Between Resistance and Revolution

Cultural Politics and Social Protest

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Abbey Lincoln's *Straight Ahead*

Jazz in the Era of the Civil Rights Movement

> Now that Abbey Lincoln has found herself as a Negro, I hope she can find herself as a militant but less one-sided *American* Negro. It could help her performance.
>
> Jazz Critic Ira Gitler (Gitler et al., 1962a, 20)

> Who knows more about the Negro than the Negro? Everybody else up until this point has been exploiting the Negro. And the minute the Negro begins to exploit himself, even if this was so, here comes somebody who says they shouldn't exploit themselves. But who *should* exploit the Negro? Here's the point: she has a perfect right to exploit the Negro.
>
> Drummer Max Roach (Gitler et al., 1962a, 21–22)

In November 1961, jazz critic Ira Gitler (1961) published a dismissive review of Abbey Lincoln's album *Straight Ahead* (Lincoln, 1961) in the pages of one of the leading jazz magazines, *Down Beat*. He accused the singer of "becoming a professional Negro," covering up poor musicianship with "banal" (i.e., political) lyrics, and mistaking propaganda for art (Gitler et al., 1962a). This remarkable album—featuring compositions and arrangements by Mal Waldron, Max Roach, Oscar Brown, Thelonious Monk, Randy Weston, and Julian Priester—combines thick five-part horn voicings, poignant improvised solos, and shifting textures, with Lincoln's expressive voice and lyrics. The musical effect was modern, dramatic, and explicitly political through both song lyrics and Nat Hentoff's liner notes—which stressed Lincoln's self-awareness as an African American as central to her artistic voice. The album has become

something of a classic in the intervening years. The ensemble accompanying Lincoln, which included a number of the most respected musicians active at that time, is nearly identical to that which had participated six months earlier in Max Roach's and Lincoln's *Freedom Now Suite* (Roach, 1960)—Coleman Hawkins, Eric Dolphy, Mal Waldron, Booker Little, Julian Priester, Art Davis, and Walter Benton (Lincoln, 1961).

The *Freedom Now Suite*, whose cover art depicted African Americans at a lunch-counter, was recorded in August and September 1960 (about six months after the first Greensboro sit-ins) and was linked explicitly to political action through its performance as a benefit for the Congress of Racial Equality (Miscellaneous Benefits) and at the 1961 national convention of the NAACP in Philadelphia (Current, 1961). The *Freedom Now Suite*, however, did not receive the same scathing criticism as *Straight Ahead*. The impact and reception of *Straight Ahead* in 1962, as well as the public debate on "Racial Prejudice in Jazz" published in the pages of *Down Beat* in response to Gitler's review, must be viewed against a set of historical circumstances that included the success of African independence movements, the escalation of the civil rights movement, and the emergence of free jazz. Although white reaction initially was positive to changes in aesthetics and the new assertiveness of African American musicians, a tremendous polarization along racial lines in the professional jazz world had emerged by 1962.

I am interested in how a new African American musical and cultural sensibility came to be constructed in the jazz scene in the early 1960s, as well as in its paradoxes and relationship to broader political struggles and discourses. At stake in the discussion are several issues that anthropologists have been debating in recent years: the politics of identity, essentialism, the role of aesthetic practices in the constitution of cultural ideologies, and the role of musicians as agents of political advocacy. From a discourse-centered perspective, my aim is to show how the discourses of race, gender, music, modernism, and political action converge and inflect one another in the world of professional jazz at a particular moment during the civil rights movement. From a practice-centered perspective, I am concerned with how people chose to act upon these discourses and in what interactional settings various positions were taken. More specifically, I am interested in the way in which individual agents in the jazz world (musicians, critics, audience members, promoters, recording industry operatives) situated themselves, negotiated their statuses, and took action within these frequently conflicting social discourses.

The theme of what Paul Gilroy calls "ethnic absolutism"—an essentialized notion of identity—hovers as a backdrop to a central issue in this essay: a partial reconciliation of practice-centered and discourse-centered approaches to social analysis through an examination of the ways in which the charge of "essentialism" has been deployed in recent debates about race and ethnic identity. A tacit presumption in recent debates—that any demand for ethnic autonomy or self-determination is fundamentally essentialist in character—creates a problem in historical and social interpretation that a close reading of the 1962 debate over *Straight Ahead* and racial prejudice in jazz illustrates.

Yet the role of music and musicians in this era of political action was not only symbolic. There was a constant multi-layered dialectic among music as a symbolic means for asserting an African American identity, musicians as participants in explicitly political activities (such as benefit concerts for the principal civil rights organizations), and musicians as advocates for greater economic equity in the white-dominated music industry.

Straight Ahead: *The Public Debate*

The quotations that provide the epigraph to this essay are drawn from Gitler's review of *Straight Ahead* and the panel discussion organized by *Down Beat* magazine in reaction to it. Two consecutive issues of *Down Beat* were devoted to an edited transcript of the discussion, which included performers and critics Abbey Lincoln, Max Roach, Ira Gitler, Nat Hentoff, Lalo Schifrin, Don Ellis, Bill Coss, and Don DeMichael (Gitler, 1962a, 1962b).[1] The issues that dominated the discussion are very familiar: (1) social vs. biological explanations of cultural and musical difference, (2) whether reverse racism or "Crow Jim" existed in the jazz world, (3) who was entitled to evaluate or speak about jazz and the black experience, and (4) whether integration was an unproblematic social goal.

Roach and Lincoln criticized Gitler for having published a review that focused more on Lincoln's politics than the artistic merits of her performance. Gitler argued that he was justified in casting Lincoln as a "professional Negro" because in his view she was "using the fact that [she was] a Negro to exploit a career" (Gitler et al., 1962a, 21). That Gitler's charges were rooted in a discomfort with Lincoln's politics is apparent in his denunciation of the singer's involvement in a group called the Cultural Association for Women of African Heritage:

> She is involved in African nationalism without realizing that the African Negro doesn't give a fig for the American Negro, especially if they are not blackly authentic. I would advise her to read *A Reporter at Large* in the May 13, 1961, issue of the *New Yorker* or talk to a Negro jazzman of my acquaintance who felt a strong draft on meeting African Negroes in Paris. Pride in one's heritage is one thing, but we don't need the Elijah Muhammed type of thinking in jazz (Gitler et al., 1962a, 21).

The positions taken by Lincoln and Roach in the *Down Beat* panel were sharpened against the implicit and explicit charges made by critics Gitler and Don DeMichael that white musicians were discriminated against in the new political climate. Lincoln and Roach were called upon repeatedly to prove that they were not racist against whites, and, in response, they defended their right to speak from a privileged position by reason of their *social experience* as blacks. The central concern for many of the white participants was their belief that white musicians were not being hired by black musicians because of their race. "We might as well use the term Crow Jim," argued Don DeMichael. "To me, a lot of the Negro jazzmen have limited the people that they say swing—the people they will hire—to Negroes. They will say white guys don't swing, don't play jazz, and they have stolen our music." Lincoln added, "and they have," while DeMichael responded, "they haven't. I don't agree with you there" (Gitler et al., 1962a, 25). In the discussion that followed, Roach argued that the reason black players "nine times out of ten" stand a better chance of swinging is due to the greater exposure to the music that is the product of living in black social environments. Roach took great care to mention a black musician who immersed himself in classical music, had a doctorate in music, but couldn't swing because of insufficient exposure to jazz.

But DeMichael was not satisfied: "You're saying we are a product of our social environment; therefore jazz is learned. Why would a Negro boy learn jazz better than a white boy?" Roach answered, "My son—he listens to records all day. From before he was born—in his mother's belly—that's all he's been hearing." DeMichael responded, "So has my son," and Roach affirmed his commitment to a social explanation by saying, "All right. Then he stands a chance" (Gitler et al., 1962a, 25).

The ability of Gitler and DeMichael to construct the white jazz musician in a "one down" position relative to black musicians, as well as Max Roach's confidence that the better jazz musician would usually be the African American musician, emanates from the atypical position African American music holds relative to dominant European American cultural hegemony. As Burton Peretti has noted, while the cultural practices of white Americans have been treated as the mainstream of American history "white jazz history is an appendix to an African-American mainstream" (Peretti, 1992, 77). Music has been one of the few cultural practices in which non–African Americans have been willing to acknowledge the achievements, even superiority, of black artists—although not infrequently with an ideology that trivializes socially acquired musical knowledge as "natural," "untutored," and "innate."[2]

In jazz, the musical devices and aesthetics developed and widely practiced in African American communities have provided the standard against which

the efforts of white participants in the music have been evaluated since at least the 1920s.[3] The history of jazz, which from its origins in African American urbanization (ca. 1890) through Lincoln and Roach's efforts in 1962 must be considered against the context of Jim Crow, reveals the repetitive character of the themes of discussion present in the *Down Beat* panel, especially those concerning appropriation and ethnic authenticity. The history of twentieth-century American popular music, indeed, is the history of an interracial encounter through music under asymmetrical economic, aesthetic, and political circumstances.

Race and Essentialism

A considerable, thought-provoking body of work has emerged critiquing the concept of race, essentialist ideologies of ethnic identity, and the privileging of vernacular experience in accounts of cultural difference.[4] Stuart Hall's critique of the "essentializing moment" turns on the tendency to reduce blackness to a racial, that is, biological category: "the moment the signifier 'black' is torn from its historical, cultural, and political embedding and lodged in a biologically constituted racial category, we valorize, by inversion, the very ground of racism we are trying to deconstruct" (Hall, 1992, 30). Kwame A. Appiah's attempt to find a "nonracialist foundation" for the "Pan-Africanist impetus" likewise centers on avoiding complicity in the racial logic of the dominator through simple inversion of racialist arguments (Appiah, 1992, 43). Appiah argues that race is a biologically meaningless term by presenting scientific work demonstrating that the chances of two human beings having the same gene at any random chromosomal locus is approximately 85 percent both ***within*** and ***between*** racial categories (Appiah, 1992, 36). The differences between the races, then, are primarily morphological rather than genetic: differences in skin, hair, and bone.

Paul Gilroy's critique of ethnic absolutism centers around what he believes is the exaggerated authenticity that the invocation of vernacular cultural forms confers upon critics, particularly black critics, who have been reluctant to "give up the qualified axiological authority that we fought so hard to attain" (Gilroy, 1994, 50). In arguing for a transnational diasporic perspective on the black Atlantic, Gilroy worries about the parochialism of vernacularism and argues that the critical community "should strive to act locally and think globally" (Gilroy, 1992, 193). He finds Americans particularly prone to "culturally protectionist" positions, even to the point of suggesting that some "Afro-American ethnicists . . . want to confine the Atlantic legacy within their own particular set of local, national, or nationalist concerns" (Gilroy, 1992, 197).

The problem, from the point of view of jazz history, is how easily the critique

of essentialism and ethnic absolutism can be transformed into renovated charges of reverse racism, no matter how socially grounded are African American arguments for ethnically based identification. bell hooks has commented on the paradoxical aspects of postmodernism for African Americans. Arguing that while, on the one hand, the critique of essentialism is useful to promoting an understanding of the diversity of black experience, she notes that: "The postmodern critique of 'identity,' though relevant for renewed black liberation struggle, is often posed in ways that are problematic. Given a pervasive politic of white supremacy which seeks to prevent the formation of radical black subjectivity, we cannot cavalierly dismiss a concern with identity politics" (hooks, 1990, 26).

To Gilroy's broad questions about the discourses of ethnicity, I would add more pragmatic ones. (1) Under what circumstances have people taken ethnically absolutist positions? (2) Does it make sense to equate every rhetorical stance of ethnic assertiveness with a fundamental essentialism? (3) What roles do self-interest and the realignment of power play in the ideological stances taken? I argue here that the shape of African American claims to authenticity and exclusivity in the early 1960s must be read against a long-standing historical process of appropriation in American popular music, the immediate context of the civil rights movement, and the broader one of African independence movements. The very hybridity of the music, which has synthesized and transformed both African and European elements, as well as its leading role in the constitution of American popular musical culture, has ensured (as Gilroy has suggested elsewhere) that music has remained a site of "constant contestation" (Gilroy, 1991; Hall 1992, 29).

Modernism and the Cultural Logic of Musical Appropriation

The issue of musical appropriation and ethnic authenticity have been dialogically intertwined throughout the history of jazz. The legal implementation of Jim Crow legislation in the 1890s created a de jure color line which homogenized diversity and internal divisions in African American communities. The legal basis for deciding who was and was not black was heredity, regardless of physical appearance. Although the discourse of race is repeatedly inflected by those of class, gender, and the economics of the recording business, the daily lives of musicians were shaped most profoundly by the side of the color line to which they were assigned. To read the early history of jazz is to learn the racial calculus of Jim Crow—which clubs accepted black patrons, which hired black musicians but did not allow black patronage, which clubs were "blacks and tans," and which musicians were light enough in complexion to be able to procure food for the rest of the band from a white restaurant. One learns, in addition, how mixed bands recorded long before they performed in public, and how resentful many whites were toward economically successful black musicians who dressed in fine clothes, drove large luxury automobiles, or squired their musicians around in customized buses or railroad cars to avoid Jim Crow restrictions.[5]

While there was certainly a two-way cultural influence operating in music, the terms of the interaction were grossly unequal and defined by the asymmetrical political, social, and economic contexts of race. Earnest young white musicians, for example, could flock to South Side Chicago black and tans to learn from African Americans the sounds of the blues, the timbral possibilities of brass instruments, and a new rhythmic sensibility, but blacks were not allowed to be patrons in white performance spaces (Kenney, 1993, 103). The economics of musical performance, on the other hand, encouraged black musicians to learn the repertories, dances styles, and large ensemble instrumentation of white dance hall orchestras, since many wanted to work in the more lucrative white dance halls. Being a musician in the 1920s was not a downwardly mobile occupation. Music was one of the few professions open to African Americans, and, as such, held out the possibility of upward mobility among urbanizing migrants from the South. Kenney's account of Chicago's South Side documents the considerable irony that what was slumming to many white racial border-crossers was an avenue to increased economic prosperity, cosmopolitanism, and independence for African Americans (Kenney, 1993, 3–60).

By the 1930s, the game of "cultural telephone," which characterizes the mainstreaming of African American musical sounds and aesthetics, was firmly in place. Band leaders such as Paul Whiteman and Benny Goodman actively sought the work of black arrangers such as Don Redman and Fletcher Henderson, but the vicissitudes of Jim Crow (which prohibited mixed bands) ensured that African American contributions to the new popular music were made invisible to the mass audience by the behind-the-scenes character of interracial interaction. Although white musicians such as Gene Krupa, Dave Tough, and Artie Shaw readily acknowledged their debt to African American music and musicians, mainstream American audiences witnessed the mass popularization of Fletcher Henderson's, Jimmy Mundy's, and Edgar Sampson's big band style through Benny Goodman's originally all-white band in all-white performance spaces.[6] The masses thus became familiar with such African American musical devices as riffs, walking bass, and shout choruses through the medium of white performance.

One of the principal contradictions of the swing era is the economic dominance of white bands despite the overwhelming aesthetic inspiration provided

by African American music and musicians. Yet appropriation was seldom simple. On the one hand, the Benny Goodman orchestra came into popularity by playing many of the same arrangements that were written and recorded by Fletcher Henderson in the late 1920s and early 1930s (*Down South Camp Meeting* and *King Porter Stomp*). On the other hand, Goodman, with promoter John Hammond's strong persuasion, became the first swing-era musician to perform publicly with an integrated trio, when Teddy Wilson was included in a 1936 performance at Chicago's Congress Hotel. Goodman later included other African Americans in public—among them Lionel Hampton, Charlie Christian, and Cootie Williams—and refused to capitulate to demands from promoters that black members of the ensemble be removed for performances in Jim Crow venues. Goodman benefited materially by having the sound of the black musicians and arrangers in the band, but he also paid them well for their services. Nevertheless, the demographics and economics of the music market remain startling. The Paul Whiteman and Benny Goodman orchestras made far more money than their African American counterparts who were of greater aesthetic significance—Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Earl Hines, and Jimmie Lunceford—not through unmediated appropriation, but because the historical context of Jim Crow, U.S. demographics, racist ideology, and the economics of the recording industry gave them an incalculable structural advantage.[7] The market and "business as usual" within the recording industry quite simply worked in favor of the white musicians (Stowe, 1994, 94–140).

Recording industry businessmen counted on the financial naiveté of some African American artists. Count Basie in the late 1930s was fraudulently signed to a Decca contract that provided him no royalties and subunion scale for recording (Porter and Ullman, 1993, 153). Local 802 of the American Federation of Musicians was unwilling to abrogate the contract despite John Hammond's intervention on Basie's behalf and the fraudulent circumstances in which a signature had been obtained. Although many artists found themselves making more money than they ever had before, they did not realize how much they were losing to substandard royalty agreements. When differing contractual terms operating for white and black bands became known, there was deep resentment.

The repeated charge that white musicians have stolen black musical innovations turns on this repetitive cultural and economic cycle within American popular music. White musicians learned from black musicians, but greater commercial success came to white artists. The mass white public then comes to view the music, not as African American music popularized by white performers, but as "white music" (or everyone's music)—historical and cultural memory stopping at the color line. The same process of cultural erasure occurred in rock and roll: Elvis Presley and the Beatles popularized rhythm and blues musical figures and encountered an ambivalent reception among African Americans for exactly the same reasons that Benny Goodman did.

The development of bebop in the 1940s has been viewed as an assertion of blackness in music in reaction to the overcommercialization and white appropriation of swing (Lott, 1988). Spearheaded by Thelonious Monk, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Christian, Kenny Clarke, and Max Roach, bebop placed the improvisational aspect of jazz at a new level of centrality. The new rhythmic complexity of bebop, especially its drumming (which was developed from Jo Jones through Kenny Clarke and Max Roach), as well as increased tempos, greater harmonic complexity, and instrumental virtuosity, emphasized both the African American bedrock of the music (as developed via the Count Basie band) and a new self-conception of "artist" rather than "entertainer." Significantly, musicians didn't use the term bebop in the early 1940s—they called themselves "modern."

The sense of modern in the 1940s *included* a sense of ethnic assertiveness. If the modern rhetoric of "equality before the law" was mobilized by the growing political movement against Jim Crow, musicians mobilized the discourse of modernism to demand nondiscriminatory treatment as artists, as well as the end of Jim Crow practices within the music industry. African American jazz musicians led the way in employing the musical and aesthetic markers of modernism—innovation, formalism, technical virtuosity, progress—to articulate an improvisational aesthetic that demanded the respect and deference of white musicians and legitimated black creativity. Hence, the curious marriage of modernism and ethnic particularism that characterize the aesthetic and political debates within the jazz community in the 1940s through early 1960s.[8] At one moment, a musician might invoke the supposedly universalistic standards of modernism to argue for the artistic merits and legitimacy of jazz; at another, the same person might invoke an ethnic argument to counter appropriative and control moves on the part of white participants in the jazz scene. At one moment, the rhetoric of brotherhood and integration; at another, the "cultural protectionism" and separatist sentiment that Gilroy terms ethnic absolutism.

The history of this dialectic in relationship to the backdrop of the civil rights movement seems central to understanding both the particularity of U.S. cultural history and the tension between transnationalism and localism that is currently a topic of debate in African diasporic cultural theory. I can only offer a preliminary sketch here of the issues especially germane to the confluence of music, politics, and identity that emerged in the 1950s and early 1960s: (1) the transnationalism of the civil rights movement in the 1950s; (2) the relationship of the cold war to emergent African nations and the civil rights movement;

(3) the violent repression of moderate civil rights demands (adherence to *Brown v. Board of Education* and voting rights); and (4) African American pride in music as a cultural practice which "one ups" the white mainstream.[9]

Transnationalism and the Civil Rights Movement

Richard Fox (in this volume) talks about the way in which the U.S. civil rights movement appropriated and molded discourses of Gandhian nonviolence to its own ends through processes he terms "hyper-difference" and "over-likeness." His point is that transnational cultural flows may generate cross-cultural interpretations that tend to exaggerate differences between the local and transnational (hyper-difference) or exaggerate similarity (over-likeness). If the look toward India was an important transnational flow shaping the civil rights movement in the 1940s (and it was characterized by these excesses of recognition and misrecognition), the look toward African independence movements in the 1950s and early 1960s provides another example.

In an interesting coincidence, the very same issue of the *Chicago Defender* that announced *Brown v. Board of Education* (22 May 1954) included an article about Haile Selassie and his upcoming visit to the United States (Daniels, 1954). On the same page a picture of Ghanaian (then Gold Coaster) Joe Appiah and his British wife Peggy Cripps appeared, with a caption that announced the birth of their son Kwame (yes, the Appiah cited earlier) ("2 African Princes," 1954). In subsequent weeks the optimistic glow in the wake of the *Brown* decision was intermingled with extensive coverage of Selassie's visit, including articles entitled "Selassie's Special Message for Negroes" (1954), "Selassie Eats with Ike, Gets Howard U. Degree (1954), and "Integration on Display for Selassie at Capital" (Hicks, 1954). In the last, James Hicks drew attention to the State Department interest's in mobilizing the *Brown* decision to counter Soviet criticism of U.S. racial policies. The continuation of Jim Crow policies was hurting the U.S. in the cold war.[10]

The convergence of civil rights and the continent of Africa in the pages of the *Defender* was hardly exceptional. Throughout the 1950s, black newspapers covered the independence movements and personalities of African nationalism on a regular basis. The independence of Ghana in March 1956 (Payne, 1957), Nkrumah's visit to the United States in 1958 ("Africa on the March," 1958; "Chicago Puts Out Red Carpet," 1958), the admission of sixteen African nations to the U.N. in 1960 ("Gain Admission to United Nations," 1960), and the treatment of African diplomats attending U.N. meetings in New York ("African Envoys Face Bias," 1960), are among the events covered in the pages of the *Defender*. The respectability of the new African leaders in the eyes of the world, the invitations to international independence celebrations received by prominent African American leaders (such as Adam Clayton Powell and Ralph Bunche), as well as a regular foreign news column (which as early as 1955 had a border announcing the geographic priorities of its coverage as "Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Latin America") established a transnational counterpoint to the decade's largely pessimistic domestic news about tolerance for school desegregation and access to public accommodations. Incidents like the lynching of Emmett Till ("Nation Shocked," 1955), the ambushing of an NAACP office in Mississippi ("Ambush NAACP Office," 1955), the success of the Montgomery Boycott (Branch, 1988, 143–205), Governor Orval Faubus's armed resistance to the integration of Little Rock's Central High ("Faubus Vows No Retreat," 1957), Louis Armstrong's public denunciation of Eisenhower's inaction in Arkansas ("Satch Blast," 1957), increasing awareness that school desegregation was not only a southern problem ("Chicago High Schools," 1957), and that the battle against Jim Crow was likely to be protracted ("Fisk Race Relations Institute," 1958; "Tuskegee Issues '59 Race Relations Report," 1960) galvanized African Americans across class lines. The parallel between African independence movements and the civil rights movement was increasingly drawn ("Tells Buffalo Meet UN," 1960) as the lunch counter sit-ins began in 1960. The dialectic of "recognition" between the struggle for African nationhood and civil rights, I believe, had enormous consequences for the way in which black nationalist ideologies developed within the musical world in the early 1960s.

Music and Politics

The rhetoric of freedom resounded in the international and domestic political arenas, but was also a critical feature of the emerging aesthetic of free jazz. Freedom from the formal conventions of the jazz tradition—e.g., chord progressions, fixed-length song forms, and the obligation to play jazz "standards"—came to be taken as an icon for political freedom, and African American self-awareness by the mid-1960s. The marriage of modernism and ethnic assertiveness was taken to a new level with free jazz, and met with considerable ambivalence from jazz audiences, musicians, and critics (both black and white), just as bebop did. Some fully embraced the new expressive aesthetic and its politics; others viewed the avant-garde dissonance of the music as derivative of classical aesthetics and alienating to the black masses. In addition, older bebop musicians viewed many of the younger free players as having failed to come up through the competitive ranks of the African American musical tradition the older musicians had pioneered.[11]

It has been customary in the jazz literature to conflate the advent of free jazz with the emergence of a radical political consciousness in the early 1960s.

Table 1
Benefit Concerts in the Era of the Civil Rights Movement

Date	Location	Benefit for	Participants
5/28/54	Eastern Parkway Arena	Brooklyn NAACP	Ella Fitzgerald, Harry Belafonte
6/2/60	Wheeler Hall, University of California, Berkeley	Scholarship Fund for students expelled from southern schools for "anti-discrimination" activities	Oscar Peterson Trio, Cannonball Adderley Quintet
8/7/60	Village Gate	"Sit-In" CORE	Thelonious Monk, Jimmy Giuffre, Bill Henderson, Clark Terry
1/15/61	Village Gate	CORE	Max Roach and the *Freedom Now Suite*
1/27/61	Carnegie Hall	CORE and Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.	Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis, Jr
5/19/61	Carnegie Hall	African Research Foundation	Miles Davis and Gil Evans
7/14/61	Philadelphia	NAACP Annual Convention	*Freedom Now Suite*, Max Roach, Abbey Lincoln, Michael Olatunji, Sarah Vaughan, Oscar Brown, Jr.
Fall 1961	San Francisco Opera House	NAACP	Miles Davis
6/62	Seattle	CORE	Dizzy Gillespie
2/1/63	Carnegie Hall	SNCC	Dave Brubeck, Charles Mingus, Harry Belafonte, Lorraine Hansberry, Tony Bennett, Shelly Winters
8/23/63	Apollo Theatre	March on Washington	A. Philip Randolph, Tony Bennett, Cozy Cole, the Golden Chords, Coleman Hawkins, Quincy Jones, Herbie Mann, Thelonious Monk, Charlie Shavers, Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, Billy Eckstine, Johnny Hartman, Ahmad Jamal, Terri Thornton, Carmen McRae, Dave "Alleycat" Thorne, Lambert, Hendriks & Bavan
8/24/63	Baltimore	"Steak-Out for the Cause"—CORE	Jimmy McGriff, Madhatters, Freda Payne

(continued)

Table 1. Benefit Concerts in the Era of the Civil Rights Movement *(continued)*

Date	Location	Benefit for	Participants
10/20/63	Five Spot	CORE	Billy Taylor, Don Heckman, Ted Curson, Bill Baron, Dick Berk, Ronnie Boykins, Kennie Burrell, Ray Draper, Ben Webster, Joe Newman, Horace Parlan,Frankie Dunlop, Edgar Bateman, Dick Kniss, Don Friedman, Ben Riley, Helen Merrill, Roy Haynes, Tony Williams, Frank Strozier
10/27/63	Five Spot	CORE	Bill Evans, Gary Peacock, Ira Gitler, Alan Grant, Paul Motian, Al Cohn, Zoot Sims,Sal Mosca, Dick Scott, Hal Dodson, Sheila Jordan, Jack Reilly, Dave Sibley, Prince Lasha, Paul Bley, J. R. Monterose, Eric Dolphy, Bobby Hutchinson, Joe Chambers, Ron Carter, Freddie Redd, Booker Ervin, Henry Grimes
11/25/63	Santa Monica Civic Auditorium	"Stars for Freedom"—CORE	Count Basie, Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis, Jr., Dean Martin. Cancelled due to assassination of John F. Kennedy
2/10/64	Upsala College, East Orange, N.J.	CORE	Dave Brubeck
2/12/64	Philharmonic Hall	Voter Registration, SNCC, CORE, NAACP Legal Defense Fund	Miles Davis Quintet
9/20/64	The Scene, NYC	"Come Sunday, an Evening of Jazz for the Benefit of the Folks in Mississippi—CORE	Benny Powell, Frank Foster, Tobi Reynolds, Quentin Jackson, Dotty and Jerry Dodgian, Thad Jones Quintet with Pepper Adams
12/27/64	Village Gate	Freedomways	John Coltrane, Abbey Lincoln, Max Roach, Len Chandler
5/23/65	Private apartment in Greenwich Village	CORE	Randy Weston Sextet, James Farmer, speaking on his recent trip to Africa and the U.S. civil rights struggle

Sources: Drawn from Congress of Racial Equality Records, 1941–1967, State Historical Society of Wisconsin (Miscellaneous Benefits) and Topics Files at the Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, Newark, N.J. (New York Handbills).

Amiri Baraka (1963) so powerfully associated free jazz with African American political self-awareness, and so disdainfully dismissed much of hard bop as middle-brow music for the black middle class, that the association of avant-garde musical style with political radicalism became for many a generation later an unquestioned assumption. Even a cursory look at the mundane genre of the benefit concert, however, suggests that features of musical style do not predict political participation well. A partial list of benefit concerts for civil rights organizations and their participants is provided in Table 1.[12] The frequency of benefit events increased in the early 1960s, reaching a peak in late 1963 and early 1964. I do not wish to exaggerate the importance of participation in benefit concerts as a marker of political activism, but even this partial list of benefit concerts establishes that a complete aesthetic and political spectrum of the jazz community lent their names and services to the major civil rights organizations. From Tony Bennett to Prince Lasha, from Ben Webster to John Coltrane, Oscar Peterson to Charles Mingus, and Frank Sinatra to Gary Peacock there appears to have been something of a consensus that jazz performers, whatever their internal differences, had a duty to support civil rights.

In retrospect, it seems to be no accident that the controversy over free jazz erupted within the jazz community when it did. Ornette Coleman became the center of a heated debate after a much-publicized debut at New York's Five Spot in November 1959, but it is difficult to explain his dramatic rise without considering the volatility of the historical moment at which he emerged. Not long after Coleman's extended engagement at the Five Spot the Greensboro lunch counter sit-downs began. On 1 February 1960, four North Carolina Agricultural and Technical (A&T) students sat at a lunch-counter at the downtown Woolworth's in Greensboro, North Carolina and requested service (Chafe, 1981, 71). Within two weeks, similar sit-ins were taking place in Raleigh, Durham and Winston-Salem (Branch, 1988, 273). As Taylor Branch reported, the contagion of the student protests took the civil rights activists by surprise: there had been similar demonstrations in at least sixteen other cities in the three years prior to Greensboro but "few of them made the news, all faded quickly from public notice, and none had the slightest catalytic effect anywhere" (Branch, 1988, 272).

As 1960 continued, upheaval in both the political and musical worlds was in evidence. In April 1960, police fired into a crowd protesting apartheid in Sharpeville, South Africa. In June, Charles Mingus organized the Newport rebel jazz festival and in October recorded the "Original Faubus Fables" for Candid records—which included lyrics lambasting Arkansas Governor Faubus's attempts to prevent black students from enrolling in Central High School (Mingus, 1960a).[13] Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln recorded *Freedom Now Suite* in late August and early September (Roach, 1960), and Ornette Coleman recorded his historic *Free Jazz* (1960) album in December. In October, Martin Luther King, Jr. was arrested during a restaurant sit-in in Atlanta and sentenced to four months of hard labor on a state road gang (Branch, 1988, 358–361), while Fidel Castro took up a highly publicized residence at the Hotel Theresa in Harlem (Duckett, 1960). John F. Kennedy was elected president in November—after the black vote was swung by his small interventions on behalf of Martin Luther King, Jr. A further escalation in the civil rights movement occurred when the Freedom rides began in May 1961 (Branch, 1988, 412–491).

Even the most insulated, single-minded musician would have had difficulty evading news of the civil rights movement and African independence. Although musicians differed in the degree to which they participated in political events, it seems reasonable to suspect that nearly everyone had some awareness of these events and that they provided an interlocking counterpoint against which various events in the daily lives of musicians and the music industry were interpreted. There was an everyday pervasiveness to the civil rights movement and African independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

In comparison to Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz* (1960), Max Roach's *Freedom Now Suite* (1960), Abbey Lincoln's *Straight Ahead* (1961) and Charles Mingus's *Original Faubus Fables* (1960a) were comparatively conservative in musical sound, but more explicit in political content. The liner notes to *Freedom Now Suite* begin with a quotation from A. Philip Randolph: "A revolution is unfurling—America's unfinished revolution. It is unfurling in lunch counters, buses, libraries and schools—wherever the dignity and potential of men are denied. Youth and idealism are unfurling. Masses of Negroes are marching onto the stage of history and demanding their freedom now!" (Roach, 1960).

The original cover art displayed a photograph of three young black men sitting at a lunch counter, while a white male waiter looked skeptically into the camera. The work announced itself as a partisan in the struggle for civil rights and African liberation. Just as Duke Ellington's *Black, Brown and Beige* portrayed a "tone parallel to the history of the American Negro" in sections entitled *Black*: "Work Song," "Come Sunday," "Light"; *Brown*: "West Indian Dance," "Emancipation Celebration," "The Blues"; and *Beige* (Priestley and Cohen, 1993), the sections to the *Freedom Now Suite* had explicitly political and historical titles related to black and African liberation: "Driva' Man," "Freedom Day," "Triptych: Prayer/Protest/Peace," "All Africa," and "Tears for Johannesburg." (The last composition referred specifically to the Sharpeville massacres that had taken place in the spring of 1960.)

Charles Mingus's "Original Faubus Fables" likewise made its political commentary explicit. Mingus had recorded an instrumental version entitled "Fables

of Faubus" (Mingus, 1959) a year earlier, but Columbia Records would not let him include the lyrics, which included the following dialogue (Mingus, 1960a):

> Mingus (M): "Name me someone who's ridiculous, Dannie."
> Richmond (R): "Governor Faubus."
> M: "Why is he so sick and ridiculous?"
> R: "He won't permit us in his schools."
> M: "Then he's a fool." (Mingus, 1960a)

In comparison, Abbey Lincoln's texts on *Straight Ahead* are far more metaphorical. On the title track, Lincoln never mentions race or class but suggests that for some the road is "smooth and easy," but for those who must use the backroads, "straight ahead can lead nowhere." Lincoln continues her indirect commentary on social change in "Retribution," where she says she doesn't want a "silver spoon" or a "hand to hold, " she just wants to let the "retribution match the contribution" (Lincoln 1961). Nevertheless, neither *Freedom Now Suite* nor "Original Faubus Fables" generated a critical reaction of the magnitude of Ira Gitler's denunciation of *Straight Ahead*, despite their more explicitly political character. Lincoln, it seems, "took the heat for them all."

As a singer and a woman, Lincoln seems to have provided a more convenient target for musical and political criticism than Roach or Mingus. The compositions on *Freedom Now Suite* were all Max Roach's (three of them with the collaboration of Oscar Brown, Jr.). Roach's position as one of the founding fathers of bebop made him less vulnerable to the musical criticisms that Gitler claims were the basis of his tirade against *Straight Ahead*, despite the fact that the two albums had nearly identical personnel. The two principal differences between the albums were first, that *Straight Ahead* was issued under Lincoln's name, and second, that Lincoln was given compositional credit on four of the seven pieces. Neither singers nor women have enjoyed the same prestige as their instrumentalist male colleagues, and Lincoln was not widely known at the time despite having previously recorded four albums under her own name.[14] In the panel discussion, Gitler claimed that his two-star rating (out of a possible five) was based solely on musicianship. In the review he stated that "her bad intonation could be excused if it led toward the achievement of something positive"(Gitler et al., 1962a, 21).

Lincoln is far from the only jazz musician to have been accused of bad intonation—Billie Holiday, Betty Carter, Ornette Coleman and many others have also received this criticism. Since pitch shading is an important expressive resource in blues and jazz, the notion that there is a pure standard of intonation against which musicians should be judged is itself problematic, for the Western-tempered scale is a compromise with the overtone series to begin with.[15] While there are some passages in *Straight Ahead* where Lincoln could be described as deviating from the tempered scale, they are by far outweighed by the dramatic power of her singing against the haunting timbral colors of the band. It seems far more likely that Gitler unloaded his accumulated discomfort with activist musicians against a relatively vulnerable, female target.[16] Lincoln did not record another album under her own leadership until 1973 (Lincoln, 1973).

In the growing consolidation of diverse African American and non–African American constituencies around the struggle to end Jim Crow, it is not surprising that formerly accepted principles of interracial business as usual in the jazz world came under attack. The early 1960s witnessed several attempts on the part of musicians to organize themselves into groups that could circumvent the unfair financial deals they encountered in the recording and performing business. Mingus's dissatisfaction at the financial sum offered to him to perform at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1960 (Mingus, 1960b, liner notes) motivated him to organize the Newport rebel festival. An organization called the Jazz Artists Guild, which intended to book concerts and other events on terms more favorable to musicians, was created in the wake of the festival with Max Roach, Jo Jones, and Charles Mingus as its leading members. Although the organization did not last, there was a new assertiveness among musicians with respect to financial dealings, and a greater willingness to suggest that racism underlay a good deal of business as usual in the jazz industry. The reaction of white critics and musicians to this new atmosphere of politicization indicates that the ideology under which they had developed their relationship to black music—a generally color-blind ideology of interracial harmony—was shifting to a politicized ethnic ground that threatened to exclude them, or, at the very least, call into question their motivations and legitimacy.

One reaction to this political assertion by non–African Americans was to appeal to the universalistic aspect of jazz modernism. The higher principle of color-blind racial equality could serve to counter those segments of the political spectrum that appealed to racial autonomy as a principle of organization. That is, in any case, how I interpret the escalation in the charge of Crow Jim at the same time as African American musicians became more vocal about white racism in the music industry. In addition to Don DeMichael and Ira Gitler, Gene Lees and Dom Cerulli repeatedly raised the issue of discrimination against white musicians (Lees 1960a, 1960b; Cerulli 1964).

To return from whence we came, Don DeMichael's discomfort with Abbey Lincoln's ethnic stance turns on her apparent deprioritization of the rhetoric of interracial unity. DeMichael asked, "But when we talked in Chicago, you remember our talking about not the struggle for just one man but for all men"? And Lincoln replied: "I'm for that. Yet my struggle first is for my people" (Gitler

et al., 1962a, 22). After an exchange in which Jim Hall's (a white musician's) merits as a guitarist for Sonny Rollins was debated between Gitler and Roach, Lincoln asked:

> Why is it that because I love my people and I want human dignity, must I be a racist? Why is that I say to you, Don. Dizzy Gillespie is a great musician. Does that mean that you are inferior? This is the whole thing. Because I say my people are worthwhile and should be free, does this mean I hate the white man?"
>
> Bill Coss: "No Abbey, it only means that if you say only my people can be [worthwhile],"
>
> Lincoln: "Only? That's true. But have I ever said this?" (Gitler et al., 1962b, 23)

While the panel discussion ended on a note of unity, it arrived there through the circuitous route of discussing what positions people might take in a hypothetical race war and a problematizing of the meaning of integration. The more the other interlocutors insisted on the rhetoric of unity, the more Lincoln insisted on a rhetoric of autonomy.

Discourse, Practice, and Vernacularism

The emphasis on ethnic difference (hyper-difference) in the rhetoric of the black separatism of the early 60s most certainly responded to the emphasis on likeness (over-likeness) in the rhetoric of universal brotherhood on the part of liberal whites; what is taken to be real within this context is certainly a matter of positionality. The polarized climax to Lincoln's and Roach's confrontation with Gitler is not simply a question of the triumph of ethnic particularism over color-blindness. Both ideological positions coexisted in Lincoln's and Roach's thinking. What seems to have been at stake is the practical deployment of these rhetorics in the realignment of power and moral authority within the jazz world. In this interactional setting Lincoln and Roach appealed to the higher cultural capital of African Americans in the discourse of jazz music. Gitler, DeMichael, and Coss countered with the charge of Crow Jim no matter how social the explanation for differences in musical capital. In thinking about the implications of *Straight Ahead* for contemporary debates about race and culture, we need to recognize the wedding of self-interest to the larger historical and ideological context of the controversy. The participants on either side of the debate over *Straight Ahead* defended their personal interests and social positions as well as matters of principle. This seems to me to be where the intersection of discourse and practice lie. Considering the interactional contexts in which various ideological positions are taken and the social

action accomplished by them is thus crucial to the reconciliation of discourse and practice-centered modes of anthropological interpretation.

I conclude with two points about the issue of transnationalism, politics, and jazz. First, considering the relationship of the jazz industry to national and transnational historical issues has much to offer a rethinking of jazz history. Jazz often has been presented as a linear succession of musical styles operating independently of broader social events: from New Orleans jazz through swing, bebop, cool jazz, and hard bop on an inevitable trajectory towards the musical avant-gardism of the 1960s (Litweiler 1984, 1992; Schuller 1968, 1986, 65, 1989). In the prevailing modernism of the literature, the jazz avant-garde has even been viewed as the logical culmination of stylistic developments that compress into approximately fifty years a harmonic evolution paralleling European classical music—from diatonic harmony to atonality; from encumbrance by rules to freedom. Existing works that consider the relationship of jazz to historical events, on the other hand, often have transposed a linear model of history to the question of jazz and social awareness. Here the quest for social freedom has been mapped directly onto the search for freedom from musical form, and free jazz has been presumed to be the most politically inflected jazz style (Baraka, 1963; Kofsky, 1970). As benefit concerts and the debate over Abbey Lincoln's *Straight Ahead* suggest, there was a more complicated set of interrelationships between the social, political, and the musical in the late 1950s and early 1960s that become visible if we consider the contexts of the civil rights movements, aesthetic modernism, and African independence.

Secondly, although the transnational circulation of music effaces geographically bounded concepts of culture, it may actually intensify debates over ownership and control of particular musics. If a love of African American–inspired music is something that multiple cultural groups within the United States and abroad have in common, we need to remember that that space of cultural overlap is evaluated differently by members of different cultural groups according to their differences in everyday social experience. This truism of traditional cultural anthropology and ethnomusicology is harder to bring into focus in the context of the United States, where the rhetoric of the melting pot constructs attention to differences as divisive. To the extent that ethnic differences and differences in color continue to shape differences in social experience, I object to the recent postmodern trend toward labeling any invocation of shared ethnic experience as essentialist. Nor is it surprising when multiple cultural groups partially share a cultural practice such as playing and listening to jazz, that members of each participating group feel (partially) entitled to claim it as their own.

In the example of Lincoln's *Straight Ahead*, one constituency's pride, self-

assertion, and political activism was another's reverse racism, and each felt their evaluation of a shared musical milieu to be obviously true. If cultural experience is something that naturalizes a particular group's accumulated experience as rational truth, differences in the evaluation of something that two or more groups share is unlikely to be experienced as simply a difference, but rather as unreasonableness or irrationality, over the same set of facts. There is an enduring paradox in the phenomenon of transnationalism and cultural hybridity in general: neither solidarity nor tension are exactly what they seem; for that which at one moment is capable of bringing diverse cultural groups together can at another be just as likely to tear them apart. This is neither cause for celebration nor despair—but a tension to keep in play when thinking about the way music functions in an increasingly transnational cultural world.

Notes

1. Abbey Lincoln and Max Roach are African American performers. Lalo Schifrin and Don Ellis are white jazz performers (Schifrin was born in Argentina and was a member of Dizzy Gillespie's band at the time; Ellis was born in Los Angeles). Ira Gitler, Nat Hentoff, Bill Coss, and Don DeMichael are white jazz critics.
2. For a discussion of the relationship of early jazz criticism to primitivism, see Gioia (1988).
3. Recent historical work on early jazz that informs my argument includes Peretti (1992) and Kenney (1993). Peretti provides a new look at the role of New Orleans and urbanization in early jazz history that subverts many taken-for-granted presumptions transmitted in jazz histories. Kenney provides a thoughtful account of white Chicago musicians who crossed racial boundaries in their pursuit of learning black musical styles—and their paradoxical attitudes about race and class.
4. I have in mind Anthony Appiah (1992, 28–46), Gayatri Spivak (1988, 195–221, 1992), and Stuart Hall (1992).
5. For a summary of the vicissitudes of the color line on early jazz, see Peretti (1992, 177–210).
6. The sound of jazz drew on African American musical tropes such as call and response, interlocking rhythmic organization, blues melodic inflection, and the vocal and spiritual tradition of the church, as well as on non-African American musical elements such as musical theater tunes, dance instrumentation, harmony, and European conceptions of the artist. Among the musical stylistic devices pioneered by African American bands are the four-beat walking bass, the rhythmic feel of swing, and consolidation of the rhythm section (Bennie Moten, Count Basie, Earl Hines), arrangments that set one instrumental section against another (Don Redman, Fletcher Henderson), and the sustained expansion of solo improvisation (Louis Armstrong and those he influenced). For a more exhaustive account of the musical devices used by these bands, see Schuller (1989).
7. For contrasting accounts of Goodman's career, see Schuller (1989) and Collier (1989). For an account of how the Congress Hotel performance came to pass, see Collier (1989, 171–176). For economic details of Paul Whiteman's career, see Johnson (1979). For a description of the economics of the entertainment industry in the 1930s, see Stowe (1994).
8. For a longer discussion, see Monson (1995).
9. For a longer discussion, see Monson (1994).
10. See also *Chicago Defender* coverage of Fidel Castro's residence at the Hotel Theresa in Harlem in October 1960 (Duckett, 1960).
11. Trumpeters Roy Eldridge and Miles Davis, for example, were extremely critical of Ornette Coleman's music (Litweiler, 1992, 82).
12. Table 1 was compiled from fund-raising records of the Congress of Racial Equality (Miscellaneous Benefits) and handbills sent to Marshall Stearns (New York Jazz Clubs) announcing events in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. This list is by no means comprehensive and it overrepresents CORE fund-raising events to the extent of my reliance on CORE archival materials at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.
13. The Newport rebel festival was held from 30 June–3 July 1960. A critical account can be found in Lees (1960c). A more sympathetic account can be found in Michael Cuscuna's and Nat Hentoff's liner notes to Mingus (1960b). Musicians who participated in the rebel festival included the bands of Mingus, Ornette Coleman, Randy Weston, Kenny Dorham as well as premier musicians of an older generation: Jo Jones, Roy Eldridge, and Coleman Hawkins. For a historical account of the escalation of the civil rights movement in 1960, as well as the labyrinthine political strategies that resulted in John F. Kennedy's election, see Branch (1988, 272–378), Meier and Rudwick (1975), and Carson (1981). Contemporary documents pertaining to the civil rights movement in this period can be found in Aptheker (1993), Carson et al. (1991), and Garrow (1989).
14. Lincoln's four previous albums were *Affair* (1956), *That's Him!* (1957), *It's Magic* (1958), and *Abbey Is Blue* (1959).
15. Fifths in the tempered scale are smaller than their naturally occurring size in the overtone series. Intonation systems, when studied cross-culturally, reveal themselves to be just as constructed as many other features of culture.
16. Lincoln confirmed this interpretation in an interview with me on 13 June 1995 (Lincoln, 1995).

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