography, *I Put a Spell on You: The Autobiography of Nina Simone.* As Simone tells us, she refused to begin the recital until her parents were given their original seats back. In waiting for this correction Simone started to view the world differently, writing that her "skin grew back again a little tougher, a little less innocent, and a little more black."[1] Around the same time in Wakefield, Massachusetts, Buffy Sainte-Marie was also facing similar racist circumstances. Sainte-Marie was taken from the Piapot Plains Cree First Nation Reserve and adopted by Alfred C. and Winifred St. Marie in 1941.[2] Sainte-Marie was one of the only people of color, and more specifically, one of the only indigenous girls living in her conservative Massachusetts town. In her first authorized biography, *Buffy Sainte-Marie: The Authorized Biography,* she describes her small-town upbringing as "understanding what their ignorance was like, because I was living right in it."[3] In attempts to remove herself from this racialized space she turned to music as an outlet through which she could express her frustrations and confusion.

At a young age music became an artistic and emotional outlet in which Simone and Sainte-Marie could tell their own stories about experiences of gendered and racialized

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[1] Nina Simone and Stephen Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You: The Autobiography of Nina Simone* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003), 27.
[2] Andrea Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie: The Authorized Biography* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2018), 16.
[3] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie,*19.

marginalization. As their careers in the music industry progressed, both Simone and Sainte-Marie strategically used their public musical platforms during the 1960s and 1970s civil rights movement and indigenous rights efforts respectively. In doing so, both musicians intentionally, and at times unintentionally, foregrounded gender-based violence and trauma narratives from the perspective of women of color.

In order to establish the importance of Simone and Sainte-Marie's individual histories, the first section relies heavily on Simone and Sainte-Marie's autobiographical materials as it relates to their childhood musical upbringing, relationship with their families, and early experiences with racism and sexism. Simone and Sainte-Marie's "origin stories," and more specifically their musical upbringing in the Western classical music idioms, countered a particular kind of racialized essentialism that characterized all people of color as inherent or natural entertainers. In addition to the importance of their childhoods, this first part also examines Simone and Sainte-Marie's relationship to their respective social justice movements, through Simone and Sainte-Marie's own descriptions of their experiences with social justice movement leadership.

Guided by Simone and Sainte-Marie's childhood histories, the second section focuses on their personal and graphic accounts of sexual and domestic violence. Displaying Simone and Sainte-Marie's own words about these instances of violence is an explicit example of my trauma-informed approach to this project. I resist certain modes of interpretation that judge the credibility of the ways in which folks who have experienced gender-based violence choose to tell their stories. In doing so, my hope is to honor Simone and Sainte-Marie's words and provide the space in this project for their words to exist without mediation. Following this portion of Simone and Sainte-Marie's own trauma narratives, I discuss the historical framework of sexual violence

perpetrated against women of color as it relates to the earliest accounts of colonialism in Africa and North America. I end the chapter considering historical traumas responses to individual, collective, and generational traumas in the form of sonic resistance. In doing so, I connect Simone and Sainte-Marie's sonic resistance to violence against women of color with the long lineage of women of color who have experienced violence before them. Overall, this chapter establishes the historical context of violence against women of color and the ways in which this history informed Simone and Sainte-Marie's protest music.

## Part I: *Origin Stories*

### *Nina Simone: "Once I understood Bach's music I never wanted to be anything other than a concert pianist"*

Born Eunice Kathleen Waymon in 1933 to a large, musical, and poor family, Nina Simone wanted nothing more than to be the first ever African-American concert pianist. As the sixth of eight children, Simone took after her siblings and started playing piano at the age of three. She grew up in a Methodist household lead by her father, Reverend John Devan Waymon (1898-1972) and her mother, a Methodist minister and a housemaid, Mary Kate Waymon (1901-2001). Nina Simone describes her earliest childhood memories as "tied up with food and music."[4] Her mother played a major role in her musical upbringing and instilled within Simone the importance of music in her life.

Mary Kate Waymon's heritage was "a rich mixture, drawn from white slave-owners, black slaves, and the Indian people who were destroyed to make way for plantations and the

[4] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You*, 7.

railroad."[5] After Mary Kate walked in on three-year-old Simone playing her favorite hymn, "God Be with You 'Til We Meet Again," on the family's prized organ, she credited Simone's musical gift to God. "The view was, any talent you had was given by God so there was no reason for you to be proud of it—you were just fortunate… it was sinful not to nurture any gift you had."[6] By age six Simone became the regular pianist at her church, the same church her mother preached at. Simone's reputation as a musical 'prodigy' earned her a lot of attention from her community. In addition to being a minister and a very active member of her church, Mary Kate was also a house keeper for the Millers, a white family that lived in the same town. Mrs. Miller, being so impressed with Simone's talent, began paying for her piano lessons.

Mrs. Muriel Massinovitch, Simone's first piano teacher, introduced her to the world of classical music. "Once I understood Bach's music I never wanted to be anything other than a concert pianist; Bach made me dedicate my life to music and it was Mrs. Massinovitch who introduced me to his world."[7] Mrs. Massinovitch, or, how Simone lovingly referred to her as, Miss Mazzy, founded the "Eunice Kathleen Waymond Fund" in order to fund Simone's talents. After studying with Miss Mazzy for a few years, Simone came to think of her as her "white mama."[8] In addition to giving Simone private piano lessons, Miss Mazzy also coordinated public performances through the fund for Simone to showcase her musical skills.

Simone graduated the Allen High School for Girls, a boarding school outside her hometown. At age seventeen she moved to New York City to begin her studies at the Juilliard School with Dr. Carl Frieberg. In Dr. Frieberg's studio she was the only black student. "But

[5] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You*, 2.
[6] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You*, 16.
[7] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You*, 22.
[8] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You*, 24.

nobody made any mention of it and the fact was of no interest to me."[9] After studying at Juilliard for a year Simone decided to apply to her dream school, the Curtis Institute, to continue her classical piano studies. After traveling to Philadelphia for an in-person audition, Simone later heard back from the Curtis Institute that she was rejected. "When I was rejected from the Curtis Institute it was as if all the promises ever made to me by God, my family and my community were broken and I had been lied to my entire life."[10] Simone began to question the impact of racial prejudice in the Curtis Institute's decision.

> The wonderful thing about this type of discrimination is that you can never know for sure if it is true, because no one is going to turn around and admit to being racist. So you feel shame, humiliation and anger at being just another victim of prejudice. Nobody told me that no matter what I did in my life the color of my skin would always make a different. I learned that bitter lesson from Curtis.[11]

After her painful rejection for the Curtis Institute, Simone took an accompanist job with The Arlene Smith Studio in Philadelphia. Playing mostly popular music and jazz standards, Simone learned a lot of her piano improvisational skills at this job and she also had the opportunity to practice singing during her time accompanying these, as she calls them, "untalented students."[12] "Working in a studio like that, trying to help some spotty teenagers sound like Frank Sinatra, was the first time I ever earned money singing."[13] Simone learned that she could make more money playing gigs in the Atlantic City Bar scene and decided to go there one summer. Fearful that her mother would find out and ultimately disapprove of her new lifestyle, she adopted her stage name "Nina Simone." Her stage name originated from a

[9] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You*, 39.
[10] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You*, 41.
[11] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 44.
[12] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You*, 46.
[13] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You*, 46.

combination of her previous Hispanic boyfriend, Chico, calling her Niña (meaning little one), and her love for actress Simone Signoret. Her first gig under her new name was at the Midtown Bar and Grill near the Atlantic City boardwalk. "Up until that moment I had never been into a bar in my entire life."[14] Simone had only ever performed classical music recitals so the transition to popular music performances was strange at first. "Between sets I sat on my own at the bar, drinking milk in my long chiffon gown. Nobody said a word to me all night."[15] She became more accepting of this new musical venue once she recognized the ways in which her love for classical music informed her popular music performances.

> I was repressed to a point where I hadn't played any of my own songs before because I didn't know I had them down there; I didn't know until they came out. They came out with Bach's technique, but they were my songs.[16]

*Buffy Sainte-Marie: "The only way I had the courage to get out onstage at all was because I believed in the content of the songs."*

Although there is no official record of Buffy Sainte-Marie's birth, she was told she was born most likely in February 1941 probably on a reserve called Piapot in Qu'Appelle Valley, Saskatchewan.[17] Shortly after her birth, Sainte-Marie was adopted out of the reserve. According to an interview conducted by biographer Blair Stonechild for her 2011 biography entitled *Buffy Sainte-Marie It's My Way*, Sainte-Marie's biological father was told by missionaries to put Sainte-Marie up for adoption because she would have a better chance of survival being adopted by a white family. While, in Warner's 2018 Buffy Sainte-Marie biography, Warner describes the reasons for Sainte-Marie's adoption as "still unclear" and "muddied by time and lack of accurate

[14] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You*, 49.
[15] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You*, 51.
[16] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You*, 52.
[17] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie,* 15.

records."[18] Regardless of the reasons for adoption, we know Sainte-Marie was adopted into the family of Alfred and Winifred Sainte-Marie in 1941 and given the name Beverly Jean. Her adoptive father was a mechanic and her adoptive mother was a newspaper copy editor. Sainte-Marie's adoptive family was "a modest" and "visibly white family," though Winifred identified as part Mi'kmaq.[19] Sainte-Marie's childhood began in a trailer by Sebago Lake in Maine and then moved to North Reading Massachusetts before her family settled in Wakefield Massachusetts for her teen years. Sainte-Marie reflects on her adoption and more specifically the things said to her by members of her conservative and mostly white community in Massachusetts.

> I was told I was adopted. I was told that I was born on the 'wrong side of the blanket.' In other words, one of my parents was my parent and one wasn't. I was told that we were part-Indian, but nobody knew anything about it, and when I grew up, I could find out about it if I was interested. I had this identity question, but it wasn't something that was haunting me or getting at me until far later in my life.[20]

When Sainte-Marie was just three-years old she discovered her passion and talent for music. She remembers waiting for her brother to finish his piano lesson in their home so she could sit in front of the piano and improvise. She says: "I couldn't wait for him to get gone and leave and go play baseball so that I could take over the piano and play not only his whole lesson by ear, but what I really wanted to play, which was anything in my head."[21] Instead of taking formal piano lessons Sainte-Marie kept on improvising, imitating her brother's lessons, and being inspired by the things around her. In fact, later on in her life Sainte-Marie began to identify as "musically dyslexic" after she learned about this condition from a Berklee College of Music

[18] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie,* 16.
[19] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie,* 16.
[20] Blair Stonechild, *Buffy Sainte-Marie: It's My Way* (Markham, ON: Fifth House, 2012), 18.
[21] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie,* 16.

professor. This condition inhibits one's ability to use or read symbols, specifically Western music notation.[22] Therefore, Sainte-Marie cannot read music. "All I've been able to do is improvise because I never took any lessons. I don't read music, and I was never boxed in that way."[23] As she got more time with the family piano when she was a child, she grew to learn that music could also be an emotional outlet for the many things she was dealing with at home.

For much of Sainte-Marie's childhood she was abused and molested by her brother as well as an older male relative. Palumbo, Sainte-Marie's closest childhood friend describes Sainte-Marie's brother as "a total creep."[24] At times Palumbo questioned whether or not he was hurting Sainte-Marie, but felt ill-equipped to help her, especially at such as young age. Palumbo says "I think she was being abused, I don't know for certain. I just didn't know what to do. We were innocent back then."[25] Sainte-Marie took refuge in music as a means of not only coping with what was happening to her but also as a way to isolate and protect herself. "I wasn't only some traumatized, scared little kid hiding under the bed—which I was—but I was also this other person who had an inner world that was really, really good."[26]

Sainte-Marie made it through high school, and, encouraged by her parents, applied to University of Massachusetts, Amherst to study philosophy. She was accepted to this program with just two weeks before classes started.[27] Throughout her college career Sainte-Marie became more and more inspired by the subject matter she learned in class and incorporated this new knowledge into her songs. "I guess I fell in love with thinking in its limitless manifestations."[28]

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[22] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie,* 16.
[23] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 17.
[24] Stonechild, *Buffy Sainte-Marie: It's My Way*, 22.
[25] Stonechild, *Buffy Sainte-Marie: It's My Way*, 22.
[26] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 23.
[27] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 30.
[28] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 36.

In combining all of her new life experiences at college with her many passions, Sainte-Marie started to play her songs publically in local coffeehouses throughout the Boston area. Although nervous most of the time, Sainte-Marie notes that "the only way I had the courage to get out onstage at all was because I believed in the content of the songs."[29]

Around 1961, while still in college, Sainte-Marie traveled to Washington D.C for the first time and met a new group called the National Indian Youth Council. Although she does not quite remember the original purpose of this trip, she nonetheless credits this experience to beginnings of her involvement in indigenous rights activism.

> I was hearing from individuals whose stories were somewhat similar to mine in that they had grown up in abuse. And in having to deny that the abuse was even abuse, since it was basically colonialism—you were gettin' it from the church or the mayor or whoever's biggest in the pecking order or something. So I was finding out that there was that, and I was finding out that they had problems in other communities.[30]

In being able to relate to other indigenous folks throughout this trip, Sainte-Marie made lasting connections with other indigenous rights activists that aided her journey in reconnecting with her indigenous heritage.

After graduating college Sainte-Marie took her degree and her music with her to Toronto's burgeoning Yorkville folk scene.[31] Throughout her travels in Toronto Sainte-Marie connected with Elizabeth Stanson and Wilfred Pelletier, two indigenous women and future indigenous rights activists. After meeting Sainte-Marie, Samson and Pelletier were convinced that Sainte-Marie was the daughter of their mutual friend, Emile Piapot and his wife Clara Starblanket. Around the same time as Sainte-Marie's adoption in 1941, Emile and Clara

[29] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 37.
[30] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 33.
[31] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 42.

reportedly had a daughter taken from them by missionaries on the Piapot Reserve in Qu'Appelle Valley, Saskatchewan.[32] Excited by this news Samson and Pelletier invited Sainte-Marie to a powwow in Ontario that Emile Piapot participated in so the two could officially meet. Soon after the two connected, Piapot and Sainte-Marie made plans for her to come visit the rest of her family on the Piapot Reserve. All of this lead to Sainte-Marie's adoption into the Piapot family in 1964. She was given the Cree name Medicine Bird Singing.

> I had a family that had raised me and another who have been my family for my entire adult life. In each of those families, I may or may not be blood relative. With my first family, I had a lot of issues with the men who were bullies and pedophiles. And with my second family, there was nothing like that; they were always good to me.[33]

The similarities between Simone and Sainte-Marie's "origin stories" provides insight into some of the early beginnings of their shared consciousness about music, gender-based violence, and other forms of discrimination. Both artists began playing the piano in some capacity at just three-years-old. For Simone, she took formal classical piano lessons whereas Sainte-Marie mimicked her brother's formal lessons. Because of their families, Simone and Sainte-Marie had access to keyboard instruments in their own homes so they could explore and practice. Each of their families consisted of two parents who valued music which, in turn, created a family environment that encouraged musicianship among their children. At the same time Simone and Sainte-Marie developed their musical talents, they were also learning about the ways in which their racial identities impacted how they were perceived by the communities they grew up in. In their biographical and autobiographical texts, Simone and Sainte-Marie both stress the significance of their first experiences of racism and how this later influenced their perception of reality. Taking all of these biographical similarities between Simone and Sainte-Marie's

[32] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 43.
[33] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 44.

childhoods into account provides context for understanding the ways in which Simone and Sainte-Marie resisted interlocking systems of oppression with their future protest music.

*Simone, Sainte-Marie & Social Justice Movements in the 1960s*

In their biographical and autobiographical texts both Nina Simone and Buffy Sainte-Marie both spoke about their complicated relationships with the civil rights movement and indigenous rights efforts respectively. Notably, both musicians highlight the many ways in which the socio-political spaces of the civil rights movement and indigenous rights efforts discriminated against women's participation. For example, with regard to the civil rights movements, Patricia Hill Collins points out that black women participating in the social justice movement were often discouraged from personal advocacy in favor of racial solidarity. [34] "Black women were taught to see their own needs as secondary to those of a collectivity of some sort, whether it be the family, church, neighborhood, race, or Black nation." [35] Because of this, African-American women's voices were treated as inferior by both internal and external power structures of the civil rights movement. Likewise, 1960s indigenous rights activism contained many contradictions about total liberation and equality of all indigenous peoples. As a result, this often further marginalized indigenous women's voices. In fact, Sherry L. Smith states that historians of the sixties social movements often "slight Indian activism"[36] for not paying enough attention to the crucial interplay of gender identities within indigenous activist spaces. Together through recounting their personal experiences of gendered discrimination, Simone and Sainte-

[34] Patricia Hill Collins, *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice,* 2005, 28.
[35] Collins, *Fighting Words,* 27.
[36] Sherry L. Smith, "Indians, The Counterculture and the New Left," in *Beyond Red Power: American Indian Politics and Activism Since 1900*, 143.

Marie's stories suggest a larger communal narrative consisting of similar discrimination tactics against women of color.

Nina Simone credits her interest in participating in the civil rights movement to her friend Lorraine Hansbury. Because of Hansbury's influence, Simone said "I started thinking about myself as a black person in a country run by white people and a woman in a world run by men."[37] Simone believed her first venture into protest music began with her 1964 song "Mississippi Goddamn," a song she wrote as her way of coping with both the murder of Medgar Evers in Mississippi as well as the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham Alabama that killed four young black children. She says, "It was my first civil rights song, and it erupted out of myself to the struggle for black justice, freedom and equality under the law for as long as it took, until our battles were won."[38] Prior to this, many people had already characterized Simone and her music as part of the civil rights struggle; however, it wasn't until 'Mississippi Goddamn' garnered public attention that Simone felt officially part of the civil rights movement.[39]

As Simone's participation with the civil rights movement progressed, she developed an ideology where she resented non-violence teachings.

> I knew a time might come where we would have to fight for what was right, and I had no problem with that: the Ku Klux Klan weren't non-violence, and neither were the police, nor the government if they felt threatened.[40]

Her alignment with Malcolm X's standpoint on violence allowed her to see the civil rights movement as a more complex socio-political environment. "We weren't one unified group

[37] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 87.
[38] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 88.
[39] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 88.
[40] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 94.

agreeing on everything and moving together, we were a whole range of people thinking, discussing and arguing among ourselves."[41] Coming to the realization that conflicting ideas and protesting strategies existed in the movement, Simone started to question her own positionality as a black woman. Although not aligning with the women's liberation movement happening around the same time, Simone still questioned black womanhood's place within the civil rights movement. By the end of the 1960s Simone remembers:

> I'd look in the mirror and see two faces, knowing that on one hand I loved being black and being a woman and that on the other it was my color and sex which fucked me up in the first place.[42]

Around the same time Simone tried to understand her place as a black woman participating in the civil rights movement, Sainte-Marie was having similar struggles. Similar to Lorraine Hansbury's impact on Simone, Sainte-Marie's was further inspired to join indigenous rights efforts by Annie Mae Pictou Aquash. Aquash's work with the Boston Indian Council in the early 1960s, when Sainte-Marie and her first met, enabled her connection to other indigenous rights activists. For example, Aquash and Sainte-Marie's own indigenous rights activism led them to mobilize with groups such as The National Indian Youth Council and the American Indian Movement (AIM). AIM was founded in 1968 by several young indigenous activists, among the founders were Dennis Baker and Clyde and Vernon Bellecourt.[43] Despite AIM's protest of broken treaties and indigenous sovereignty, AIM was lead primarily by men who often silenced indigenous women's voices.[44] For instance, Sainte-Marie said that the men in charge of

[41] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 96.
[42] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 118.
[43] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 143.
[44] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 143.

AIM were "obsessed with two things: having control of the microphone" and "getting pussy."[45] This became especially apparent when male AIM activists such as Baker and Bellecourt were idolized after their first release from jail.

> Those guys were just getting out of jail, and although they were doing great work in informing urban Indians of their civil rights, they also loved having teenage girls just in from the reservation looking up at their big brown eyes, I felt it was exploitative from the start.[46]

The theme of the exploitation of indigenous women remained throughout most of Sainte-Marie's memory and experiences with AIM.

In December 1975, Aquash was reported missing.[47] For decades Aquash's murder remained unsolved until 2004 when three AIM members were charged with the kidnapping, rape, and murder of Aquash. According to Sainte-Marie, Aquash's daughters Debbie and Denis "still believe high-ranking AIM members ordered her execution due to fears that she was an informant." Aquash's murder is an extreme example of violence against indigenous women within indigenous rights activist spaces. Sainte-Marie's initial suspicions of the exploitation of indigenous women became an even more tangible reality after the death of her dear friend and fellow indigenous activist, Aquash. Sainte-Marie's says that the second verse of her 1975 song "Start Walker" pays tribute to Aquash and other indigenous women activists like her. The events leading up to and after Aquash's murder point out both the gendered politics with social justice spaces that enable violence against women but also the ways in which fellow indigenous women, like Sainte-Marie, coped with their loss through music.

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[45] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 150.
[46] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 150.
[47] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 164.

The foregoing discussion of Simone and Sainte-Marie's experiences in the civil rights and indigenous rights movements is not meant to minimize in any way their historical importance and radical social and political achievements. Rather, in centering Simone and Sainte-Marie's negative experiences, I hope to focus on the often untold histories of violence against women of color in a way that takes account of the nuanced and complex facet of social justice activist spaces through Simone and Sainte-Marie's verbalized realities. The extenuating histories of social justice spaces are even further informed by a vast colonial history of violence. Despite fighting against this colonial context, social justice spaces still participated, consciously and unconsciously, in the silencing and abusing of women of color. In order to understand Simone and Sainte-Marie's complicated positionality within the aforementioned social justice movements, it is imperative to understand the historical context of gender-based violence against black and indigenous women. Furthermore, examining historical structures of gender-based violence enables a more comprehensive understanding of women of color's collective and individual consciousness as well as their sonic resistance to that violence.

## Part II*: Historical Trauma*

### *Trauma Narratives and Autobiography*

Nina Simone recounts her many experiences of trauma caused by the violence and betrayal perpetrated by some of the important male figures in her life throughout her autobiography. For example, at age fourteen, Nina Simone started dating her first serious boyfriend, Edney, a Cherokee boy who was two years older than her and had just moved to Tryon, North Carolina with his family, the Whitesides. Simone remembers "from the moment we started going together, our families approved, and everyone assumed that one day we would get

married. It seemed like destiny."[48] When Simone left for Allen High School for Girls, a boarding school out of town, Edney would write her letters every day and drive to visit her ever Sunday as they tried to make their long-distance relationship work. Unfortunately, Edney's letters and visits became less frequent as Simone discovered he began dating her hometown friend, Anna Mae. Despite Edney's new love interest, he insisted on attending Simone's high school graduation in 1950 with his family in order to watch her give the Valedictorian speech. After Simone's graduation, Edney told Simone that if she stayed in Tryon that he would break up with Anna Mae and instead marry her. Although tempting for Simone at the time, she decided to move to New York and pursue her classical music career instead.

> We didn't have a chance, either of us…I told him I was going to New York. He didn't say anything, just pushed me backward and tried to kiss me, tried to force himself on me, tried to make love to me, as if he saw those years of self-control laid out behind him on purpose. In some ways he was trying to rape me, but it wasn't frightening or dangerous—it was sad and funny at the same time. I laughed as he grabbed onto me, not understanding that he was trying to keep me there anyway he could, including by force. He couldn't do it—he didn't know how because he wasn't brute, he was a sensitive beautiful man and he couldn't do it and I laughed and laughed until he jumped up and walked away.[49]

Simone remembers Edney as her first love and mentions him quite often in her autobiography.

Another notable male figure in Simone's history with trauma and violence was her second husband, Andrew 'Andy' Stroud. Simone met Andy at the 1960 Newark Jazz Festival. Shortly after they started dating she learned that Andy used to be a police officer and had been married three times prior to the start of their relationship. Simone believed that since Andy had been married before, "he knew women, he knew how to be around them, how they liked to be

[48] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 31.
[49] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 36.

treated."[50] After dating for a little over a year, Andy proposed to Simone in the summer of 1961. On the night they went out to a New York City bar to celebrate their engagement, Simone describes the abuse she endured after Andy became angry and jealous of a male fan asking Simone for her autograph.

> Andy got up and walked out so I followed him on the street and found him looking for a cab. When I walked up to him he turned around and hit me. Then he turned back to find his cab, then he hit me again. A cab came and he pushed me in it, got in himself, and have the driver my address. He hit me in the cab, on the pavement outside my apartment building, in the lobby of the building, in the elevator up to the twelfth floor and along the passageway to my apartment…When we got inside the apartment I was already bleeding. Andy walked around like a madman, shouting and turning over furniture. I was trying to tell him that there was nothing to be jealous of, but he wasn't listening.

At this point, Andy aimed his gun at Simone and demanded that she bring him the love letters from Edney that she had kept hidden. Simone had told Andy about these letters month prior to this incident.

> He put his gun down and started going through Edney's letters, making me read bits out, asking me about them, and if he wasn't satisfied with the answers he hit me again, and again. I sat tied up like his prisoner, bleeding and shaking, scared out of my skin. After five hours, he stood me up, kicked over the chair and took me into my bedroom. He tied me to the bed and forced himself on me. Afterwards he fell asleep and I twisted out of the cord around my hands and ran out. [51]

Simone went to hide at a friend's house, and when Andy found her in a café days later he asked: "Who beat you up like that?" [52] To which she responded, "you did." [53] In that moment, Simone realized that Andy had no idea what he had done to her that night. Andy still wanted to get married, and Simone was decidedly hesitant. In making this difficult decision, Simone said:

> The way I look at it, if I married Andy he would be able to protect me from everything, but himself… The memory of the brutal night didn't fade, but it was opposed by the

[50] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 74.
[51] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 77.
[52] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 77.
[53] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 77.

> knowledge of what I would lose if I turned him away. In the end my loneliness and insecurity made my mind up for me. Andy was a strong man and I loved him. I forced myself to believe he wouldn't hit me anymore. [54]

On December 3, 1961 they got married. Soon after, Andy became not only her husband but also her manager.

As mentioned earlier, Buffy Sainte-Marie experienced childhood sexual abuse perpetrated by both her brother and an older male relative. These traumatic experiences were paramount in informing the ways in which she viewed the world around her. During a lot of the abuse Sainte-Marie remembers shutting down and sometimes passing out in order to physically cope with the trauma.[55] Sainte-Marie says, "I just thought that was the ways people were treated, and what you had to do was just get tough and endure it. I didn't have any idea of it being plain wrong."[56] She goes on further,

> Do you know what a ten-year old can do to a five-year old—to the body and self-esteem of a five-year-old? To their psyche and confidence? What a boy going through puberty can do to a little unprotected girl? It's a very, very big problem for little girls who are in a situation like this.[57]

With her skewed perception of family dynamics Sainte-Marie sought help from her mother, Winifred. However, Winifred thought that Sainte-Marie's brother was just teasing her, she did not understand that Sainte-Marie was trying to communicate that she was being sexually abused.

> My mom didn't know the details of what my brother was doing to make me cry, and she had no idea there was a problem in the other case. But she would see me crying or upset or traumatized and she would say, 'What? Have they been picking on you again?' So I thought that's what sexual abuse was called. Fuck. We were talking about two different things and she didn't know it.[58]

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[54] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 78.
[55] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 22.
[56] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 23.
[57] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 21.
[58] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 23.

Sainte-Marie, later in her life, researched about pedophilia and came to many realizations about how her childhood experiences with sexual violence impacted not only her expectations for how to be treated, but more specifically her expectations for how the men in her life treated her.

> I think the most important thing that happens to a child who is abused, embarrassed, and tormented, is the child learns that the word 'no' does not work—it only makes things worse. So as an adult this kind of child grows up to be an abused spouse or girlfriend. So I was later an abused wife, an abused girlfriend."[59]

In 1964 Sainte-Marie began dating a painter, Ramon Indius, who she describes as "a son of a bitch, but a really good painter."[60] After accidentally meeting one of his other girlfriends Sainte-Marie states: "I didn't know he had other girlfriends, but he did, and she didn't know he had other girlfriends, but she found out he was with me too. He was a bully, and he beat us both up. He was a bad guy."[61] In 1967 Sainte-Marie left Alvarez.

A few years prior to dating Indius, Sainte-Marie experienced a different kind of male-perpetrated assault. Sainte-Marie traveled to Florida where she developed bronchitis and needed to go to the doctor. This doctor, without her consent, gave her opiates. She later found out that this particular doctor was known for addicting young women and girls to pills in order to force them into sex work. Sainte-Marie identifies this experience with this doctor as 'assault.'[62]

> I was assaulted in the sixties—well, I think of it as assault—by a doctor. It was the only time I had been involved with opiates. I was given them against my will by a doctor who [later] went to jail for turning women out, you know, into prostitutes. He went to jail.[63]

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[59] Stonechild, *Buffy Sainte-Marie: It's My Way*, 29.
[60] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 73.
[61] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 74.
[62] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 65.
[63] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 65.

In order to cope with this assault Sainte-Marie wrote the song 'Cod'ine,' where she details her experience with drugs, abuse, and withdrawal. This song will be further analyzed and discussed in chapter two.

The last mention of violence Sainte-Marie recounts in her biographical interviews was perpetrated by her ex-husband, Jack Nitzsche. Sainte-Marie and Nitzsche first met in 1971. Nitzsche helped produce Sainte-Marie's album, *She Used to Wanna Be a Ballerina.* She describes her first professional experience with Nitzsche as "awful" and "crazy, I don't mean fun crazy."[64] They rekindled their friendship in the early 1980s which then quickly transformed to marriage in 1982. After they got married Sainte-Marie described her career as "over"[65] because Nitzsche took over as her manager and became extremely controlling. Based on his controlling behavior as her manager and his threatening behavior as her husband, Sainte-Marie "slept with one eye open all the time"[66] she was married to Nietzsche. For many years she was unaware that in 1979 Nitzsche's ex-girlfriend, actress Carrie Snodgress, accused him of breaking into her home, beating her, threatening to kill her, and allegedly raping her with his gun.[67] He was charged, plead guilty and was sentenced to three years' probation.[68]

> I should be clear that Jack never hit me, But Jack, in his threatening ways and intimidation, in his belittling and verbal assaults, could really reduce you to something that you weren't. It continued until I was broken. I was conquered. I was dead. Just make it stop.[69]

[64] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 176.
[65] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 176.
[66] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 186.
[67] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 183.
[68] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 183.
[69] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 183.

Looking at Simone and Sainte-Marie's stories of gender-based violence together shows both the similarities of women of color's collective consciousness of trauma and abuse but also the nuanced uniqueness and complexity of their own individual stories. For example, many parallels can be drawn from Simone's relationship to her second husband, Andrew Stroud, and Sainte-Marie's marriage to Jack Nietzsche. As both managers and husbands Stroud and Nietzsche used tactics to isolate Simone and Sainte-Marie respectively from their friends, family, and the music industry. In both controlling Simone and Sainte-Marie's musical careers and abusing them through various forms of interpersonal gender-based violence, these men dominated and exploited all aspects of Simone and Sainte-Marie's personal and professional lives. These overarching similarities between Simone and Sainte-Marie's abusive partners shed light to the collective similarities among women of color's experiences of sexual, domestic, and interpersonal gender-based violence. However, at the same time, in paying attention to the ways in which Simone and Sainte-Marie tell their own trauma narratives, we can also understand the complicated ways they choose to identify their various stories of gender-based violence.

*Travel Narratives*

In contextualizing Simone and Sainte-Marie's biographies within a larger history of racialized and gendered essentialism it is important to understand some of the origins of that essentialism. Historical documentation of colonizers' and slavers' travel narratives dating back to the 1600s provides historical context in which to understand the transnational and diasporic quality of women of color's musics. In connecting West African travel narratives about music and dance to those of North American colonizers, I shed light on the colonial commonalities between black and indigenous women's lived experiences. This historical and theoretical

approach, in turn, situates women of color's sonic resistance to colonization in terms of a transnational framework. Drawing on scholars such as Sarah Deer and Katrina Dyonne Thompson, I will address the ways in which colonial travel narratives demarcated women of color's bodies as inherently predisposed to music and dance. As a result, this colonial notion served to justify the colonization and enslavement of black and indigenous female bodies because it painted them as active participants in their eventual sexualization and commodification.

First addressing West African travel narratives, Thompson presents many seventeenth and eighteenth-century travel journals written from the perspective of white male colonizers that specifically document women of color's participation in music and dance. Thompson argues that the writers of these travel journals often characterized West Africans as "malleable and capable of being shaped according to the desires and purposes of the gazer." [70] In fact, white male travelers going to West Africa largely ignored actual traditional and cultural aspects of music and dance in West Africa in their documented accounts. [71] Looking at these travel journals serves to uncover the ways Europeans and later, North Americans frequently misrepresented Africans and North American indigenous peoples as a tactic to ultimately justify imperial and colonial practices. [72] These colonization efforts included purging lands of resources, enslaving people of color, and forcefully converting them to Christianity. [73] Furthermore, Europeans and later North

[70] Katrina Dyonne Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About: The Racial Politics of Music and Dance in North American Slavery* (Urbana (Ill.): University of Illinois Press, 2014), 14.
[71] Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About,* 15.
[72] Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About,* 15.
[73] Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About,* 15.

American "scrutinized music and dance in order to place West Africans and indigenous peoples into the roles of servant, prostitute, an entertainer."[74]

Recounting West African women's participation in music and dance practices as overtly sexual and only for amusement purposes portrayed black women as willing participants in their later forced labor in the slave and sex market.[75] For example, Thompson describes slaver and author Jean Barbot's 1668 travel journals, specifically the ways in which he characterizes black female bodies. The written documentation of his many trips to West Africa describes African women as "handsome," "well-shaped," and "much to attract the eyes."[76] Synthesizing all of Barbot's descriptions of African women with the larger colonial context in which Barbot participated in, Thompson argues that Barbot "seems barely able to conceal his attraction to African women he encountered in his travels, however, he continually transfers his owns sexual desires onto them, casting black women as sexual pursuers who entice through dance."[77] Barbot's journals are just one example of a larger ideological tactic where white male slavers, authors, and travelers used their public platform to shape and perpetuate myths that African women were hypersexual, without morals, and intellectually inferior, thus fit for enslavement and subordination.[78]

In the case of black female bodies in West Africa, Thompson notes: "the white male gaze that directed travel narratives commonly positioned music and dance as a form of sexual entertainment."[79] White, Eurocentric, male gazes such as these created the myth that black

[74] Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About,* 23.
[75] Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About,* 22.
[76] Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About,* 22.
[77] Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About,* 27.
[78] Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About,* 14.
[79] Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About,* 26.

female bodies were active participants in their commodification and sexualization. This discourse, in turn, served to justify the sexual violence perpetrated against black female bodies, arguing that these women were "asking for it." Likewise, from the Native female perspective author Sarah Deer observes that:

> Dispossession and relocation of indigenous peoples on this continent both necessitates and precipitates a highly gendered and sexualized dynamic in which Native women's bodies became commodities—bought and sold for the purposes of sexual gratification (or profit), invariably transporting them far away from their homes.[80]

In a similar vein, Deer argues that Native women's bodies were commodified as a means for colonial power, profit, and pleasure.[81] Furthermore, Jean Barman asserts that based on the amount of historical evidence available, often documented from white male colonizers, historians have broadly determined that when settlers first came in contact with North American indigenous communities they depicted women in terms of their sexuality exclusively. This stereotypical hyper-sexualized image of North American indigenous women has remained a critical component of colonialism in the Americas. [82]

Black and North American indigenous female bodies share a history of sexual violence and commodification that benefits white male colonizers. Their colonial histories contribute to the shared historical, generational, and individual traumas shared among black and indigenous women's consciousness. Although West African women and North American indigenous women have different and unique histories and stories, travel narratives such as these conflate all women of color's stories through a singular colonial gaze. This essentialist historical perspective ignores

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[80] Sarah Deer, *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 62.
[81] Deer, *The Beginning and End of Rape,* 62.
[82] Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhndorf, and Jeanne Perreault, *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 92.

not only the differences between these cultures, but also their unique musical and artistic practices. Because of the hegemonic documentation from the colonizer's perspective, many historians are now trying to edit and complicate historical canons through researching women of color's specific positionality within diasporic communities.

*Sexual Violence, Colonialism, and Women of Color*

Anne McClintock makes a symbolic connection between the male settler's gaze upon indigenous women as it relates to the colonization of land. "Women are the earth that is to be discovered, entered, named, inseminated and above all, owned." [83] Ruana Kuokkanen furthers the colonial connection between violence against women of color when she states: "colonial relationships are gendered and sexualized and sexual violence functions as a tool of racism and colonialism, not merely as a means of patriarchal control." [84] In a way, Kuokkanen uses colonial rhetoric to speak about sexual violence as a colonial tactic white male settlers used to gain power.

Although relatively little information exists about Native women at the start of European colonization, historians have no doubt that "colonization required the slaughter, rape, maiming, kidnapping, policing, and imprisonment of Indigenous women."[85] Scholar Andrea Smith argues further that "issues of colonial, race, and gender oppression cannot be separated,"[86] as sexual violence against indigenous women was instrumental in colonization.[87] In the same way

[83] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 31.
[84] Rauna Kuokkanen, "Globalization as Racialized, Sexualized Violence," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 10, no. 2 (2008): 220.
[85] Andrea J. Ritchie, *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2017), 20.
[86] Ritchie, *Invisible No More,* 21.
[87] Ritchie, *Invisible No More,* 21.

McClintock connects sexual violence to the seizure of land, Andrea Richie argues, "sexual violence of Native women during massacres not only signified that both the land and the bodies of indigenous women were invadable."[88] The long history of dehumanization of indigenous women lays a foundation in which violence against indigenous women persists up until the present day. From forced gender hierarchies that privilege cis white men, to forcing Native youth to attend residential schools, to the continual seizure of land, state-run and/or state-sponsored systems and institutions subscribe to past colonial strategies to silence and abuse indigenous women.

With specific attention to black women's subjectivity, Kimberlé Crenshaw notes: "it is necessary to recenter inquiries relating to violence against women of color from the vantage point of women of color." [89] Because of the variety of aspects of the subordination of black women, Crenshaw points out the structural, cultural, and political ways in which the lived experience of violence perpetrated against black women is either erased, caught within an inescapable cycle of abuse, and/or completely invalidated. [90] In a different facet of oppression, bell hooks points out the paradoxical viewpoint of the racist stereotype projecting that black women possess a mythical power and strength that renders their stories of abuse and violence even less likely to be believed. [91]

> Racist stereotypes of the strong, superhuman black woman are operative myths in the minds of many white women, allowing them to ignore the extent to which black women are likely to be victimized in society.[92]

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[88] Ritchie, *Invisible No More,* 21.
[89] Kimberlè Williams Crenshaw, "Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew," *Words That Wound*, 2018, 247.
[90] Crenshaw, "Beyond Racism and Misogyny," 249.
[91] bell hooks, "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory," in *The Black Feminist Reader*, ed. Joy James, 2006, 143.
[92] hooks, "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory,"143.

Taken together, Crenshaw and hook's analyses suggest an extensive history of contradictory elements surrounding black womanhood.

According to bell hooks, dating back to African women's accounts of their experiences on slaveships, rape was used as a common form of torture and punishment.[93] From a legal perspective, the colonial practice of rape and other forms of sexual violence against African women persisted. For example, Southern states enacted "slave codes" which dictates that "*any* white" had permission to punish "a slave who stepped out of line."[94] Often, these punishments were rape and other forms of sexual violence. In addition to "slave codes," enslaved women were subject to "plantation justice" where they were "routinely stripped naked when at auction or as a part of punishment."[95] Both "slave codes" and "plantation justice" legally condoned the rape and torture of enslaved women, as the rape of black women was not a crime under most slave codes[96] or common law.[97] Angela Davis situates the abuse of enslaved African women within a social framework which, in turn, sheds light onto the social impacts these laws had on slavery.

> Slavery relied as much on routine sexual abuse as it relied on the whip and the lash. Sexual coercion was an essential dimension of the social relations between slave master and slave. In other words, the right claimed by slaveowners and their agents over the bodies of female slaves was a direct expression of their presumed property rights over Black people as a whole.[98]

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[93] bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981).
[94] Ritchie, *Invisible No More*, 26.
[95] Marcia Williams, *Soul Survivors* (London: X Press, 1999), 70-71.
[96] Katheryn K. Russell, *Color of Crime: Racial Hoaxes, White Fear, Black Protectionism, Police Harassment, and Other Macroaggressions* (New York: New York Univ Press, 1998), 17.
[97] Angela P. Harris, "Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory," *Feminist Legal Theory*, 2018, 15.
[98] Angela Davis, *Women, Race & Class,* (New York: Random House, 1981).

Richie notes that the end of chattel slavery did not in fact bring an end to the violation of black women.[99] "Emancipation" was often still linked to the rape of black women, notably perpetrated by Union troops.[100] Richie, as well as other historians, argue that the "Black codes" of the Reconstruction era effectively replaced slave codes, which were then replaced by Jim Crow segregation laws.[101] Overarching and generalized connections between these laws together points to the foundational ideology in which they were created. Rape, torture, and the dehumanization of black women remained a central theme of laws like these and, at the same time, informed how they were enforced.

Through understanding the complicated colonial histories of women of color's experiences of gender-based violence, we can then recognize the ways in which women of color consciously and unconsciously resisted the many forms of their marginalization. For example, artistic platforms became a safe place for women of color performers to transgress certain gendered colonial expectations and even redefine women's collective political identities. [102] Music became an outlet in which women of color broke hundreds of years of silence about their lived experiences of gender-based sexual violence. Patricia Hill Collins notes that "breaking the silence thus represents a moment of insubordination in relation to power."[103]

*Historical, Generational, and Communal Traumas*

Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart defines historical trauma as "the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding, over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive

[99] Ritchie, *Invisible No More*, 29.
[100] E. B. Brown, "Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom," *Public Culture* 7, no. 1 (1994): 345-346.
[101] Russell, *Color of Crime,* 27.
[102] Suzak, Huhndorf, and Perreault, *Indigenous Women and Feminism*, 189.
[103] Collins, "Fighting Words," 50.

group trauma experiences." [104] Thus, trauma theorists' research aims to trace the inexhaustible shapes of both human suffering and responses to that suffering. [105] For example, Cathy Caruth, arguably the founder of trauma theory, utilizes the exploration of trauma as a hermeneutic tool for linking structures and collective experiences of suffering. [106] Since Caruth's groundbreaking research, scholars such as Shoshanna Ringel and Jerrold Brandell began examining power structures that cause individual and collective traumas. In doing so, these theorists, among others, use the connection between historical trauma with present-day trauma to highlight the ways in which collective and individual experiences of trauma inform one another.

For instance, Ringel and Brandell further to notion of historical trauma in theorizing the ways in which past traumas intermingle with recent traumas to create "a cumulative and compounding spiral of traumatic effects."[107] With specific attention to the lived experiences of Native Americans, Ringel and Brandell argue that attention to the origin of trauma and violence is essential in the understanding of the vast impact historical trauma has on marginalized communities. Historical and generational trauma resultant from colonial institutions and practices often gets passed on from one generation to another. Because of this generational exchange, traumatic histories and experiences from the past become incorporated into the ever-evolving collective cultural identity of marginalized groups.[108] Uneven power distributions among various socio-political institutions such as religion, law, science, among others,

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[104] Shoshana Ringel and Jerrold R. Brandell, *Trauma: Contemporary Directions in Theory, Practice, and Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2012), 7.
[105] Bruce B. Lawrence and Aisha Karim, *On Violence: A Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 7.
[106] Gert Buelens, Sam Durrant, and Robert Eaglestone, *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary Criticism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 8.
[107] Ringel and Brandell, *Trauma*, 2.
[108] Ringel and Brandell, *Trauma*, 2.

additionally impact the ways in which trauma is or is not represented.[109] Because more power is often distributed to perpetrators of violence, the ways in which trauma claims are portrayed often favor the perspective of those in power.[110] This skewed perception of historical trauma erases violent histories of human suffering while perpetrators of collective suffering avoid assuming responsibility for the damages they have caused.[111] The erasure of marginalized voices, such as women of color, from historical canons silences stories of trauma and invalidates many aspects of individual and collective suffering. Moreover, responses to historical traumas compounded with recent traumas often manifest in a variety of behaviors. For example, "substance abuse, self-destructive behavior, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, anger, difficulty recognizing and expressing emotions, survivor's guilt, identification with ancestral pain,"[112] among other responses.

For the purposes of this project, I would like to turn to scholar Stef Craps' contributions to the field of trauma research. Throughout her book, Craps notes that, historically, the trauma theory field has lacked inclusivity and often ignored the suffering of minority groups.[113] She suggests that research in this field must take into account "the specific social and historical contexts in which trauma narratives are produced and received, and be open and attentive to the diverse strategies and representation and resistance which these contexts invite or necessitate."[114] Keeping Craps' theoretical approach to trauma theory in mind, deeper analysis of gender-based colonial violence narratives will enable a more inclusive look into the gendered and racialized

[109] Ringel and Brandell, *Trauma*, 2.
[110] Ringel and Brandell, *Trauma*, 2.
[111] Ringel and Brandell, *Trauma*, 2.
[112] Ringel and Brandell, *Trauma*, 2.
[113] Stef Craps, "Beyond Trauma Aesthetics," *Postcolonial Witnessing*, 2013, 43.
[114] Craps, "Beyond Trauma Aesthetics," 43.

oppression of women of color as well as a deeper analysis of these women's sonic resistance to individual and communal traumas.

Taking Simone and Sainte-Marie's trauma narratives with an understanding of the historical contexts of violence against women of color enables for a framework in which to discuss acts of resistance to this marginalization. These notions, established in Thompson's analysis of colonizer travel journals, among other things, shaped women of color's identities to the desired purpose of the gazer. [115] Often times, the "desired purpose" suggested to readers that black and Native American indigenous women were willing to participate in the slave and sex market. [116] Both the contemporary threats of violence Kuokkanen describes combined with Brave Heart's theory of historical trauma create a very specific layered subjectivity for women of color. One which requires thoughtful analysis and attention to the multifaceted components to black and indigenous women's collective and individual traumas. Simone and Sainte-Marie's musical resistance took many forms. Chapter two and three analyze their sonic resistance in the face of gender-based violence.

[115] Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About,* 26.
[116] Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About,* 15.

## Chapter 2: Nina Simone & Buffy Sainte-Marie's Folk Consciousness

In order to contextualize Simone and Sainte-Marie's participation in and relationship to 1960s folk music, the first part of this chapter discusses the 1960s Urban Folk Revival. I first present a brief history of folk music's relationship to social justice and discuss conventional musical stylistics of the genre. Then, I consider the Greenwich Village's reputation within the 1960s folk revival movement through a survey of folk music venues and a gendered and racialized analysis of the popular folk musicians performing at the same time a Simone and Sainte-Marie. Finally, I examine Simone and Sainte-Marie's autobiographical accounts of the 1960s folk revival and, more specifically, their experiences performing in Greenwich Village. Part two of the chapter consists of a lyrical and musical analysis of four songs – Simone's "Four Women" (1966) and "Go Limp" (1964); and Sainte-Marie's "Cod'ine" (1964) and "The Incest Song" (1964). My analysis of these songs draw on the statements and perspectives of Simone and Sainte-Marie within media reception.

### Part I: *Urban Folk Revival - "The Boom"*

Folklore scholar Neil Rosenberg characterizes the revival of folk music in 1960s North America as "The Boom Period."[1] During the "boom," Rosenberg argues that the stereotypical 1960s folk singer could be classified as two distinct and opposite categories. The first category consists of folk regarded as "pretentious, naïve, iconoclastic in appearance."[2] Often, such performers would wear avant-garde or artistic clothing that read to audiences as "pretentious,

[1] Neil V. Rosenberg, *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 10.
[2] Rosenberg, *Transforming Tradition,* 10.

wealthy, middle-class urbanites in blue-collar outfits."[3] While, on the other hand, Rosenberg's second classification of folk singers during this time was more positive and defined through social change. "The social and intellectual iconoclasm of the great boom was a catalyst for social change and from this came the belief that a folksinger is someone who performs serious, "meaningful" songs."[4] Although oversimplified, these characteristics attributed to folk musicians of the 1960s urban folk boom provides a foundation in which to understand folk singers' music and their connection to social justice spaces.

Building from Rosenberg's research, folklorist and participant in the 1960s folk revival, Ellen Stekert outlined four categories in which to classify folk musicians in the early 1960s. Stekert calls the first group "traditional singers." People who fall under this category learn their musical style and repertoire through various oral traditions. "Traditional Singers" usually performed at small cultural festivals while hardly performing for "spoiled coffeehouse audiences."[5] The second group, Stekert labels as the "Imitators" which she later renames to "Emulators." This group consists of young artists taking and learning from "traditional singers" and incorporating these musical elements into their own music.[6] Third, the "utilizers," take some works from "traditional singers" and alter them based on popular and dominantly commercially accepted musical aesthetics. For example, "utilizers" often modified the text, style, and/or presentation of prior folk songs in order to retain identifiable folk elements, while still bringing a new sense of authorship to their music.[7] Stekert calls the fourth and final group the "new

[3] Rosenberg, *Transforming Tradition,* 10.
[4] Rosenberg, *Transforming Tradition,* 10.
[5] Ellen Stekert, "Cents and Nonsense in the Urban Folksong Movement: 1930-66," in *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined* (University of Illinois Press, 1993), 96.
[6] Stekert, "Cents and Nonsense in the Urban Folksong Movement," 96.
[7] Stekert, "Cents and Nonsense in the Urban Folksong Movement," 98.

aesthetic." "The sound of the 'new aesthetic' group is one which developed from the merging of vocal and instrumental folks, classical jazz, and pop styles."[8] These four groups, although broadly generalized, provides first-hand interpretations of early 1960s folk scene's musical participants.

Gillian Mitchell advocates for the acceptance a definition of 'folk music' in terms of Stekert's "broad, fluid, and perhaps at times contradictory" categorizations.[9] For example, 1940s folk musicians, representative of the "traditional singers" category, such as Pete Seeger, Woodie Guthrie, and groups like the Almanac Singers coupled with their participation in worker's rallies and union meetings are often credited for establishing a folk music canon compiled of politically liberal content.[10] Based on 1960s publications such as *Broadside, Sing Out!,* later joined by *Little Sandy Review* and *Caravan,* popular folk musicians from the 1940s like Seeger and Guthrie were still highly lauded for their folk music's impact on social change.[11] Notably, *Broadside'*s quick emergence as a national media platform for topical songs of the early 1960s provided a public space for popular folk artists to publish both their own music and written opinions on the climate of folk music in the United States.[12] For instance, as the civil rights movement garnered more public attention in the early 1960s, *Broadside* became one of the major platforms for activist folk singers of the movement to share their songs publically.[13] While still publishing new protest

[8] Stekert, "Cents and Nonsense in the Urban Folksong Movement," 99.
[9] Gillian Mitchell, *North American Folk Music Revival: Nation and Identity in the United States and Canada, 1945-1980* (Routledge, 2016), 11.
[10] Mitchell, *North American Folk Music Revival,* 11.
[11] Ronald D. Cohen, *Rainbow Quest: The Folk Music Revival and American Society, 1940-1970* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 157.
[12] Cohen, *Rainbow Quest,* 180.
[13] Cohen, *Rainbow Quest,* 187.

songs that Stekert might characterize as "new aesthetic," *Broadside* remained dedicated to artists from previous decades by circulating their music alongside new and emerging folk artists.

Musically, Mitchell notes that, like 1940s folk music from the Northern United States, 1960s folk revival music from the same region frequently used, acoustic guitar, banjo, harmonica, mandolin, autoharp, accordion, and violin.[14] Moreover, Dunaway and Beer suggest that, in the post-war period, folk music came to be known as "the people's music" because it engaged with existing topical protests.[15] Together Dunaway and Beer, and Mitchell's research provide a historical basis for the urban folk revival of the 1960s in Greenwich Village.

Greenwich Village, a "long-established bohemian enclave," is often argued as a "natural haven" for the 1960s urban folk revival.[16] As the "center" of the folk revival, the growing New York folk scene gradually welcomed popular and new folk musicians to its funny-named coffee houses and bars.[17] Among some of the performance venues were The Gaslight, Wha?, The Bitter End, Café Figaro, Gerde's Folk City, and The Village Gate.[18] Reporting on the cultural and musical climate of the Greenwich Village folk music scene were publications like *Broadside. Broadside,* among others, portrayed the positive aspects of Greenwich Village where all folk artists exemplified Stekert's permeable and often contradictory categorizations harmoniously.

Although the revival "welcomed and actively promoted female singers and musicians,"[19] many female performers were being consciously and unconsciously excluded from Greenwich Village's folk music scene. The gendered and racialized politics of Greenwich Village's folk

[14] Mitchell, *North American Folk Music Revival,* 8.
[15] David King Dunaway and Molly Beer, *Singing Out: An Oral History of Americas Folk Music Revivals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 11.
[16] Mitchell, *North American Folk Music Revival,* 111-112.
[17] Mitchell, *North American Folk Music Revival,* 116.
[18] Mitchell, *North American Folk Music Revival,* 116.
[19] Mitchell, *North American Folk Music Revival,* 123.

scene were dominated by white male folk artists and white male-dominated record labels.[20] Through her many interviews with Greenwich Village performers, Mitchell came to understand a common theme among female performers that characterized men as gatekeepers to the folk scene where only certain female musicians were invited to perform.[21] Unfortunately, being invited to perform often came along with further gendered and racialized discrimination.

> If the male musicians were not referring to the women in terms of their sexuality or sexual activities, then they were discussing the alleged rivalry among the various prominent 'chick' performers.[22]

Joan Baez, Judy Collins, and Odetta all started their careers in the Greenwich Village coffee-house circuit, while Joni Mitchell began hers in Toronto's Yorkville folk music scene.[23] These female folk singers make up a widely accepted musical canon during that time that often excluded musicians like Nina Simone and Buffy Sainte-Marie. Despite all of this exclusion and erasure, Simone and Sainte-Marie both performed in Greenwich Village venues in the early 1960s and had a lot to say about their experiences throughout their published autobiographical accounts.

*Nina Simone, Buffy Sainte-Marie & the Greenwich Village Urban Folk Movement*

Nina Simone described her musicianship in the early 1960s as "totally different and in its own way superior"[24] in response to audiences and record labels trying to "put her in a box with other jazz singers."[25] She says:

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[20] Mitchell, *North American Folk Music Revival,* 124.
[21] Mitchell, *North American Folk Music Revival,* 124.
[22] Mitchell, *North American Folk Music Revival,* 124.
[23] Mitchell, *North American Folk Music Revival,* 124.
[24] Nina Simone and Stephen Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You: The Autobiography of Nina Simone* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003), 69.
[25] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 69.

> Jazz music was just another aspect of the whole thing, so in that sense because I was black I was a jazz singer, but in every other was I most definitely was not. If I had to be called something it should have been a folk singer, because there was more folk and blues than jazz in my playing.[26]

At first, Simone appreciated how musically diverse Greenwich Village was in the late 1950s and early 1960s, especially when she performed at The Village Gate.

> I was lucky because life in the Village had given these people the right sort of attitude: if it sounded good, appreciate it for what it was and don't get too uptight if you can't decide what to call it… Whatever I was, the people in the Village liked it and word spread across the country.[27]

After Simone's first album with Colpix Records, *The Amazing Nina Simone*, was released in 1959 she noticed how "the intellectual and artistic crowd" that spent time in the Village were the first to become fans of her music.[28]

For Simone, Greenwich Village was separated into three different groups that often cohabitated with one another. She refers to the first group as "the jazz scene" which consisted of John Coltrane, Art Pepper, George Adams, among other jazz instrumentalists. Surrounding this scene was the second group, made up of poets, writers, and painters. Among them, Langston Hughes, Jimmy Baldwin, Amiri Baraka, and Lorraine Hansberry, many of which were Simone's closest friends. Finally, Simone describes the third group as:

> Journalists, film makers, and record company guys, the people who were going to package up and exploit the scene just as soon as they got a handle on what it actually was.[29]

[26] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 68-69.
[27] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 68-69.
[28] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 67.
[29] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 67.

Simone names The Village Gate and the Bitter End as two venues that exemplify the first two groups of Greenwich Village. She saw The Village Gate as a place fixated on both jazz and politics. While, just across the street at the Bitter End was the folk music crowd.[30] To her, places like the Bitter End "had a different kind of approach to music and an attitude that wasn't cool like the jazz guys, but who were hip all the same."[31] She admired many of the Bitter End's regular performers such as: Joan Baez, Tim Hardin, Peter, Paul and Mary, Odetta, "and this very young guy who sang comedy parodies in the intermissions, Bob Dylan."[32] Although she notes that not many people moved between the jazz and the folk scenes, those that did were given respect throughout the Greenwich Village music scene.

> The whole thing was multi-racial and integrated, although the folkies were mainly white kids. And everybody in and around these scenes liked to think that they were cool, so when I came along playing music that wasn't much like anything they were used to, they were cool to that—they gave my music a chance, and they found they liked it. And they were cool to me, too: in the words of the time they 'dug' me—they gave me respect.[33]

Being able to transgress Greenwich Village musical boundaries placed Simone in a precarious position, especially as a black woman performer during this time. Simone herself identified her music within folk and blues styles despite how others categorized her. On one hand, Simone maintained a multi-faceted platform in Greenwich in which she was able to speak about topics like gender-based violence against women of color to the different groups of people she mentioned. While, on the other hand, Simone herself and her music were subject to even more racialized and gendered criticism coming from all areas of the Greenwich Village scene for her controversial musical messages.

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[30] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 67.
[31] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 67.
[32] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 67.
[33] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 68.

At the same time Simone was resisting racialized genre limitations, Buffy Sainte-Marie was pushing against musical stereotypes that portrayed her as an "angry Indian" or a "savage."[34] Author Andrea Warner argues that females performers in the 1960s who strayed outside of the "narrow categories of sweet virgin or sex kitten" were discredited by being characterized as hysterical, aggressive, or angry.[35] For example, a *New York Times* article reviewing one of Sainte-Marie's performances begins: "Buffy Sainte-Marie, the singer, is an angry woman…"[36] To this day, Sainte-Marie resents being discredited in this way.

> In my associations with Native American historians, scholars, professors, activists, schools, school kids, and community people over the last fifty years, I have not seen a lot of angry people. Determined, dedicated, depressed, disgruntled, disappointed, defeated, demoralized, and in despair—yes.[37]

When Sainte-Marie began performing in Greenwich Village she tried her best to defy these racialized expectations of her music by not getting angry.

> Protest songs have to be more than just emotional 'angry' Indian songs or angry anti-war songs—they're not effective. It's okay to do that, but anger itself is not necessarily effective in making change, which is what I really wanted to do…For Native people, it was almost like being an abused child or wife: Anger would just make the bully more dangerous, so you were careful not to become a target."[38]

Sainte-Marie remembers the musical climate when she first arrived in New York City. Musicians like Pete Seeger and Woodie Guthrie were quite well-known while Bob Dylan and Joan Baez were just on the cusp of becoming famous.[39] She describes the performances she saw

[34] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 96.
[35] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 96.
[36] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 96.
[37] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 98.
[38] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 98.
[39] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 41.

in Greenwich in the early 1960s as "mostly Euro-American folk music."[40] As she became more familiar with the Greenwich folk scene she spent a lot of her time watching and performing in the coffee-house circuit.

> Coffee houses offered an atmosphere for young people to be together and have a safe place to go and hear music that was actually about themselves and their peers—that was us, the songwriters.[41]

Sainte-Marie grew to love how the musicians, artists, and writers around her talked about social issues in their work, especially issues that impacted indigenous communities. Inspired by the Greenwich Village environment and passionate about indigenous rights, Sainte-Marie's protest songs brought forth social issues, specific to Native peoples, that were often overlooked.

> …it was my first time playing [at Gerde's Folk City], there was an open-mic night when anybody could play so I did. People liked it a lot; they were a little shocked by my songs like 'Universal Soldier' and 'Now That the Buffalo's Gone,' as hard protest that made sense, and songs about Native American issues were pretty unique—that that's what was so great about the coffee-house days and the early folk music era: diversity.[42]

After establishing herself within the coffee-house circuit, Sainte-Marie became aware of the different social circles within the Greenwich music scene. The social aspects of the scene also played into some of the ways in which many business decisions were made by those in positions of power. Because she did not drink, she found it difficult to engage with some of these groups, as many of the social gathering involved alcohol and other drugs. However, there was also another layer to her apprehension in the social aspects of the Greenwich folk scene.

> I was scared of men. I wasn't comfortable after the show going out with a bunch of guys and drinking in a bar, which a lot of people did—certainly all the guys did and several of the girls. I didn't, so I missed a lot of those business and social opportunities.[43]

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[40] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 41.
[41] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 76.
[42] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 52.
[43] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 77.

Even at the very beginnings of her time in Greenwich Sainte-Marie was aware of the ways in which men throughout the different groups of the scene discriminated against women, especially women of color. This manifested in a variety of socio-economic discrimination. One of which was record companies often taking advantage of new and young artists from low-income backgrounds and marginalized identities without proper representation.[44]

Understanding Simone and Sainte-Marie's own individualized experiences within the Greenwich Village folk scene provides a contextual foundation for an analysis of their folk music. Mitchell notes that; "the richest primary source at the revival historian's disposal is that of first-hand accounts."[45] Simone and Sainte-Marie's first-hand accounts compound their personal anecdotes with general observations and theories about the Greenwich Village folk revival. Foregrounding Simone and Sainte-Marie in this folk music context provides a framework in which to understand their sonic narratives about gender-based violence against women of color, the ways in which they raised social consciousness about these issues, and spoke to the historical collective experiences of violence against women of color through music.

Part II: *Musical and Lyrical Analysis*

In building on the theoretical and historical framework laid out in part I, I turn to specific recordings from Simone and Sainte-Marie's repertoire of protest music. This section analyzes specific musical and lyrical conventions Simone and Sainte-Marie use in their songs to raise

[44] Denise Sullivan, *Keep on Pushing: Black Power Music from Blues to Hip-Hop* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2011), 21-22.
[45] Mitchell, *North American Folk Music Revival,* 16.

consciousness about gender-based violence against women of color. Throughout this section I investigate the ways in which the violence and trauma narratives in Simone's "Four Women" and "Go Limp," and Sainte-Marie's "The Incest Song" and "Cod'ine" not only raise consciousness about violence against women of color but also how they promote action and critique the treatment of women of color in the United States.

*"Four Women"*

Nina Simone teamed up with songwriter, jazz singer, and civil rights activist Abbey Lincoln in composing the lyrics to her 1966 song "Four Women." The lyrics offer "a brief chronicle of different women characterized by stereotypical markers of African American femininity."[46] Simone and Lincoln's lyrics tell four different stories from the perspective of four different African American women: Aunt Sarah, Saffronia, Sweet Thing, and Peaches. Centering the voices of four black women in itself was a controversial choice, one that complicated race and gender consciousness. Tammy Kernodle notes that "Four Women" was the first song to incorporate gender into the context of the Black Arts Movement, as this movement previously focused solely on racial equality, often at the expense of gender equality. [47] In general, the lyrics of "Four Women" reject the essentialism of black women's lived experiences often told through the narrow aforementioned stereotypes. A closer look into these lyrics and the stereotypes they narrate speaks to the long history of violence against women of color.

Simone introduces herself as Aunt Sarah in the first verse.

*My skin is black*

[46] Malik Gaines, "Nina Simone's Quadruple Consciousness," *Black Performance on the Outskirts of the Left*, 2017, 258.
[47] Tammy L. Kernodle, ""I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free": Nina Simone and the Redefining of the Freedom Song of the 1960s," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 2, no.3 (2008), 310.

*My arms are long*

*My hair is woolly*

*My back is strong*

*Strong enough to take the pain*

*Inflicted again and again*

*What do they call me*

*My name is Aunt Sarah*

Aunt Sarah is characterized as strong and perhaps unbreakable as she has a history of enduring pain throughout her life. I interpret Aunt Sarah as fulfilling the culturally constructed figure of the "mammy." The mammy stereotype dictates certain emotional qualities, physical attributes, labor, and overall behavior of African American women. K. Sue. Jewell defines the emotional make-up of the "mammy" as "fiercely independent, aggressive, and powerful,"[48] further noting that these are all also qualities attributed to Western notions of masculinity.[49] The physical features of the "mammy" often portrayed as an "obese African American woman, of dark complexion, with extremely large breasts and buttocks and shining with teeth visibly displayed in a grin."[50]

Scholars place the origin of the "mammy" image to female slaves being assigned domestic duties for the family of the slave owner.[51] Early depictions of mammies portrayed them

[48] K. Sue. Jewell, *From Mammy to Miss America and Beyond Cultural Images and the Shaping of US Social Policy,* 2002, 37.
[49] Jewell, *From Mammy to Miss America,* 37.
[50] Jewell, *From Mammy to Miss America,* 37.
[51] Jewell, *From Mammy to Miss America,* 187.

as content and even satisfied with providing domestic labor for white families.[52] Jewell argues that these characteristics attributed to African American womanhood were carefully constructed by many of the white male slave owners, and later employers of black women in order to uphold and perpetuate white hetero-patriarchal power structures.[53] The physical appearance of the "mammy" combined her assigned domestic labor role places her "outside the sphere of [white male] sexual desirability and into the realm of maternal nurturance."[54] This, in turn, was used to justify sexual relations between female slaves and white male slave-owners; arguing that sexual intercourse was initiated by the advances of female slaves rather than the male slave-owner's abuse of power.[55]

Simone's delivery and embodiment of Aunt Sarah in the first verse both reclaims and repositions the "mammy" trope from the humanized perspective of the trope herself. Aunt Sarah is telling her own story, through Simone's voice, about the violence and abuse she has endured. In talking about pain and abuse, Aunt Sarah, speaking on behalf of the "mammy," provides an untold perspective that defies the very basis of the stereotype.

In the second verse, Simone introduces herself as Saffronia, a half black and half white woman.

*My skin is yellow*

*My hair is long*

*Between two worlds*

*I do belong*

[52] Jewell, *From Mammy to Miss America,* 187.
[53] Jewell, *From Mammy to Miss America,* 59.
[54] Jewell, *From Mammy to Miss America,* 40.
[55] Jewell, *From Mammy to Miss America,* 40.

*My father was rich and white*

*He forced my mother late one night*

*What do they call me*

*My name is Saffronia*

Minelle Mahtani defines the public myths surrounding mixed-race women as "marked by relentless negativity…whereby "mixed-race" women have been positioned as flighty, exotic, erotic, dangerous, oversexed, tormented, and even pathetic through various mainstream fictional literatures." [56] Mixed-raced individuals, derogatorily called "mulattas," were seen to fall outside the American racial fantasy that makes a clear distinction between the unrealistic black and white binary. [57] Mixed-race women occupy such a fraught racialized subjectivity in American society that, in turn, directly challenges dominant white cultural ideals. [58] Teresa Zackodnik places the origin of the "mulatta" trope, with specific attention to culturally constructed standards of beauty, amongst nineteenth-century respectability and racial politics.

> According to the cult of domesticity, a white woman's beauty would signal a corresponding purity of soul and elicit her protection and respect of white gentlemen, but a mulatta's beauty was a liability that placed her at immediate and constant risk of sexual violence. The mulatta need not be abducted from her home and forced into prostitution, for her home was often the site of her legalized exploitation. White men did not pay her for her "services," they owned her. [59]

The prominence of sexual violence perpetrated against racialized women is a key aspect of Saffronia's verse. Simone and Lincoln's lyrics involve Saffronia's mother's experience with sexual violence perpetrated by Saffronia's biological father, a powerful white man. Saffronia's

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[56] Minelle Mahtani, "Mixed Metaphors: Positioning "Mixed Race" Identity," in *Situating "Race" and Racisms in Time, Space, and Theory: Critical Essays for Activists and Scholars*, ed. Jo-Anne Lee and John S. Lutz, 2005, 78.
[57] Teresa C. Zackodnik, *The Mulatta and the Politics of Race,* 2010, 103.
[58] Zackodnik, *The Mulatta and the Politics of Race,* 103.
[59] Zackodnik, *The Mulatta and the Politics of Race,* 107.

family history of sexual violence not only speaks to the historical traumas passed from one generation to the next but also the ways in which she herself feels violated because of her biological father's actions. Saffronia's statement of being "caught between two worlds" can go even deeper than the ideological black and white color lines of the United States and could refer to her conflicted feeling about both of her parents.

Using the same timbre of voice and dynamic level as Aunt Sarah and Saffronia's verses, Simone introduces herself as Sweet Thing in the third verse.

*My skin is tan*

*My hair is fine*

*My hips invite you*

*My mouth like wine*

*Whose little girl am I?*

*Anyone who has money to buy*

*What do they call me*

*My name is Sweet Thing*

Sweet Thing takes on the racialized trop of the "Jezebel." Townsend et al. defines the "jezebel" as "one of the most overtly sexual images of African American women…she is perceived as seductive, manipulative, and unable to control her sexual drive."[60] The "jezebel" is a hypersexualized trope that suggests African American women do not have the ability to ever say "no" to sexual activity therefore cannot be assaulted or raped.[61] Directly opposing the "mammy" stereotype, the "jezebel" uses her sexuality as means of financial support and often engages in

[60] Tiffany G. Townsend et al., "I'm No Jezebel; I Am Young, Gifted, and Black: Identity, Sexuality, and Black Girls," *Psychology of Women Quarterly,* 2010, 274.
[61] Townsend et al., "I'm No Jezebel," 274.

sex work. [62] Based on the comparative assumptions of the "mammy" and the "jezebel," Aunt Sarah and Sweet Thing are supposed to be polar opposites of one another. Yet, the melodic and harmonic structure as well as Simone's vocal delivery remains the same for both Aunt Sarah and Sweet Thing's verses. Simone's choice to keep the first three verses strophic can be read in many ways. Perhaps, as sonic solidarity among Aunt Sarah, Saffronia, and Sweet Thing? Or, as a commentary on the essentialist ways in which all African American women, despite their actual differences and even the differences among these racialized tropes, are limited to very narrow means of representation? Regardless of Simone's reasoning, the theme of gender-based violence against African American women remains throughout these three verses.

Concluding the song is Simone's portrayal of Peaches in the fourth verse. Peaches takes on the "violent black woman" trope.

*My skin is brown*

*My manner is tough*

*I'll kill the first mother I see*

*My life has been rough*

*I'm awfully bitter these days*

*Because my parents were slaves*

*What do they call me*

*My name is PEACHES*

Jones and Norwood argue that any black woman who pushed back against her marginalization get characterized by society into the "angry black women."[63] The "angry black woman"

[62] Townsend et al., "I'm No Jezebel," 274.
[63] T. Jones and K.J Norwood, 2017. "Aggressive Encounters & White Fragility: Deconstructing the Trope of the Angry Black Woman," *Iowa Law Review,* 2017, 2044.

stereotype is described as "loud," "erratic," "violent," and "uncontrollable." This kind of characterization positions the "angry black woman" as the problem rather than the conditions to which she is responding to. [64] Simone's delivery of Peaches' verse disrupts the repetitive groove of the previous three verses, most notably at the very end of the verse where Simone dissonantly screams in a raspy timbre "my name is peaches!" Simone's transgression from the established groove not only gets audience's attention but also displays the deep-rooted anger of the character in which she is playing, Peaches. It could be argued that Peaches' anger is reflective of Simone's transition to a more militant stance within the civil right movement. Or perhaps, that Simone placed her own anger at the treatment of black women in the United States into this character.

The fraught reception of "Four Women" speaks the many different ways in which to interpret Simone's musical and lyrical choices. In her autobiography Simone explains what her intentions were when co-writing "Four Women."

> The women in the song are black, but their skin tones range from light to dark and their ideas of beauty and their own importance are deeply influenced by that. All the song did was tell what entered the minds of most black women in American when they thought about themselves: their complexion, their hair—straight, kinky, natural, which?"[65]

She goes on to talk about the impossible and contradictory standards of beauty forced onto black women in the United States.

> Black women didn't know what the hell they wanted because they were defined by things they didn't control and until they had the confidence to define themselves they'd be stuck in the same mess forever—that was the point the song made.[66]

Despite Simone's intentions with "Four Women," many radio stations banned the song altogether. According to Hugh Wyatt's 1967 Daily News article, a New York radio station was

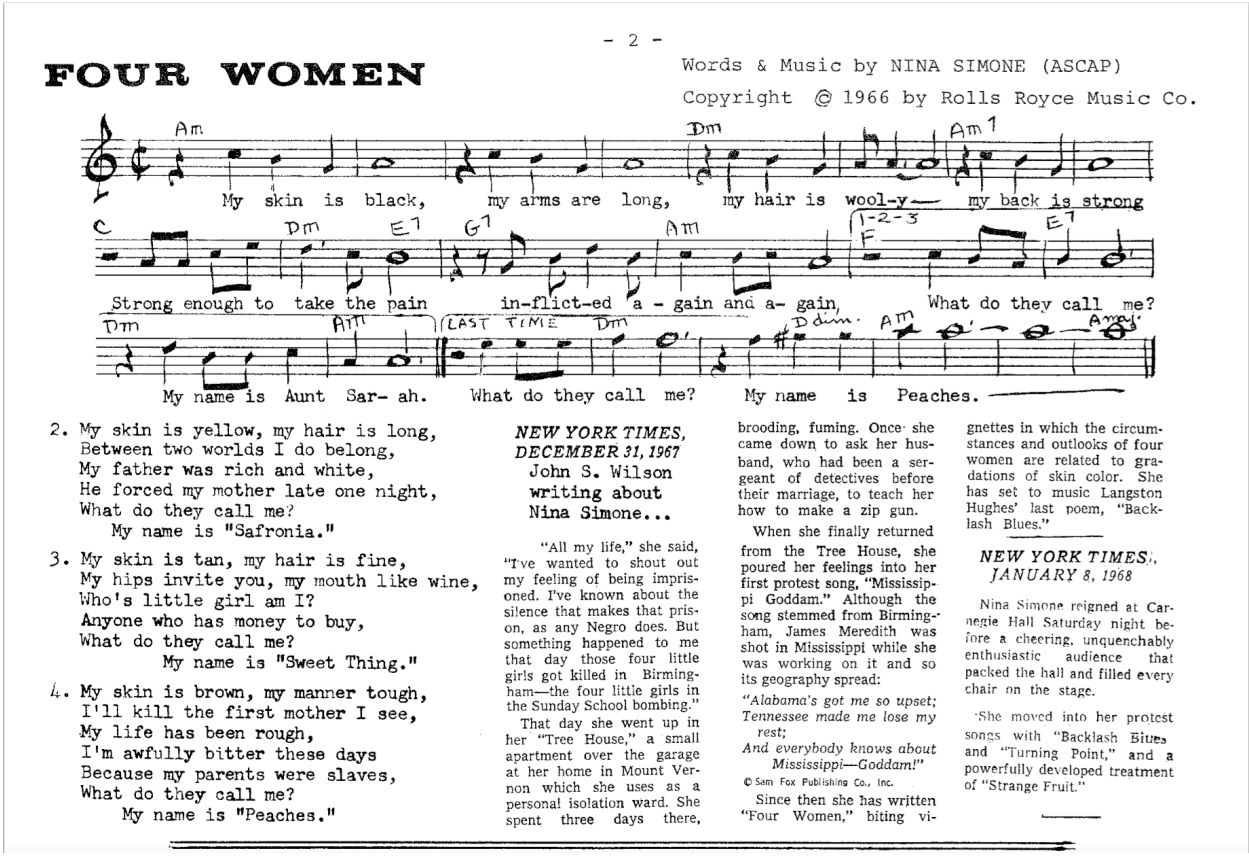
[64] Jones and Norwood, "Aggressive Encounters & White Fragility," 2044.
[65] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You, 117.*
[66] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You, 117.*

"swamped with calls" after playing "Four Women" and a Philadelphia jazz radio station banned the song, saying it was "offensive to Negroes."[67] In response to this Simone states:

> When 'Four Women' was released in 1966 some black radio stations banned DJs from playing it because they said it 'insulted' black women. It didn't, and banning it was a stupid thing to do, but I wasn't surprised. The song told a truth that many people in the USA—especially black men—simply weren't ready to acknowledge at the time. [68]

Although banned from radio stations all across the United States, "Four Women" was lauded among folk music magazines. For example, *Broadside* published the sheet music to "Four Women" alongside two clippings of *New York Times* articles from 1967 and 1968 giving positive reviews about the song [Figure 1].

[67] Hugh Wyatt, "The Sound of Nina," *Daily News* (New York, New York), June 25, 1967.
[68] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You*, 117.



- 2 -

**FOUR WOMEN**

Words & Music by NINA SIMONE (ASCAP)
Copyright © 1966 by Rolls Royce Music Co.

Am Dm Am7
My skin is black, my arms are long, my hair is wool-y— my back is strong
C Dm E7 G7 Am F 1-2-3 E7
Strong enough to take the pain in-flict-ed a - gain and a- gain, What do they call me?
Dm Am LAST TIME Dm D dim. Am Amaj7
My name is Aunt Sar- ah. What do they call me? My name is Peaches.

2. My skin is yellow, my hair is long,
Between two worlds I do belong,
My father was rich and white,
He forced my mother late one night,
What do they call me?
My name is "Safronia."

3. My skin is tan, my hair is fine,
My hips invite you, my mouth like wine,
Who's little girl am I?
Anyone who has money to buy,
What do they call me?
My name is "Sweet Thing."

4. My skin is brown, my manner tough,
I'll kill the first mother I see,
My life has been rough,
I'm awfully bitter these days
Because my parents were slaves,
What do they call me?
My name is "Peaches."

***NEW YORK TIMES, DECEMBER 31, 1967***
**John S. Wilson writing about Nina Simone...**

"All my life," she said, "I've wanted to shout out my feeling of being imprisoned. I've known about the silence that makes that prison, as any Negro does. But something happened to me that day those four little girls got killed in Birmingham—the four little girls in the Sunday School bombing."

That day she went up in her "Tree House," a small apartment over the garage at her home in Mount Vernon which she uses as a personal isolation ward. She spent three days there, brooding, fuming. Once she came down to ask her husband, who had been a sergeant of detectives before their marriage, to teach her how to make a zip gun.

When she finally returned from the Tree House, she poured her feelings into her first protest song, "Mississippi Goddam." Although the song stemmed from Birmingham, James Meredith was shot in Mississippi while she was working on it and so its geography spread:

*"Alabama's got me so upset;*
*Tennessee made me lose my rest;*
*And everybody knows about Mississippi—Goddam!"*



Since then she has written "Four Women," biting vignettes in which the circumstances and outlooks of four women are related to gradations of skin color. She has set to music Langston Hughes' last poem, "Backlash Blues."

***NEW YORK TIMES, JANUARY 8, 1968***

Nina Simone reigned at Carnegie Hall Saturday night before a cheering, unquenchably enthusiastic audience that packed the hall and filled every chair on the stage.

She moved into her protest songs with "Backlash Blues" and "Turning Point," and a powerfully developed treatment of "Strange Fruit."

[69] Figure 1

Clearly controversial, "Four Women" challenged racialized ideas about African American womanhood by telling the uncomfortable and challenging stories of the women behind these stereotypes. The common thread of sexual violence in my lyrical analysis suggests a level of consciousness among black women that entails a long history of sexual violence. Simone, informed of her own experiences with sexual and gender-based violence, brought the stories of Aunt Sarah, Saffronia, Sweet Thing, and Peaches to life, and to audiences that might be completely unaware of black women's varied connections to gender-based violence. Placing "Four Women" in the context of the civil rights movement brings forth a perspective on

[69] "Four Women," *Broadside*, January 1968.

gendered politics that often were silenced. Simone notes specifically that some black radio stations banned "Four Women." The reaction of the black radio stations she refers to is a clear examples of the ways in which overall racial equality was often prioritized in the civil rights movement at the expense of black women's humanity. In bringing gender dynamics to existing conversations of blackness, Simone and Lincoln challenged civil rights movement ideology about overall racial equality. Simone says:

> I'd look in the mirror and see two faces, knowing that on one hand I loved being black and being a woman and that on the other it was my color and sex which fucked me up in the first place.[70]

*"Go Limp"*

Just as Simone did in "Four Women," "Go Limp" also highlights gendered and racialized expectations of black womanhood during in the 1960s. Nina Simone adapted the lyrics to her parody folk song "Go Limp" from author, scientist, and political activist Alex Comfort's original song with the same name. Simone brings "Go Limp" from Comfort's anti-nuclear warfare stance into the context of the civil rights movement. For Simone, "Go Limp" tells the story about a mother and daughter's conversation about the daughter joining the nonviolent efforts of the civil rights movement. The daughter, a young civil rights activist, defends her choice to join these protests and marches by assuring her mother she will return home "a virgin maid." Her mother begins the song with her warnings.

*Oh daughter, dear daughter*

*Take warning from me*

*And don't you go marching*

[70] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You*, 118.

*With the N-A-A-C-P*

*For they'll rock you and roll you*

*And shove you into bed*

*And if they steal your nuclear secrets*

*You'll wish you were dead*

Simone's choice to include Comfort's original mention of "nuclear secrets" in the context of the civil rights movement gives these "nuclear secrets" a whole new meaning, one related to the sexual and racial politics underweaving civil rights efforts from groups like the NAACP. In this context, "nuclear secrets," suggest the daughter's virginity, or purity. To assuage her mother's worries, the daughter responds in the following two verses.

*Oh mother, dear mother*

*No, I'm not afraid*

*For I'll go on that march*

*And return a virgin maid.*

*With a brick in my handbag*

*And a smile on my face*

*And barbed wire in my underwear*

*To shed off disgrace*

The daughter does not deny that civil rights protests were often unsafe for women of color and in response to this she will arm herself against the potential sexual dangers.

The following verse, from the perspective of a narrator, introduces the male protagonist.

*One day they were marching*

*A young man came by*

*With a beard on his cheek*

*And a gleam in his eye*

*And before she had time*

*To remember her brick…*

*They were holding a sit-down*

*On a nearby hay rig*

In these two verses, the narrator implies that sexual activity between the daughter and the new male protagonist occurred. However, it remains unclear as to the consensual nature of this activity because of the mention of forgetting to use her defense mechanism, the brick. I interpret this lack of clarity as a way in which Simone's lyrics maintain the parodic nature of this story. She does not outright use language to imply sexual violence, instead she hints at it. This double-speak requires audiences to read into this story beyond their surface level encounters.

Simone and Lincoln's lyrics become more specific with regards to the relationship between the daughter and male protagonist as the song progresses.

*One day at the briefing*

*She'd heard a man say,*

*"Go perfectly limp,*

*And be carried away."*

*So when this young man suggested*

*It was time she was kissed,*

*She remembered her brief*

*And did not resist*

Non-violent civil rights protesters were advised to "go limp" if they were ever arrested by the police as means of solidifying their non-violent stance in the face of police aggression during protests and rallies. However, what does "go limp" mean to the young black women participating in these kinds of protests? If black women were instructed to "go limp" when faced with police aggression, what did this mean when they encountered other forms of aggression? In this case, Simone's lyrics suggest that the daughter was sexually assaulted by the male protagonist, and more specifically coerced into sexual activity by the male protagonist's alignment with supposedly non-violent civil rights ideology.

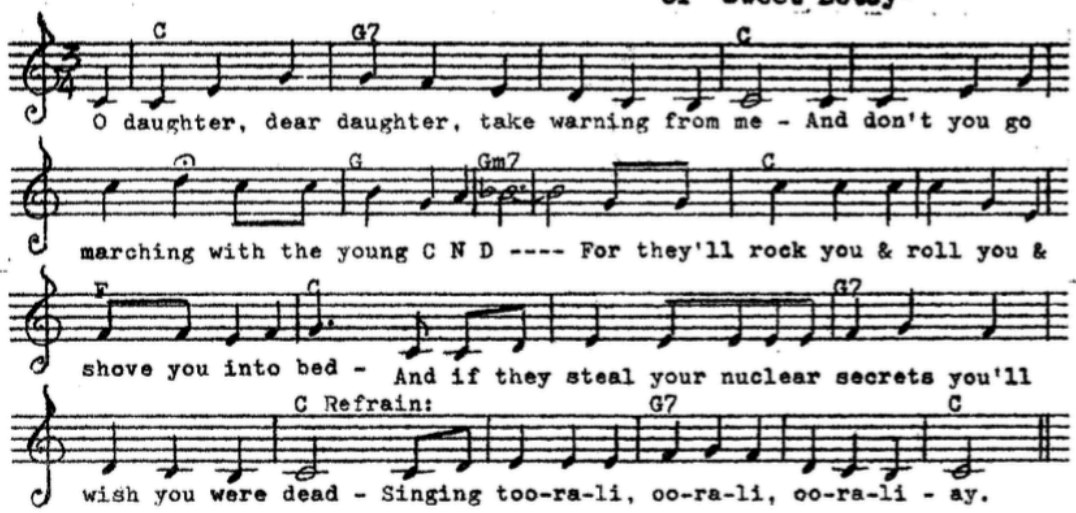
Simone's version of "Go Limp" tells a story about the sexual assault of a young black woman in the civil rights movement through multiple performative strategies that conceal this harsh reality. Simone's intertextual borrowing of folk melody and lyrics are quite significant as well. Musically, "Go Limp" is based off a common Irish folk ballad entitled "Sweet Betsy from Pike." One could classify this folk song as traditional. The recognizable nature of "Sweet Betsy from Pike's" melody, with its bouncy triple-meter feel and major key, provides a comfortable medium in which Simone can deliver her harsh critiques, though veiled in familiarity. Lyrically, Simone suggests similar meanings to the ways in which Alex Comfort's original lyrics both slight male sexual dysfunction and address complex sexual politics during the 1960s. Alex Comfort is best known for his 1972 book "The Joy of Sex." Prior to publishing this non-fiction

sex manual, Comfort taught science classes with specific emphasis on sexual education throughout the United Kingdom, and, notably, took a militant stance against nuclear warfare. Comfort's connection to sexual politics in the 1960s combined with his participation in social justice activist spaces provides intertextual context for Simone's adaptation of "Go Limp."

Comfort's "Go Limp" was published in an early issue of *Broadside,* presumably for its connection to folk protest repertoire. [Figure 2]

## G O  L I M P

words: Alex Comfort
tune: British version
of "Sweet Betsy"




O mother dear mother, I am not afraid
For I'll go on that march and I'll return a maid
With a brick in my handbag and a scowl on my face
And barbed wire in my underwear to head off
disgrace. Singing toorali, etc.

But as they were marching, a young man came by
With a beard on his chin and a gleam in his eye
And before she had time to remember her brick
They were holding a sitdown on a neighboring
hayrick. Singing toorali, etc.

Now once at the briefing, she'd heard a man say
Go perfectly limp and be carried away
So when this chap suggested it was time she was kissed
She remembered her briefing and did not resist.(Cho)

O meeting is pleasure and parting is pain
I don't need to sing all that folk stuff again
O mother, O mother, I'm stiff and I'm sore
From sleeping three nights on a hard classroom
floor. (Cho.)

Now mother, don't flap, there's no need for distress
That marcher has left me his name and address
And if we win, though a baby there be
He won't have to march like his dada and me. (Cho.)

BROADSIDE # 5, May 1962. P.O.Box 193, Cathedral Sta. New York 25,NY

[71][Figure 2]

[71] "Go Limp." *Broadside*, May 1962.

Noticeably, Simone's version of "Go Limp" was never published in *Broadside.* Perhaps it would have been to repetitive to publish similar songs? Or the publishers at *Broadside* did not see Simone's "Go Limp" as relevant to their readership? Whatever the reason, I interpret the choice to exclude Simone's "Go Limp" from publications like *Broadside* as a gendered decision, one that proves the point that gendered and racialized politics in the civil rights movement remained a truth many did not want to acknowledge.

Another layer of consciousness resides in Simone's relationship to her audiences. My observations made throughout listening her live recording of "Go Limp" on Simone's 1964 album entitled: *Nina Simone in Concert* will inform this portion of my analysis. In this recording, she welcomed audiences in with her seemingly approachable humor and invitations to even sing along. Simone mocks the ethos of parodic folk songs as she repeatedly invites the audiences to sing along to, what she refers to as, the "hootenanny time."[72] The "hootenanny time" is arguably the chorus of the song, as it occurs after every two verses.

Singin' too roo las, too roo la, too roo li ay

Singin' too roo las, too roo la, too roo li ay

It is musically simple, repetitive, and quite easy to catch onto; thus, Simone's audiences could easily follow along regardless of their musical background. Daphne Brooks poses the following questions about the audience's laughter during Simone's performance of "Mississippi Goddam" on the same live recorded album that I believe are relevant to "Go Limp":

> What do we make of this confident, full-bodied first round of audience laughter? Do we hear the sounds of a crowd delighted (with delusion) in the putative distance [between them and the civil rights movement]? If this decidedly uneasy second round of laughter,

[72] Ruth Feldstein, ""I Don't Trust You Anymore": Nina Simone, Culture, and Black Activism in the 1960s," *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (2005): 1364.

> markedly less hearty and far more tentative, an anxious reaction to the social and cultural impropriety sounded by one black female vocalist?[73]

Although there is not a single answer to any of Brook's poignant questions, one can still pay attention to Simone's audience interactions as means for further analysis. For instance, I interpret that Simone's invitation for audience participation goes even further than mocking the genre. I believe that Simone makes the audience complicit in the treatment of the daughter. In turning the ironic gaze of the sexual and racial politics of the civil rights movement onto unknowing audience members, Simone transforms the negativity of the story into action. Malik Gaines defines Simone's fourth level of consciousness as her ability to transform negativity resultant from alienation.[74] The multiple meanings and possible interpretations of "Go Limp" lends itself to Gaines' argument that Simone exhibits many layers of consciousness in the performativity and lyrics of the song. I extend Gaines' argument in my interpretations of the ways in which narratives about violence against black women interacts with each of these layers of consciousness. Instead of broadly raising concerns about the underweaving sexual and racial politics of the civil rights movement, Simone's "Go Limp" points directly to sexual violence against black women.

Like in "Four Women," Simone's articulation of black women's perspectives on the violence they have endured raises consciousness around these issues. Both intentionally and unintentionally, Simone utilized her positionality as a famous civil rights protest singer to promote solidarity amongst other black women who have experienced sexual violence. The kind of intertextual borrowing and layers of consciousness I mention throughout my analysis of "Go

[73] Daphne A. Brooks, "Nina Simone Triple Play," *Callaloo* 34, no. 1 (2011): 183.
[74] Gaines, "Nina Simone's Quadruple Consciousness," 259.

Limp" aligns with trauma theorist, James Scott's "hidden transcript." Scott states: "by definition, the hidden transcript discourse—gesture, speech, and practices—is ordinarily excluded from the public transcript of subordinates by the exercise of power." [75] He further argues that folk culture, including rumors, gossip, songs, jokes, codes, and rituals, are all medium where the hidden transcript is most commonly found. [76] I believe that with a narrative surrounding trauma, Simone's "Go Limp" creates Scott's definition of a hidden transcript, one which communicates to audiences and other listeners the multiple meanings mentioned in my analysis.

*"The Incest Song"*

Using similar folk music stylistics and consciousness raising strategies about gender-based violence as Simone did in "Four Women" and "Go Limp," Sainte-Marie's "The Incest Songs" explicitly highlights themes of gender-based violence through a narrative about child sexual abuse. Switching between the roles of the narrator, the king's daughter, and the king's son, Sainte-Marie tells the complicated story of a sexual relationship between the two siblings that resulted in a pregnancy in her 1964 song "The Incest Song."

*Word is up to the king's dear daughter*

*And word is spreading all over the land*

*That's she's been betrayed by her own dear brother*

*That he has chosen another fair hand*

[75] James C. Scott, "Domination and the Art of Resistance," in *On Violence: A Reader*, by Bruce B. Lawrence and Aisha Karim, 2007, 202.
[76] Scott, "Domination and the Art of Resistance," in *On Violence: A Reader*, 201.

*Many young man had a song of her beauty*

*And many a grand deed for her had been done*

*But within her sights she carried the child*

*Of her father's youngest, fairest son*

The title of this song alone is a radical choice, but Sainte-Marie goes even further than the title suggests and tells this complicated, and unfortunately relatable, narrative about childhood sexual abuse. Trauma theorist Diana Russell calls incest and other forms of childhood sexual abuse "the secret trauma," one that is often not spoken about publically. [77] "The Incest Song" breaks down established cultural barriers that silence survivors and victims of familial sexual abuse through not only its title, but also the ways in which Sainte-Marie's sonic narrative personifies the emotional confusion of a child who has experienced this kind of abuse.

In the second and third verses we learn the sister's feelings toward her brother and her brother's actions as Sainte-Marie moves from the narrator role into the king's daughter's perspective.

*Tell to me no lies*

*Tell to me no stories*

*But saddle my good horse and I'll go and see my own true love*

*If your words be true ones, then that will mean the end of me*

[77] Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1995), 100.

*Brother oh brother what lies be these ones*

*They say your love to another I lose*

*There's a child within me of thy very own lineage*

*And I know it's I that thou would choose*

Private and secret abuse within families is often viewed in a narrow binary between good and evil. [78] These two verses complicate this binary and defy dominant notions of the ways in which someone reacts to their own experiences with trauma. The king's daughter's complex love for her brother, her abuser, brings forth quite challenging emotional responses of a child, one who has experienced familial sexual violence and that is confused about their own sexuality. Sainte-Marie puts forth an alternative reaction to familial sexual violence, one that takes private shame and brings it to a public discourse.

The king's son responds to his sister's questions in his own verse.

*No I've not told no one but you my dear one*

*For it's a secret between us two*

*And I would come home and quit all my roaming*

*And spend my days only waiting on you*

*Too late too late for change my sister*

*My father has chosen another fair bride*

After the king's son's response, Sainte-Marie shifts back into the role of the narrator to deliver what happens next.

[78] Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 102.

*And he stabbed her easy and lovingly lay her*

*Down in her grave by the green wood side*

*And when he's come home to his own wedding feasting*

*And his father asks why he's weeping all so*

*He says such a bride as I've seen on this morning*

*Never another man shall know*

The last act of the king's son's violence against his sister s fatal. Sainte-Marie further complicates the story by humanizing the brother, using empathetic language to describe the way he placed her in her grave and how he cried after murdering her. These complicated lyrics are largely representative of king's son and daughter's confusion about their relationship. However, because of the gendered power dynamics in place within the family, the song ends with the king's son not being held accountable for his violent actions against his sister.

Musically, "The Incest Song" replicates a folk ballad, I would argue even a version of a Child Ballad, for its references to royalty. The genre of traditional folk ballads, especially those about gentry, are often intertwined with narratives about violence against women. For example, Pauline Greenhill and Diane Tye argue that through topological analysis of folklore, one can determine that the abuse of women is a common topic within the genre. [79] Greenhill and Tye associate lyrical content about violence against women with many sonic elements of folk ballads and traditional folklore such as simple accompaniment and a slow triple meter pace.[80] Lyrically and sonically blurring the lines between fictional folktales and reality, I argue that Sainte-Marie's

[79] Pauline Greenhill and Diane Tye*, Undisciplined Women: Tradition and Culture in Canada,* 2014, 90.
[80] Greenhill and Tye, *Undisciplined Women,* 90.

"The Incest Song" uses topics of incest in this folk medium to bring to light private instances of abuse. As someone who has experienced childhood sexual abuse herself, Sainte-Marie's haunting delivery of "The Incest Song" speaks her reality through this fictional story.

Although Sainte-Marie's experience with sexual violence is discussed extensively in the first chapter of this thesis, I want to turn back to her own words about her experiences with childhood sexual abuse and how these experiences informed expectations of her own sexuality.

> I've read some things where somebody accused of pedophilia will say, 'the kid liked it.' Okay. That one [justification] gets kicked out right away. Children are born with sexuality. Things feel good. Sexual abuse of an innocent child imprints a confusing unequal relationship imbalance. There things that the public doesn't know about child abuse, and it's not about how far he stuck it in. It's about power and control over girls. Pretty nasty, isn't it?[81]

Her own words inform much of my analysis of "The Incest Song." The confusion and contradictory emotions a child who has experienced sexual abuse may feel, combined with not knowing the difference between reality and fiction. Sainte-Marie, in many ways, notes her own complicated journey with sexual violence, and in doing so she provides personal context for "The Incest Song."

*"Cod'ine"*

Buffy Sainte-Marie recorded "Cod'ine" on the same album as "The Incest Song" in 1964 which, in turn, might suggest Sainte-Marie's dedication to spreading awareness about narrative of violence against women of color on this album. Sainte-Marie wrote "Cod'ine" based on her experience (mentioned in more detail in chapter one) with a doctor in Florida prescribing her

[81] Andrea Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie: The Authorized Biography* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2018), 21-22.

opiates without her consent in order to then coerce her into sex work. She describes her encounter with this doctor and the drugs he tried to addict her to as an assault. Despite being brief, Sainte-Marie calls her experience of opiate withdrawal as "hellish."[82] She channeled her experiences with both the doctor's assault and the drug withdrawal into the creation of her song, "Cod'ine."

*An' my belly is craving. I got a shakin' in my head*

*I feel like I'm dyin' an' wish I were dead*

*If I lived till tomorrow it's gonna be a long time*

*For I'll reel and I'll fall and rise on codine*

Sainte-Marie sings the entire song in first-person, further highlighting her personal connections to addiction. This connection not only stemmed from her experiences in Florida but also her knowledge about Native people's complicated historical relationship with various forms of addiction. For instance, Weichelt argues that Native people often turned to drugs or alcohol as a mechanism for coping with unresolved historical, individual, and generations traumas. [83]

In the second and third verses of "Cod'ine" Sainte-Marie mentions other addictive substances, namely whiskey.

*When I was a young man I learned not to care*

*Wild whiskey, confronted I often did swear*

*My mother and father said whiskey is a curse*

*But the fate of their baby is many times worse*

[82] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 66.
[83] Shelly A. Wiechelt and Jan Gryczynski, "Cultural and Historical Trauma among Native Americans," *Trauma: Contemporary Directions in Theory, Practice, and Research*, 6.

*You'll forget your woman, you'll forget about your man*

*Try it just once, an' you'll try it again*

*It's something you wonder and it's something you think*

*That I'm a-living my life with abandon to drink*

Still in the first-person, Sainte-Marie tells a story about alcoholism from the perspective of a young man in her third verse. I interpret this change of character as Sainte-Marie's shift in consciousness, looking deeper into issues of addiction beyond her own brief and traumatic experience. Her third verse is a more general warning about the effects of alcohol addiction. Brave Heart notes that American Indian youth have a higher death rate caused by alcoholism than any other youth group. [84] Sainte-Marie's hyperawareness of substance abuse within her community of Native peoples informed her ability to put forth truths about these often overlooked issues.

Sainte-Marie returns to her own experience in the fourth verse where she further warns her audience about the "men pushin' codeine around."

*Stay away from the cities, stay away from the towns*

*Stay away from the men pushin' codine around*

*Stay away from the stores where the remedy is found*

*I will live a few days as a slave to codine*

I interpret her warnings about men addicting people to codeine in this verse as a means of specifically communicating to other indigenous women. Not only is Sainte-Marie speaking about

[84] Shoshana Ringel and Jerrold R. Brandell, *Trauma: Contemporary Directions in Theory, Practice, and Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2012), 590.

unintentional drug addiction, but also certain abusive men in positions of power using drugs in order to force young indigenous women in sex work. Actions such as these resemble colonial tactics that characterized indigenous women as both active participants in their own sexualization and as objects that can be bought and sold.[85] Kuokkanen argues that racism plays an essential part in the sex work industry.

> Sex slaves, whether trafficked or abducted from the streets, produce profits globally for criminal groups and the sexual pleasures of other. Racism has always played a central role in this business [sex work industry]—not only because of these women's assumed 'exotic sex appeal' but also because they can be used as objects of sadism and violence with relative impunity. [86]

The abuse Sainte-Marie endured, perpetrated by the doctor in Florida, is one example of the ways in which indigenous women have been historically targeted by the sex industry as objects for men's pleasure and power. Sainte-Marie uses "Cod'ine" to tell her own story, validate other indigenous peoples' experiences with addiction, and to uncover realities of the male-perpetrated coercion of indigenous women into sexual slavery.

Throughout "Cod'ine" Sainte-Marie repeats the lyrics: "An' it's real, an' it's real, one more time" after each verse. Each repetition, Sainte-Marie's vibrato intensifies and her vocal timbre is hoarse and gravelly. This kind of timbre was often associated with 1960s drug culture, an association in which Sainte-Marie resented. In working with Vanguard Records for the first time on her first album, *It's My Way,* Sainte-Marie recalls some of instructions she received from them during the recording process.

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[85] Ringel and Brandell, *Trauma,* 590.
[86] Rauna Kuokkanen, "Globalization as Racialized, Sexualized Violence," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 10, no. 2 (2008): 221.

> Whoever was choosing the takes wanted me to sound like I was king of old and dying. I think they imagined maybe I was a junkie or they probably thought I was going to be a young casualty.[87]

Many interpreted these sonic choices as Sainte-Marie feeding into the 1960s culture of drugs use and experimentation. Sainte-Marie herself expected that because Vanguard Records would not let her chose which takes were put onto her album that they had a perception of her as an addict and wanted to profit off that kind of image. While, on the other hand, different critics and audiences thought of "Cod'ine" as "a contribution to the anti-hippie, anti-drug, reefer-madness panic-song canon."[88] According to Sainte-Marie, both interpretations were incorrect because they did not account for the actual story behind "Cod'ine." In addition to these inaccurate portrayals of Sainte-Marie's inspiration for 'Cod'ine," folk singer Donovan Philip Leitch (who recorded under Donovan) covered this song without crediting Sainte-Marie as the author and composer. In fact, Warner argues that in the present-day, it is still common misperception that Donovan is the songwriter of "Cod'ine."[89] Sainte-Marie's erasure as the author further speaks to the abusive ways in which indigenous women were treated in the music industry.

Despite Vanguard Record's constructed image of Sainte-Marie and Donovan's blatant plagiarism, she "consciously capitalized on the success of *It's My Way!* to bring attention to Indigenous people and talk about broken treaties, exploitation, unfair treatment, and genocide."[90] In the 1960s folk music scene, Sainte-Marie was written about quite frequently in folk music publications. For examples, before publishing some of her later folk protest music, an early issue of *Broadside* prepared readers for Sainte-Marie's first album and referred to her as "the most

[87] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 64.
[88] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 66.
[89] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 66.
[90] Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, 68.

exciting new talent since Bob Dylan."[91] Furthermore, in one of the following issues, *Broadside* published a letter from folk music critic, Bob Blackmar in which he wrote:

> After seeing and hearing Buffy Sainte-Marie at the Ash Grove out here and listening to her Vanguard album, I certainly feel her songs are worth the status given to Reynolds, La Farge, Paxton, Dylan, etc.[92]

Regardless of the many misrepresentations of her songs, Sainte-Marie's music remained provocative to many; thus, opening up various media and public spaces in which she could get her messages about indigenous rights across to audiences.

Public platforms such as *Broadside* serve a spaces in which Sainte-Marie could raise consciousness about both historical and present violence perpetrated against indigenous peoples in the early 1960s. However, "The Incest Song" and "Cod'ine" did not make it into any issues of *Broadside* while, some of her other controversial protest such as: "Now That the Buffalo's Gone" and "My Country Tis of Thy People You're Dying" were published. The erasure of "The Incest Song" and "Cod'ine" from media platforms such as *Broadside* speaks largely to the ways in which indigenous women's subjectivity, one that includes extensive histories of gender-based violence, is often erased from public memory.

[91] "Bits of Information about Some New Songwriters," *Broadside*, December 1962.
[92] Bob Blackmar, "A Letter from Bob Blackmar," *Broadside*, March 1964.

## Chapter 3: Nina Simone & Buffy Sainte-Marie Sing the Blues

Now that we have explored Simone and Sainte-Marie's usage of folk idioms in their music about gender-based violence against women of color, let us turn to the ways in which they use the blues to raise consciousness about the same themes. My aim in this chapter is to complicate the history of women of color's participation in the blues by situating existing stories about violence against women of color within historical colonial practices. To this end, the first part of this chapter provides a brief historical overview of the blues genre, and more specifically how blues stylistics are often associated with social imagery of an idealized African past of musical lamenting as well as traditional practices of North American indigenous music making. Addressing sonic manifestations of the blues in its earliest documented forms provides a framework in which to discuss the ways the blues is often connected to racialized violence. I also examine the colonial practices that perpetrate and perpetuate racialized violence against people of color, especially women of color, and address the ways in which blueswomen of the early 1920s articulated their experiences of violence. My argument is that the blues served as a musical vehicle for women of color to share common stories of violence as a sort of consciousness-raising strategy which, in turn, became a strategy for social protest.

Using the historical framework, the second section of this chapter analyzes the ways in which Nina Simone and Buffy Sainte-Marie used the blues in popular culture in the 1960s and 1970s as a means for mobilization, social justice, and coping with experiences of violence. I argue that Simone and Sainte-Marie used the blues as a gendered protest medium within their respective social justice movements in similar ways to the blues women before them. In forming these arguments, I analyze two blues songs from Simone and Sainte-Marie's 1960s and 1970s repertoire. In 1967 Simone released her first blues album entitled "Nina Simone Sings the Blues"

which consisted of both "Blues for Mama" and "Backlash Blues." While, Sainte-Marie released her first ever blues song, "Rolling Log Blues" in 1966 and "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues" in 1974. Through a lyric content and musical analysis of these four songs, I argue that Simone and Sainte-Marie used the blues as a medium in which to speak to women of color's historical experiences of gender-based violence. Following my musical analysis, I will briefly investigate some of the media's receptions of Simone and Sainte-Marie's blues music using music publications from the 1960s and 1970s.

Part I: *The Blues and Transnationalism*

Historically, blues songs often musically articulated expressions of love, sorrow, joy, as well as pain and despair.[93] In many cases the messages conveyed in the blues spoke to both the individual and collective experiences of these various feelings and emotions.[94] With specific attention to the blues lament, we can see some of the cross-cultural exchanges among black and North American indigenous peoples dating back to the North American slave trade. Kernodle states that: "The traditions of lamenting found in West and Sub-Saharan Africa provides the earliest cultural basis for the public, communal music making and narrative text structure that defines the early rural blues traditions."[95]

For a moment, I would like to bring us back to the "Travel Narratives" section in chapter one of this thesis. In this section I use seventeenth and eighteenth-century white male colonizer's and slave owner's travel journals, as laid out in Thompson's and Deer's articles, in order to argue how the colonial gaze conflated and essentialized the experiences of all women of color. The

[93] Tammy Kernodle, "Having Her Say: The Blues as the Black Woman's Lament," in *Women's Voices Across Musical Worlds* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 225.
[94] Tammy Kernodle, "Having Her Say," 225.
[95] Tammy Kernodle, "Having Her Say," 214.

misrepresentation of black, and later North American indigenous women's participation in music and dance in this kind of historical documentation perpetuates both an inaccurate and hegemonic narrative for all women of color during this time. This argument is particularly relevant for my investigation of the ways in which shared experiences of diaspora among black and indigenous women contributed to their historic participation in the blues idiom.

Kernodle examines the ways in which cross-cultural exchanges in the New World aided the formation of the rural blues sound. She points out that "the interaction between West African slaves, European landowners, and slave masters and the indigenous peoples of these lands and islands" provided a multi-cultural basis for the blues lament.[96] Kernodle's assertions about the blues lament's connection to West African and Caribbean slave trades contextualized the emergence of the blues tradition within a transnational lens, one that provides a framework in which to discuss how diaspora informed the lyrical and music contents of women of color singing the blues.

In a similar vein, Cobb presents a narrative about North American indigeneity through a transnational framework where he outlines the complexities of native diasporas. Cobb argues that, in a physical sense, Native peoples in North America either lived *in* diaspora or were made strange *by* diaspora. Native American either "resided in communities far removed from the ancestral homelands of their people" [97] and/or "were exiled without ever leaving." [98] The common lived experience of diaspora, although unique and nuanced, creates a communal

[96] Tammy Kernodle, "Having Her Say," 214.
[97] Gregory D. Smithers and Brooke N. Newman, *Native Diasporas: Indigenous Identities and Settler Colonialism in the Americas* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 445.
[98] Smithers and Newman, *Native Diasporas,* 445.

narrative in which women of color's bodies share a history of colonial oppression. Jayna Brown states:

> …movements and migrations, forced and/or voluntary structure African American cultural expression and historical narrative. The specific histories of their oppression, their resistance, their music, words, and songs have traveled, with or without them, around the world and have been a part in shaping what diaspora has meant to black peoples.[99]

In other words, Brown argues that African American cultural expression is informed by the ways in which black bodies have both traveled and resisted historical oppression. In arguing that North American indigenous peoples experience diaspora in a different yet similar sense, I want to expand Brown's argument to include North American indigeneity into the overall understanding of histories of colonial oppression and cultural expressions of resistance to that oppression. Making these broad connections between African and indigenous diasporas as well as understanding the ways in which colonizers homologized all women of color's experiences creates a framework in which to understand the complex and contradictory positionality of women of color within the blues genre.

Stylistically, Kernodle credits much of the cross-cultural exchanges between colonizers, indigenous peoples, and African peoples to the emergence of certain blues stylistics. For example, the use of moans, groans, cries for mercy, and vocal inhalations heard in early recordings of Mississippi Delta region blues is connected to similar attributes heard in African laments.[100] Furthermore, in post-Emancipation era blues:

> The mournful sound of the early twelve-bar blues was solidified with its emphasis on subdominant harmonies. "Blues notes" in melody also enhanced this doleful quality.

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[99] Jayna Brown, *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 8.
[100] Kernodle, "Having Her Say," 215.

> These altered chromatic pitches confirmed the deep-rooted connection between the blues and the African musical aesthetic.[101]

Sonically, early blues stylistics are informed by the African musical aesthetic Kernodle mentions. Kernodle further argues that African-derived music in the North American colonies could be broken up into two distinct categories: communal music-making and individual performance. [102] Although there was a lot of overlap between these categories, the distinction between communal and individual performance is quite notable and provides a tool for analysis found later in this chapter.

With regard to the North American indigenous perspective, Jane Hafen notes that there are many similarities between black and indigenous rural blues. For example, at the very emergence of the blues idiom 'resistance' was a common theme. "[Indigenous blues] lyrics portray resistance to colonization, just as African American blues resists domination but the mainstream culture."[103] Beyond lyrics, Hafen suggests that traditional indigenous elements such as "vocables," "rhythm rattles," "bells," and "cedar flute" are present in much of the blues created by indigenous peoples.[104] Despite the lack of scholarship regarding early North American indigenous peoples' contributions to the blues genre, Hafen concludes that: "this music resides not only within but far beyond the borders of black culture."[105]

In terms of understanding how the blues became its own genre, David Brackett notes that prior to the establishment of the blues as a commercial genre with the recording of country blues

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[101] Kernodle, "Having Her Say," 219.
[102] Kernodle, "Having Her Say," 215.
[103] Jane Hafen and Jeff Berglund, "Rock and Roll, Redskins, and Blues in Sherman Alexie's Work," in *Sherman Alexie: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Salt Lake City: Univ. of Utah Press, 2010), 68.
[104] Hafen and Berglund, "Rock and Roll, Redskins, and Blues in Sherman Alexie's Work," 68.
[105] Hafen and Berglund, "Rock and Roll, Redskins, and Blues in Sherman Alexie's Work," 63.

artists in the 1920s, the term "blues" was "circulated as a description for a mood."[106] For example, in his analysis of Mamie Smith's 1920 song "Crazy Blues" Brackett argues that the musical conventions Smith used throughout the song "shifted the playing field in terms of how the blues would be understood."[107] Musically, Smith's use of raspy timbres and the ways in which she reshaped pentatonically based melodies showed how Smith's habits were informed by vernacular musical practices within African American communities. These musical practices laid the sonic framework for other recordings of blues women by establishing the musical expectations for commercial blues women.

Along with the establishment of commercial blues as a genre, blueswomen in the 1920s and 1930s were also able to "articulate the black woman's perspective of life in America and provided a voice for a segment of the population that through racial and sexual politics had been suppressed."[108] In other words, blues served as medium in which black women could express their perspective, a perspective that was often silenced through various sexual and racial politics.[109] Blues women such as Gertrude "Ma" Rainey and Bessie Smith articulated a consciousness into the lived experience of violence and oppression among black women. Angela Davis states:

> Violence against women was always an appropriate topic of women's blues. The contemporary urge to break the silence surrounding misogynist violence and the organized political movement challenging violence against women has an aesthetic precursor in the world of the classic blues singer.[110]

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[106] David Brackett, *Categorizing Sound: Genre and Twentieth-Century Popular Music* (University of California Press, 2016), 76.
[107] Brackett, *Categorizing Sound,* 88.
[108] Kernodle, "Having Her Say," 213.
[109]Kernodle, "Having Her Say," 213.
[110] Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999), 25.

Like Kernodle, Davis argues that the blues genre emerged as a direct descendant of the slave work song. The sonic story-telling heard in slave work songs relied on "indirection and irony to highlight the inhumanity of slave owners so that their targets were sure to misunderstand the intended meaning."[111] Therefore, blues women not only drew upon West African and Caribbean music and dance, but also the sonic strategies slaves used for survival. With all this in mind, Davis further points out that blues women must be understood in conjunction with their role in creating an emotional community based in affirmation of women of color's absolute and irreducible humanity.[112]

More specifically, Bessie Smith recorded many songs about incarceration, homelessness, violence, and impoverishment.[113] In doing so, Smith also "reflected new historical experiences of the urban immigrant communities."[114] Her song "Washwoman" is just one of many examples of Smith's gendered commentary on black women's oppression. Moreover, "Ma" Rainey's blues often built upon African-American social consciousness in that they were inextricably linked to many realities for black southerners. With regard to Rainey's social commentary on black women's subjectivity, her song "Huslin' Blues" is a great example. "Hustlin' Blues" tells the story of a black woman deciding to leave the streets and turn her pimp in to the police. Although not explicitly critiquing the harsh conditions black women sex workers faced, Rainey's lyrics (which she co-wrote with Thomas Dorsey) articulate the possibility for bodily agency and resistance against male perpetrated violence and sexual exploitation.[115] Overall, Smith and

[111] Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism,* 25.
[112] Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism,* 26.
[113] Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism,* 92.
[114] Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism,* 92.
[115] Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism,* 108.

Rainey's blues articulate black women's collective consciousness, which is ultimately linked to historical and individual experiences of trauma and violence.

The blues has historically served as a medium in which to resist marginalization. In the cases of Rainey, Smith, and other early blues women, the blues provided a public platform in which these women could speak about private matters, such as gender-based violence. Early blues women's ability to transgress the binary between public and private discourse laid the musical foundation for other women of color to do the same.

> Gertrude "Ma" Rainey's and Bessie Smith's songs maybe interpreted precisely as historical preparation for political protest. They are certainly far more than complaint, for they begin to articulate a consciousness that takes into account social conditions of class exploitation, racism, and male dominance as seen the through the lenses of the complex emotional responses of black female subjects. While there may not be a direct line to social activism, activist stances are inconceivable without the consciousness such songs suggest.[116]

The blues often brought private stories of gender-based violence into the public realm in both subtle and explicit ways. Blues women spoke to different facets of their audiences about these difficult topics through overt protest, consciousness-raising, and/or story-telling. Davis notes that the blues "absorbed techniques from the music of slavery, in which protest was secretly expressed and understood only by those who had the key to the code."[117] And, Davis argues throughout her book that blues women often times held that key.

Understanding colonial histories of violence against women of color as it relates to early blues women is essential in the interrogation of the ways in which women of color utilized music, and more specifically the blues, to speak about their own individual and collective trauma narratives. Nina Simone and Buffy Sainte-Marie's experiences with gender-based violence

[116] Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism,*119.
[117] Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism,*111.

perpetrated by men speaks to the continued prevalence of gender-based violence within black and Native communities in North America. Like the blues women before them, Simone and Sainte-Marie experienced sexual and domestic violence and used the blues to tell these stories.

Yet, despite the many similarities between Simone, Sainte-Marie, and blues women, these two musicians had a complicated relationship with the blues. For example, in a 1979 interview with Karl Dallas of *Melody Maker,* Simone said: "I don't like the blues. And though I am known as a blues singer and a jazz singer in the States, I'm not really."[118] This quotation landed in Dallas' controversial article entitled: "Nina Simone: Lady Trashes the Blues" where Dallas is almost outraged that a prominent popular black musicians did not like the blues. This is one of many examples of the ways in which Simone did not subscribe to genre boundaries despite her commercial success within specific genres. Likewise, with regards for Sainte-Marie, she does not explicitly mention her feelings about the blues. Rather, she explains in various interviews how she, like Simone, does not like to be confined to one specific genre. For example, in a 1967 interview with an uncredited writer of KRLA Beat, Sainte-Marie says:

> I don't think that it's possible to fit me into any of the categories of music. I realize that it's a problem for people writing about music to be able to say I'm a blues singer and think that I shouldn't sing anything else.[119]

Although not identifying as solely a blues singer, Simone and Sainte-Marie still incorporated the blues idiom into their repertoire of popular protest music in a significant way.

[118] Karl Dallas, "Nina Simone: Lady Trashes the Blues," September 29, 1979.
[119] Uncredited, "It's More Dangerous to Be an American Indian Under 18 than to Be in Vietnam," *KRLA Beat*, October 7, 1967.

Part II: *Musical and Lyrical Analysis*

In 1967 Nina Simone released her first blues album entitled "Nina Simone Sings the Blues" and on this album were "Blues for Mama" and "Backlash Blues." While, one year earlier in 1966, Buffy Sainte-Marie released "Rolling Log Blues," her first ever recorded blues song. And, in 1974 she then released "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues." Taking these four blues-oriented songs as a point of departure, Part II analyzes the ways in which Simone and Sainte-Marie used the blues as a gendered protest medium. Through musical and lyrical analyses, I argue that Simone and Sainte-Marie's racialized and gendered participation in the blues idiom was informed by the long history of blues women before them. Additionally, I argue that Simone and Sainte-Marie's blues told stories about gender-based violence against women as a means for social justice, mobilization, consciousness-raising, and even individual coping.

*"Blues for Mama"*

Nina Simone's 1967 album, "Nina Simone Sings the Blues" was her first commercial venture into the blues genre. Simone teamed up with singer songwriter and fellow activist Abbey Lincoln again to compose the last song on this album, "Blues for Mama." In my analysis of "Blues for Mama" I aim to highlight the ways in which Simone both transgresses discourse surrounding the public and private through her lyrics while, at the same time, musically paying tribute to the blues women before her. Simone and Lincoln's lyrics in this song raise consciousness about the prevalence of domestic violence perpetrated against black women during this time.

Before addressing the musical and lyrical components of "Blues for Mama," I would like to briefly discuss Simone and Lincoln's collaborations. Although not much has been written about Simone and Lincoln's collaborations, we do know that they collaborated in many different

ways. For example, they co-wrote the lyrics to "Four Women," as mentioned in chapter two. By the time they wrote the lyrics to "Blues for Mama," Simone and Lincoln shared similar views about the civil rights movement in the 1960s, and more specifically black women's participation in that movement. For example, based on many autobiographical accounts, both Simone and Lincoln distanced themselves from the "feminist" label associated with the 1960s Women's Liberation Movement.[120] However, regardless of their views on second-wave feminism and the women's liberation movement, scholars like Farrah Griffin and Eric Porter utilize black feminist thought to guide academic discussions about Simone and Lincoln's protest music. Griffin situates Simone and Lincoln within an "Africana womanist" perspective while Porter relies on Patricia Hill Collin's research in black feminist theory in order to understand Simone and Lincoln's specific black woman's musical consciousness. Briefly giving attention to Simone and Lincoln's collaborations as well as the ways in which scholars have researched the two musicians and activists aids in my larger analysis of "Blues for Mama."

Musically, "Blues for Mama" begins with a two-bar instrumental introduction. The song is in a slow 4/4 meter, in the key of B major, and contains five verses in total. Harmonically, each verse follows a modified twelve-bar blues pattern introduced in the first verse of the song. With regard to instrumentation and arrangement, "Blues for Mama" corresponds to the electronic blues scene. Simone sings and plays the piano while accompanied by drums, electric guitar, electric bass, and harmonica. The electronic instrumentation combined with the distinct blues walking bass reinforces the repetitive effect of the blues groove often seen in urban blues scenes. Charles Kiel notes that the urban blues scene, originating in the Southern seaboard (Chicago, Kansas City, and Memphis), consisted of a synthesis of rural vocal practices and electronic

[120] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You*, 117.

rhythm sections.[121] The popularity of the urban blues scene culminated in some of the largest blues record companies that later moved to Chicago, a city emerging onto the civil rights movement scene in the early 1960s.

Although sonically following much of the Chicago electronic blues idiom, "Blues for Mama" also harnessed some rural blues singers' strategies in vocal delivery and lyrics. As stated earlier, Kernodle argues that rural blues women used moans, groans, cries for mercy, and vocal inhalations to further stylize the highly personal stories they told in their music.[122] For Simone, her vocals in "Blues for Mama" resemble both the sonic expressions and stories about violence against black women sung by the blues women before her. Simone's relation to the blues women before her informs her sonic strategy to raise a collective consciousness for black women who have experiences gendered and racialized violence.

Lyrically, Simone and Lincoln speak directly to the female subject of the song, presumably a close friend of theirs. The lyrics recount the rumors and gossip about a man leaving and abusing this woman.

*Hey Lordy Mama*

*I heard you wasn't feeling good*

*They're spreadin' dirty rumors*

*All around the neighborhood*

*They say you're mean and evil*

*And don't know what to do*

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[121] Eric Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?: African American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2007), 182.
[122] Kernodle, "Having Her Say," 216.

*That's the reason that he's gone*

*And left you black and blues*

The first verse serves to introduce the audience to the main female subject of the story and also establish that the singer, Simone, is speaking directly to her. The relationship between Simone and this woman is presumably a close friendship based on the fact that the words Simone sings are colloquial and informal. In a way, Simone is warning her friend about the harsh rumors circulating throughout the neighborhood about the reasons why her romantic male partner left her. The people spreading the "dirty rumors" about Simone's friend not only know about the abuse she has endured at the hands of her male partner, but these people are also blaming her as the reason her partner hit her and then left. Immediately in the first verse Simone and Lincoln's music and lyrics bring a private matter of domestic violence into the public sphere.

The second verse reveals to the audiences that this woman's partner "got another woman now, hangin' on his arm." Here, Simone tells her friend the second layer to this narrative, that this "old fool" is cheating with another woman. This verse adds the identity of a cheater to this man's already established identity as an abuser of women.

Notably, the third verse is a more direct and radical commentary on the complicated gendered and racialized politics associated with domestic violence situations among intimate partners.

*They say you love to fuss and fight*

*And bring a good man down*

*And don't know how to treat him*

*When he takes you on the town*

*They say you ain't behind him*

*And just don't understand*

*And think that you're a woman*

*But actin' like a man*

The lyrics suggest that the rumors about this woman's story further places the blame of abuse she endured on her. These victim-blaming words claim this woman does not know her role as a woman. First, "they" accuse her of not understanding how to treat a man after he takes her out on a date. The stereotypical assumption of male entitlement on dates with women comes along with the expectation of sexual acts in return for the date. In this verse, the female subject of the song is being accused of not fulfilling these expectations. Furthermore, the lyrics "and think that you're a woman//but actin' like a man" point to the ways in which this woman transgresses the gendered expectations of her inferior role in the relationship and even acts superior, like a man is expected to act. "They" believe that these transgressions are the reason why her partner ultimately left and abused her.

The lyrics in the fourth verse advise this woman to "get your nerves together" and "set the record straight" about the gossip. Simone suggests to her friend that none of this is her fault "Let the whole round world know//it wasn't you." This moment in the song is significant because Simone not only acknowledges the damage that both these rumors and the abuse caused for her friend, but also Simone validates the fact that her friend still loves this man despite all of this. The complicated and often contradictory emotions following incidents of abuse and violence exist for many folks who have experienced interpersonal violence. Simone's validation of these complex and contradictory emotions speaks to both her stance of solidarity as well as a

specific collective consciousness among other women of color who have experiences gender-based violence like this.

*The fifth and final verse is as follows:*

*When you love a man enough*

*You're bound to disagree*

*'Cause ain't nobody perfect*

*'Cause ain't nobody free*

The lyrics of this verse point out that no ones in this song is perfect nor are they free. In saying this, Simone speaks to the multiple layers of black subjectivity in this song. On the surface, Simone states that two people in loving intimate relationships will always disagree because not only are both people in the relationship not perfect, but in this case racially they are still not free of racialized oppression. A deeper reading of this verse might suggest that Simone is speaking directly to all women of color's freedom. First, their lack of freedom within the black and white color lines in 1960s America. And, second, at the lack of freedom women have in relationships with men that abuse them. In this deeper analysis, Simone connects racialized abuses within U.S institutions with that of male-perpetrated intimate partner violence against women of color.

Each of the five verse end in the same refrain; some sort of variation of "hey yeah//tell me what you gonna do now?" Simone asks her friend this question repeatedly thus giving her agency in this situation. I interpret the refrain as yet another instance of Simone's stance of solidarity with the female-subject of this song. In each verse Simone reports to her friend about the rumors she is hearing about her, and then asks her what she wants to do about it thus, giving her agency. As Kernodle observes, the blues style provided a platform for women of color to

capture collective feelings of the black community, and in this case "Blues for Mama" did just that in the song's content about domestic violence.

Simone and Lincoln bring hushed rumors behind closed doors directly to the woman being gossiped about. I interpret Simone and Lincoln's lyrics as a moment where they speak directly to their friend, a victim and/or survivor of gender-based violence, and give her agency over her own story by addressing the public rumors about private matters. Kernodle suggests that the blues enabled women of color to "make the transition from private to public music making, and in doing so redefined black womanhood."[123] Speaking about domestic violence publically was taboo for women of color, especially in the 1960s. Crenshaw states that during the Women's Liberations Movement in the 1960s, "strategies for increasing awareness of domestic violence within the white community tend[ed] to begin by citing the commonly shared assumption that battering was a minority problem."[124] Crenshaw argues for an intersectional approach that takes into account race, gender, and other identities. Simone and Lincoln's lyrics align with both Kernodle's idea of defining women of color's experiences with gender-based violence from the perspective of women of color and at the same time validate Crenshaw's claims about intersectionality in the study of violence against women. My analysis aims to center women of color's experiences of gender-based violence rather than to fixate on the villainization of those who perpetrate this kind of violence.

In the media, little was written about Simone's formal venture into the commercialized blues world with this 1967 album. It was almost expected of a black popular singer during this

[123] Kernodle, "Having Her Say," 229.
[124] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1262.

time to be connected to the blues in some inherent fashion. Music critic Alan Walsh of the magazine *Melody Maker* wrote about Simone and the blues saying:

> Nina Simone provokes mixed reactions from the music critics of the world. Some hail her as a giant of the blues, while others, though grudgingly admitting she can play piano, refuse to acknowledge any vocal talent whatsoever.[125]

Walsh creates a binary in which music listeners and critics either like her blues vocals or hate them. The mixed reactions among critics that Walsh is talking about could be attributed to the fact that Simone herself pushes against any one particular genre of music. Or, that critics during this time only thought of Simone's music in terms of black popular music stereotypes exclusively. Regardless of Walsh's intentions of creating this binary, I believe reviews like this prove that not only did Simone's blues transgress established musical boundaries within commercialized women's blues, but also confused many critics along the way.

In an interview with Karl Dallas of the same magazine nearly a decade later in 1979 is where Simone tells her audiences that she hates the blues.[126] When asked about some of the themes in her recorded blues music Simone says:

> I had gone through being hurt, being robbed, being found on a hotel room floor by the maid, left for dead, then taken to an emergency ward and harassed about where I was staying. I've had traumas, traumas, traumas. I've changed. But now I am well.[127]

I interpret Simone sharing some of her traumas with Dallas and readers as a contradictory way of both connecting to themes about violence often expected of blues songs but also distancing herself from the negativity about the impact of these themes. In other words, I think Simone acknowledges her similar lived experiences of violence to the blues women before her. However,

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[125] Alan Walsh, "Nina Hit With *Hair*," *Melody Maker*, November 23, 1968.
[126] Dallas, "Nina Simone: Lady Trashes the Blues."
[127] Dallas, "Nina Simone: Lady Trashes the Blues."

at the same time, I think in saying that she has "changed" and is "well" distances her from these kinds of trauma narratives. Simone says she does not like the blues and that she rejected being categorized within the blues and jazz genres exclusively. In doing so, despite sharing a similar history of violence and trauma as blues women before her, Simone resists racialized assumptions that she must only be referred to in terms of popular black musical idioms.

*"Backlash Blues"*

It is quite significant that Simone's first blues album contained two songs, "Blues for Mama" and "Backlash Blues," that highlight gender-based violence narratives because it suggests Simone's commitment to utilizing the blues as a sonic medium in which to raise awareness about these difficult issues. "Backlash Blues" has a somewhat complicated history. Many believe that Langston Hughes wrote the lyrics for Simone in 1966 as liner notes for her 1968 LP *Nuff Said!* Others believe Hughes wrote the lyrics for Simone's 1967 album *Nina Simone Sings the Blues.* Regardless of Hughes' purposes for writing the lyrics, what we do know is that Nina Simone recorded "Backlash Blues" on January 5, 1967 for her first blues album mentioned above. "Backlash Blues" also makes another appearance on *Nuff Said!* which was released on April 7, 1968, three days after Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. Because of the timing of the second public release of "Backlash Blues" this song gained more attention and sparked more outrage among audiences. Hughes' 1966 poem of the same time title is featured in the first two verses of this song while Simone wrote the third and final verse herself.

Before examining the meanings behind the title of this song and poem, I would like to first note the importance of Simone and Hughes' friendship. Nina Simone and Langston Hughes first met at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1960s. Their friendship was further solidified after

Hughes invited her to a cookout at his home that same year. Since then, Simone and Hughes began spending more and more time together, and when they were apart they would write letters to each other.[128] Throughout her autobiography Simone speaks fondly of her friendship with Hughes.

> I was guided by Langston, who sometimes gave me books he thought I should read, but more often simply sat me down and told me what I should know. I'd go over to his place in Harlem and over dinner—Southern style—we'd talk, recite songs and poems and drink wine until the sun came up.[129]

Simone credits much of her civil rights movement education of her friendship with Hughes as well as his writings. Hughes helped Simone understand how to use her public platform to callout racialized stereotyping and other forms of racialized oppressions.

> Calling me a jazz singer was a way of ignoring my musical background because I didn't fit into white ideas of what a black performer should be. It was a racist thing; "If she's black, she must be a jazz singer." It diminished me, exactly like Langston Hughes was diminished when people called him a 'great black poet,' Langston was a great poet period, and it was up to him and him alone to say what part the color of his skin had to do with that.[130]

She related the Hughes' poems, and this in turn inspired their collaboration in the creation of the song "Backlash Blues."

> With regard to the title, African American studies scholar W.S Tkweme argues that:
>
> The title "Backlash Blues" evokes what American mass media in the mid-1960s was calling the "white backlash," the widespread and growing disapproval of the activities if not goals of the civil rights movement among white U.S citizens. The text engages the supposedly new anti-civil rights clamor when it states that blacks seeking employment were met with "white backlash."[131]

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[128] W.S Tkweme, "Blues in Stereo: The Text of Langston Hughes in Jazz Music," *African American Review* 42, no. 3 (2008) 507.
[129] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 84.
[130] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 84.
[131] Tkweme, "Blues in Stereo," 509.

In conjunction with Tkweme's observations about the title of the song, historian Kenneth D. Durr's book entitled *Behind the Backlash* highlights particular instances of "white backlash" in Baltimore during the 1960s.[132] For example, the 1960s civil rights lunch counter protests lead by Morgan State College students was met with much white resistance.[133] The kind of "white backlash" Durr describes manifested in many ways including racist attacks against African Americans, a shift in American religious life, as well as a "distaste for big government."[134] For Simone, she defined "white backlash" in an interview later released in 2008 on an album entitled *Nina Simone: Protest Anthology.*

> The word backlash is like, every time we try to get our rights, and we do something that displeases them [white people] they take it out on us in different ways. For instance, they might take away our job tomorrow to get back at us. Or they may, um, induct a lot of guys in the army. You see, since it's a white power structure, they control our economic, everything we do, they control it. So if we try to do anything to help ourselves they slap us. It's like a backhand hit when your father hits you with the back of his hand and he hits your face, it's a backlash. They hit you back in various ways.[135]

This civil rights context informed Simone and Hughes' collaboration and further inspired the creations of "Backlash Blues." Together, they expanded ideas of the violence associated with "white backlash" to include acts of violence both physical and non-physical.

Musically, "Backlash Blues" contains three verses in AAB form with an electric guitar solo in between the second and third verses. The first two verses contain two six-bar phrases within the harmonic twelve-bar blues structure. While the third verse consists of two four-bar phrases ending with a short outro. The song is in 4/4 time and in the key of B-flat major.

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[132] Kenneth D. Durr, *Behind the Backlash: White Working-Class Politics in Baltimore, 1940-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 114.
[133] Durr, *Behind the Backlash,* 114.
[134] Durr, *Behind the Backlash,* 117.
[135] *Nina Simone, Nina Simone: Protest Anthology, Andy Stroud Inc., 2008, CD.*

Simone's vocals are accompanied by guitarists Eric Gale and Rudy Stevenson, drummer Bernard Purdie, plus organ, harmonica, bass, tenor sax, and of course Simone on the piano.[136] This particular instrumentation evokes a more traditional blues band context while at the same time codes their sound within the context of the Chicago electronic blues scene.

Lyrically, the first verse personifies "white backlash" as "Mr. Backlash." The first phrase calls out the institutionalized racist expectations in the socio-economic landscape of the United States, while at the same time bringing to focus African American male participation in the Vietnam War.

*Mr. Backlash, Mr. Backlash*

*Just who do you think I am*

*You raise my taxes, freeze my wages*

*And send my son to Vietnam*

*You give me second class houses*

*And second class schools*

*Do you think that all colored folks*

*Are just second class fools*

*Mr. Backlash, I'm gonna leave you*

*With the backlash blues*

The text points out the unequal nationalistic expectations for African American men drafted into the war. I believe this initial phrase points out the paradox in national systems that economically oppress African American citizens and at the same time are asking African American men to risk

[136] Tkweme, "Blues in Stereo," 509.

their lives and serve in the army to defend a country that does not support them. The second phrase notes that beyond salary restraints, black American experiences other forms of economic oppression.

The second verse is as follows:

*When I try to find a job*

*To earn a little cash*

*All you got to offer*

*Is your mean old white backlash*

*But the world is big*

*Big and bright and round*

*And it's full of folks like me*

*Who are black, yellow, beige, and brown*

*Mr. Backlash, I'm gonna leave you*

*With the backlash blues*

I read the second verse as a means of creating solidarity among the common lived experiences of oppression. Not only is this verse recounting similar stories of economic oppression from "white backlash" common and relatable, but this verse also presents a simple narrative as a means of consciousness-raising. In addition to the aspect of consciousness-raising, the final phrase of this verse praises the racial diversity in America and in one way could empower the mobilization of people of color to resist communal experiences of "white backlash."

In the third verse, Twkeme argues that Simone "invokes Hughes as a recently departed ancestor whose charge to her from beyond the grave was to continue to challenge white

supremacy politically, intellectually, and culturally."[137] To further this argument, I also believe Simone's third verse speaks from the often underrepresented perspective of black women's positionality.

*Mr. Backlash, Mr. Backlash*

*Just what do you think I got to lose*

*I'm gonna leave you*

*With the backlash blues*

*You're the one will have the blues*

*Not me, just wait and see*

Simone takes a militant approach in the many ways she threatens her own backlash in response to *their* backlash. Her threats and strong words in this verse align with her pro-violence position within the civil rights movement as she publically criticized non-violent protest practices quite often.[138] In addition to her activist ideologies on violence, I would argue that Simone's verse has multiple layers for black women. On the surface, Mr. Backlash could be symbolic of a male figure, or more specifically a romantic partner, that resents black women's freedoms. This sort of gendered interpretation of backlash suggests this sort of individually experienced violence is a larger product of culturally constructed male backlash against women of color.

Like "Blues for Mama," "Backlash Blues" did not get a lot of music critic's attention. I believe because both songs were on the same album of blues music, they were subject to the same racialized essentialism mentioned in the prior section. However, in one 1967 review, music critic Max Jones of *Melody Maker,* takes on Simone album, "Nina Simone Sings the Blues."

[137] Tkweme, "Blues in Stereo," 509.
[138] Simone and Cleary, *I Put a Spell on You,* 88.

> Here "Nina Simone Sings the Blues" (RCA Victor RD7S33) bears the stamp of her individual outlook on its programme and performance. These are no ordinary done-to-death blues but songs such as 'House of the Rising Sun,' the Gershwins' 'My Man's Gone,' Bill Broonzy's 'In the Dark' and the protest song, 'Backlash Blues,' by poet Langston Hughes and Nina Simone.[139]

Although initially lauding Simone's songs, Jones ultimately ends the album review with: "It comes down to perhaps: do you find the vocal style affected or convincing? In this blues-folk-primitive context, I'm sorry to say it fails to reach me."[140] Jones' review provides evidence for my argument that because Simone's blues album did not exclusively subscribe to past blues women. Critics often discredited her contributions to the genre; citing that Simone's blues vocal were not "convincing" enough and classifying her blues as "blues-folk-primitive." This is an example of the ways in which critics discredited Simone's music and, in turn, diminish her story about violence against African Americans, and more specifically African American women.

*"Rolling Log Blues"*

Sainte-Marie's blues songs invoke similar strategies to Simone's blues songs in that they both contain themes about gender-based violence against women of color. However, deeper analysis of Sainte-Marie's blues songs provides a specific perspective to indigenous women. In 1966 Sainte-Marie released her third album called "Little Wheel Spin and Spin" which contained her first blues song, "Rolling Log Blues." Sainte-Marie wrote the lyrics to the verses herself while the chorus was adapted and inspired by 1920s blues woman Lottie Kimbrough's 1928 song with the same title. Kimbrough's country blues legacy likens her to other blues women

[139] Max Jones, "Nina Simone: Nina Simone Sings the Blues," *Melody Maker*, September 23, 1967.
[140] Jones, "Nina Simone: Nina Simone Sings the Blues."

mentioned earlier in this chapter. Kimbrough's popularity with "Rolling Log Blues" can be seen in the many subsequent recordings and arrangements of the song performed by different blues artists. Like Kimbrough's original version of the song, Sainte-Marie used familiar musical strategies commonly heard in blues and country blues music. Because of this, Sainte-Marie evoked similar consciousness-raising strategies among women of color using this sonic medium in which these stories of violence and oppression had a platform to be told publically.

Sainte-Marie's version of "Rolling Log Blues" consists of three iterations the chorus and two verses all which harmonically follow typical blues chord progressions. The first two choruses consist of two eight-bar phrases in an overall sixteen-bar harmonic structure, while the last repetition of the chorus has a shorter first phrase consisting of a fifteen-bar harmonic pattern. Likewise, the two verses of the song contain variations of the initial sixteen-bar pattern. Additionally, the song starts with a twelve-bar instrumental introduction, a twelve-bar guitar solo between the third and fourth verses, and a twelve-bar instrumental outro. All of these harmonic and structural choices align "Rolling Log Blues" within the existing expectations for blues songs, and more specifically the commercial expectations for women of color performing the blues.

Lyrically, "Rolling Log Blues" starts with the first iteration of the chorus. The chorus sets the scene for the narrative Sainte-Marie tells throughout the song about a woman hitchhiking.

*We are drifting and rolling along the road*

*Tryin' to bear my heavy load*

*Like a log that's been passed on the side*

*I'm so heavy and so tired*

On the surface, the first chorus serves to introduce the singer, Sainte-Marie, as the main subject of the song. Listeners can deduce that she is on the side of the road, carrying her belongings with

her and she is getting tired. A deeper reading of the chorus will occur later in the analysis as we learn more details about the woman in this narrative.

The first verse gives us more information about the particular circumstance and subjectivity of the narrator of the song.

*And I know me a few men in my time*

*None of them worth a lousy dime*

*And they make me work like a doggone slave*

*Won't be happy 'till I'm in my grave*

Here, Sainte-Marie tells her audience about some of her negative experiences with men in her life. Specifically, the absolute power her male bosses have had over her contributes to her tiredness and perhaps how she wishes for her own death. Sainte-Marie's lyrics have thus far established that she is hitchhiking, working like a "doggone slave," and being treated poorly by some of the men in her life. Taken together, I read all of these details as Sainte-Marie hinting towards sex work, and more specifically indigenous women's willing and unwilling participation in that industry. Sainte-Marie was well aware of sex slavery and the ways in which indigenous women were targeted in human trafficking networks. Mentioned in chapter two in my discussion of "Cod'ine," Sainte-Marie's experience in Florida where a doctor assaulted her by trying to addict her to opiates and then sell her into sex slavery opened her eyes to these pervasive issues within indigenous communities. I believe this experience combined with her knowledge about indigenous women and girl's issues informed much of this album, and specifically this song.

The next verse of "Rolling Log Blues" occurs after an extended guitar solo where Sainte-Marie begins to expand upon the narrative of violence against indigenous women.

*My done you took it and torn it in two*

*Who'd ever thought it of a boy like you*

*It looked hot, I thought it was sugar and spice*

*Salty water turned to ice*

Here, Sainte-Marie transitions from a general attitude toward abusive men to a more individualized narrative about one specific man. The lyrics suggest that the main character of the story at one point trusted the boy she talks about in this verse. He tricked her into believing that he was not capable of abusive behavior when in fact he was abusive. I read this verse as a deeper commentary on acts of betrayal as gendered and racialized situations in which indigenous women are often victimized. For example, with Sainte-Marie's own story about the doctor in Florida, she had no reason to not trust the doctor's orders when he prescribed her medicine. However, the doctor took advantage of her trust and, without her consent, prescribed a highly addictive and unnecessary drug with the hopes of selling her into sex slavery. I argue that the common theme of betrayal in Sainte-Marie's own lived experience informs the theme of betrayal in this verse.

Let us now address the different repetitions of the chorus adapted from Lottie Kimbrough's original lyrics. As stated earlier, the first iteration of the chorus occurs after the instrumental introduction and establishes the blues medium in which Sainte-Marie tells this story. There are more choruses than verse thus placing the sonic importance on the text in the chorus. In this sense, I understand Sainte-Marie's choice to allow the chorus to take up more sonic space as a way to both pay tribute to Kimbrough's blues as well as to situate her variation of "Rolling Log Blues" within the blues genre. Sainte-Marie's interpretation of Kimbrough's original song is connected through similar themes about abuse and oppression. This significant

connection not only connects Sainte-Marie to Kimbrough but also, on a larger scale, indigenous women's struggles with black women's struggles.

Historically, "Rolling Log Blues" has acted like a blueprint for other musicians like Woody Mann, Rory Block, the Blues Band, among others to speak about private acts of violence and oppression in a public way. Sainte-Marie is notably the only artist to interpret and adapt "Rolling Log Blue" from an indigenous subjectivity. The story she articulates about one indigenous woman in the sexual slavery industry aligns with the history of both sexual slavery and the commodification of Native women and girls dating back the first encounters of colonization in North America. In "Rolling Log Blues" Sainte-Marie utilizes sonic storytelling within the blues idiom as a means for consciousness-raising about the often silenced private matters of indigenous women and girls forced into sex slavery.

*"Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues"*

In 1974, on her self-title album Buffy Sainte-Marie released "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues." The cover of this album displays Sainte-Marie with one of her bare breasts showing through a large black coat. The controversial image with one of her nipples showing is quite significant in that is presents a side of Sainte-Marie that most audiences of hers did not normally see. Using this album artwork as a starting point for analysis will enable a thorough discussion of the ways in which Sainte-Marie's "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues" promotes indigenous women's sexuality while at the same time satirizing masculinity associated with rockabilly blues stylistics. "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues" tells the story of a day in the life of woman, most likely tricked into becoming a sex worker. Unlike the blues songs I mention before, this is a story about

reclamation and the ways in which an indigenous woman performing masculinity pokes fun at the often undesirable conditions for sex workers.

"Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues" is a rockabilly song with significant connections to the blues idiom. Mullen argues that rockabilly music "originated as a blending of African American rhythm and blues and Anglo-American country music in the early to mid-1950s and was significant in the development of rock 'n' roll."[141] Rockabilly's connection to the blues is extensive and beyond the scope of this project. However, the fact that there is a connection between the two genres provides a framework in which to understand Sainte-Marie's "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues." Rockabilly songs often contained themes about masculine aggression, drinking at honky-tonks, and fighting.[142] These kinds of masculinist themes were associated with honky-tonk venues which country music historian Bill Malone describes as "essentially a masculine retreat…a place to aggressively assert one's manhood."[143] Through both lyrical content and musical stylistics, I argue that "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues" takes on themes about violence against women of color often found at the intersection of rockabilly and blues music.

Musically, "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues" is in a fast, upbeat 4/4 time and features a large brass section, drums, electric guitar, and a piano playing honky-tonk styles. Marvin Schwartz notes that instruments in rockabilly music "provided a raucous release of energy" and were often

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[141] Patrick B. Mullen, ""Let's All Get Dixie Fried": Rockabilly, Masculinity, and Homosociality," in *Unsettling Assumptions: Tradition, Gender, Drag* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2014), 112

[142] Mullen, ""Let's All Get Dixie Fried,"" 115.

[143] Bill Malone, *Country Music USA: 50th Anniversary Edition* (Univ OF Texas Press, 2018), 246.

aggressive in their musical approach.[144] This classification of rockabilly music suits the musical texture of "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues." Although subscribing to a semi-blues harmonic tonality, "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues" is coded more overtly in rockabilly stylistics; stylistics often associated with "rough drinking establishments" called roadhouses, fast cars, "loose" women, and dancing.[145] However, unlike rockabilly performers before her, Sainte-Marie's vocal delivery deviates from certain expectations of the genre. Schwartz says rockabilly singers "sang at their upper range, rasping range or shouting voice adding to the impression of strain, of a performer giving his all."[146] Sainte-Marie's vocals are contained to a small lower range without shouting or raspy tones. I interpret the choice to keep her vocal melody sonically simple as a means to draw more attention to the story she tells, a story that transgresses the themes associated with this genre.

The first verse of "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues" establishes a narrative about a sex worker and that this sex worker is the main subject of the song.

*She comes swingin' on out of the motel room*

*Lookin' like she just got paid*

*There's a bald man sittin' on the side of the bed*

*You know he's lookin' like he just got made*

It is clear that there was a financial transaction for sex between a female sex worker and a man that occurred in a motel room. The second verse provides more details about the woman's experiences in this industry.

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[144] Marvin Schwartz, *We Wanna Boogie: The Rockabilly Roots of Sonny Burgess and the Pacers* (Little Rock, AR: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 95.
[145] Schwartz, *We Wanna Boogie,* 97.
[146] Schwartz, *We Wanna Boogie,* 107.

*She's a hard workin' lady and she satisfies*

*Think it up baby we can give it a try*

*Only one thing before you drop on by*

*Give me something to relax my mind*

The last line of this verse occurs many times throughout the song. It is significant in that it points out the connection between drug use and sex work. The woman in the song will do anything sexually in exchange for money and/or drugs.

The third verse provides an important context for her beginnings working in the sex working industry. The last two lines of the verse are as follows:

*Then I met a fella gonna set me up better*

*Now I got these broken blues*

The end of this third verse suggests that she met a man who promised her money and a job. And that she is left with these "broken blues," implying that not only is this song's interpretation of the blues imperfect but also that she is referencing the title of the song, "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues." Her beginnings as a sex worker align with Sainte-Marie's own experience of nearly being forced into sex work through male-perpetrated manipulation. This hint toward the abuse of power in addicting young women to drugs in order to become prostitutes points out darker themes of violence in an otherwise vibrant rockabilly blues song.

The fourth and fifth verses stress the transactional quality of this woman's job. In the fourth verse the transaction involves sex in exchange for money and drugs. While, in the fifth verse the transactional exchange involves sex and a place to stay.

*So count your money, honey*

*Hide your change*

*Something on your mind boy, give her the reins*

*Every little thing goes on just like an exchange*

*Give me something to relax my mind.*

*If you need a home in the heart of the south*

*Looking for a change of luck*

*Sister made a home in the heart of a man*

*Looking for an easy fuck*

The part of the song's narrative shows the different things one can achieve in this industry, whether short-term or long-term. The fourth verse warns male clients to hide their money from her because she will take it and spend it. And, the fifth implies that female sex prostitutes can manipulate male clients into a long-term commitment of financial stability. Both outcomes are still transactional yet display the varied options sex workers do have despite unfavorable conditions. The song ends just as it began, by repeating the first two verses musically and lyrically. I interpret this ending as symbolic of the cyclical nature of the main character's life as a sex worker. She starts her day over the same way and in the same motel room. A long instrumental outro fades out and concludes the entire song.

The lyrical narrative told in this song comes from the perspective of a female sex worker. This in itself transgresses the thematic expectations of rockabilly blues music because the subject of rockabilly blues songs often center male drinking, aggression, and violence. Since the rockabilly aesthetic is associated with these aspects of masculinity, I interpret Sainte-Marie's choice to share this sonic narrative through a rockabilly medium as one of reclamation through performative masculinity. In changing the perspective of how this story is told, Sainte-Marie's

rockabilly blues parodies rockabilly masculinity by giving agency to the women this genre often exploits. Sainte-Marie's own awareness of the harsh and violent conditions for indigenous female sex workers is apparent throughout her autobiographical accounts. Therefore, her choice in "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues" to not center on this violence and rather tell a narrative about women's agency speaks to the ways in which Sainte-Marie invited audiences into a familiar sonic medium while still subliminally hinting at more difficult themes and realities for indigenous women sex workers.

Evidence to support my argument about this song can be seen in music criticism of this overall album. The imagery of the album cover combined with particular themes about female agency in songs such as "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues" challenged male music critics. For example, in June of 1974 Michael Gray of *Let It Rock* Magazine reviewed Sainte-Marie album, *Buffy*. With regards to the cover, Gray states:

> It has a very perplexing cover; it may just be intended as a visual pun on the album's title, since it features the singer's brown, sizable and naked tit. All the same, it seems a strange moment in time for an artist whose femaleness, as something positive, authoritative and dignified, has always added to her artistic strengths, to start stripping off.[147]

Gray discredits the music on Sainte-Marie's album based on her nudity on the cover arguing that the singer is losing some of her artistic strengths and resorting to selling her work through nudity instead. He goes on to compare Sainte-Marie to Joni Mitchell to further discredit the indigenous musician. "Perhaps she just can't stand the competition with Joni, and she has chosen this to

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[147] Michael Gray, "Buffy St Marie: The Best of Buffy Sainte-Marie Volume 2 (Vanguard)/ Buffy (MCA)," *Let It Rock*, June 1974.

signal her surrender, accepting her consignment to an eternal second-rank placing."[148] As we saw in chapter two, music critics often referred to female performers during this time in terms of both their sexualities and "alleged rivalries" with other female musicians.[149]

Gray ends his album review with the following:

> …the singer's tit is the best thing about the whole package. Which is hardly what I should like to be able to say about a new album from the artist who was long a model of female purposiveness: the opposite, in fact, (until now) a model for a Playmate camera cuteness.[150]

Again, speaking about Sainte-Marie in terms of her sexuality and pretend rivalries reduces her musical contributions. "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues" took an often masculinist genre, rockabilly blues, and completely changed it to highlight the female perspective. However, based on Gray's review Sainte-Marie's transgressions on this album might have challenged the musical status quo too much.

In response to the controversy surrounding *Buffy,* Sainte-Marie spoke to *Melody Maker* that same year and addressed some of Gray's specific concerns about the album cover.

> Yes, I supposed that cover may come as a shock to some people. When I was last in New York, *Ms.* Magazine came down to see me and were absolutely delighted that a woman could take her shirt off for her own reasons alone.[151]

This quotation alone proves Sainte-Marie's dedication to empowering female agency. Although speaking about the album's cover, this quotation is also applicable to "Sweet, Fast Hooker

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[148] Gray, "Buffy St Marie: The Best of Buffy Sainte-Marie Volume 2 (Vanguard)/ Buffy (MCA)."
[149] Gillian Mitchell, *North American Folk Music Revival: Nation and Identity in the United States and Canada, 1945-1980* (Routledge, 2016), 124.
[150] Gray, "Buffy St Marie: The Best of Buffy Sainte-Marie Volume 2 (Vanguard)/ Buffy (MCA)."
[151] Chris Charlesworth, "Buffy St Marie: Buffy Breaks Away," *Melody Maker*, July 6, 1974.

Blues." Through album cover art and songs like "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues," Sainte-Marie reframed and centered the positionality of women of color within masculine-coded musical spaces to tell the often untold and complex stories about female sexuality.

## Conclusion

This study advocates for trauma-informed musicological research in understanding gender-based violence narratives in popular music. While this thesis focuses entirely in Nina Simone and Buffy Sainte-Marie, I have created a thoughtful and careful theoretical framework in which, I believe, could be transferred to similar studies about gender-based violence in popular and/or protest music. My trauma-informed methodology first centers and uplifts stories about sexual violence that have historically gone untold. In using Simone and Sainte-Marie's own words about their experiences with violence and abuse, I hope to provide a framework in which to present trauma narratives like theirs to readers without mediation or judgement. Furthermore, in utilizing scholarship from the field of black and indigenous feminist studies, social trauma theory, and transnationalism, this project advocates for an interdisciplinary approach to addressing trauma, gender-based violence, and music. Applying these seemingly unconnected fields of research in a study like this enables a fruitful understanding of the nuanced complexities about researching gender-based violence and popular protest music.

Throughout this project I have rooted my study within a larger context of gender-based violence against women of color through discussions of colonialism and slavery. In doing so, I add Simone and Sainte-Marie's experiences with gender-based violence to the long history of violence against women of color dating back to the 1600s colonizer travel journals. In addition to addressing histories of violence, I examined the long lineage of women of color's sonic resistance to their marginalization and oppression. Throughout the first chapter, we begin to understand the significant role music played in women of color's resistance to the violence they experienced. Simone and Sainte-Marie's protest music highlighted in the second and third chapters of this study are examples of this kind of sonic resistance.

The second and third chapter of this thesis provide musical and historical context for the kinds of stylistics Simone and Sainte-Marie used in their protest music. The second chapter strictly focuses on the urban folk revival of the 1960s while the third chapter takes a transnational approach to understanding women of color performing the blues. In doing so, I connected Simone and Sainte-Marie's music about violence against women of color to these musical stylistics. Using Simone's "Four Women," and "Go Limp" and Sainte-Marie's "Cod'ine" and "The Incest Song," I argued in chapter two that through the use of folk idioms Simone and Sainte-Marie not only resisted their own marginalization and oppression as women of color in the Greenwich Village music scene, but also that they raised consciousness about gender-based violence musically and lyrically. Likewise, chapter three musically and lyrically analyzes Simone's "Blues for Mama" and "Backlash Blues" and Sainte-Marie's "Rolling Log Blues" and "Sweet, Fast Hooker Blues" in order to come to similar conclusions about gender-based violence consciousness, but this time through the usage of blues stylistics. These two chapters contribute a methodology for musical and lyrical analysis of protest songs written by women of color that tell stories about the many complicated facets of gender-based violence.

Finally, while my work's primary focus has been Nina Simone and Buffy Sainte-Marie, I believe that this project is applicable to the recent declarations and expressions of "Me Too"[1] throughout the music industry. I believe this thesis serves as a starting point in addressing these contemporary narratives about sexual violence in popular music. As incidents of sexual violence in the music industry continue to surface, more and more challenging and complex questions arise. What stories about gender-based violence in music go untold? Who are we leaving out of

[1] *The Founder of #MeToo Doesn't Want Us to Forget Victims of Color*, prod. NewsHour Productions LLC, Infobase, February 9, 2018.

contemporary "Me Too" discussions in the music industry? And lastly, a relevant question prominent in the field of social trauma theory "how can one apply knowledge about violence to advocate strategies that either reduce its incidence or deflect its force?"[2] In centering the perspective of women of color such as Nina Simone and Buffy Sainte-Marie, my hope with this project is to advocate for more studies that pay attention to often silenced perspectives of trauma in order to address some of these crucial questions.

[2] Bruce B. Lawrence and Aisha Karim, *On Violence: A Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 10.

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