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# Four Chords to Freedom - Human Rights Education through Music Performance

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University of San Francisco

**Four Chords to Freedom - Human Rights Education through Music  
Performance**

A Field Project Presented to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in International and Multicultural Education

by  
Noah Romero  
May 2016

**Four Chords to Freedom - Human Rights Education through Music  
Performance**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTERS OF ARTS in  
INTERNATIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

By Noah Romero

May 2016

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members,  
this field project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

Approved:

Dr. Monisha Bajaj

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## Abstract

The purpose of this field project is to develop and implement a workshop called Four Chords to Freedom, which combines music performance with decolonizing, postcolonial feminist human rights education to serve as a space for transformative praxis in formal and non-formal educational settings. This field project includes observations from the activity, as well as recommendations for educators who are interested in combining human rights education with music performance to explore pedagogical approaches that develop skills and orientations centered on a critical understanding of human rights.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Statement of the Problem**

As evidenced by recent mass mobilization efforts against police brutality, economic exploitation, and institutionalized oppression, the demand for social justice and the recognition of universal human rights is on the rise. Discursive shifts in opinion and perception have spurred codified change in domestic policy, such as Supreme Court decisions striking down warrantless mass surveillance and legalizing gay marriage. The revolutionary fervor of recent years is perhaps best exemplified by Black Lives Matter, a movement rooted in a radical, intersectional, postcolonial, and queer feminist critique of state violence whose protest actions draw much-needed attention to the bloody realities of institutionalized racism in the United States. Still, unarmed black civilians are being murdered in the streets by police officers, corporations continue to receive government subsidies to deplete nonrenewable resources, and women, people of color, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, the differently abled, indigenous peoples, immigrants, and minorities face manifold forms of discrimination that reinforce their otherness and second-class status. Contrary to the notion that the United States is a global leader in justice and democracy, the unconditional recognition of human rights in the U.S. is a long way off. Education is a critical frontline in the struggle.

Despite advancements in social justice, Peter McLaren's (2011) portrait of modern day America represents the prevalent reality for many of the nation's citizens and subjects. U.S. society, as McLaren (2011) experiences it, is one in which capitalism and its by-products- militarism, nationalism, and the scapegoating of perceived others for

domestic troubles- reign supreme. Education, which has the potential to empower people to transcend the systems of oppression that both covertly and overtly dominate their lives, instead serves as the means by which people are inculcated from an early age with the perverse discourses of globalized consumer culture (Collins, 2009). Schools are thusly meant to reproduce the hierarchies of capitalism and “prepare people for adult work rules by socializing people to function well and without complaint in the hierarchical structure of the modern corporation” (Bowles & Gintis, 2002, p. 1). The work of human rights educators, however, lends credence to the notion that schools are not mere sites of capitalist reproduction but are institutions where a revolutionary spark can be ignited.

Meintjes (1997) contends that schools “...function as *contested public spheres* not only to produce domination, but to produce resistance to domination as well” (p.75, emphasis added). This ideal of the school as a place where human rights can be taught and promoted must undergird the development of educational policy and curricula if a new reality founded upon the respect for human dignity is to be achieved. In order to recognize and address systemic injustices and human rights violations, educators must continue to evolve past dominant paradigms of punitive and capitalist-reproductive models of education and toward alternative models that encourage divergent thought, community-responsive praxis, and creative problem solving. Such a curricula should not only teach human rights issues, treaties, and laws, but also inspire students to take reflective action to enact radical change based upon the categorical demand for human rights. This paper positions music education as an undervalued yet critical site for transformative human rights pedagogy, in keeping with Lise Vaugeois’s (2007) definition of music as “a key site of cultural, hence, political protestation” (p. 167) and the



demonstrated effectiveness of music as a tool for the teaching of social justice (Byrd & Levy, 2011). In response to the need for educational resources that merge music and human rights education, I have conceived a classroom activity and pedagogical tool called Four Chords to Freedom.

### **Purpose of the Project**

Though the use of music in teaching social justice is well documented (Levy & Byrd, 2011), there is a dearth of scholarly research that specifically addresses the intersection of music and human rights education. Given the inextricability of music and social change, both the performance of music and an understanding of the role music has played in the history of social movements have far-reaching implications for the future of HRE. From Riot Grrrl bands like Bikini Kill and Bratmobile channeling the primal urgency of punk rock to protest interpersonal and systemic violence against women, to NWA and Public Enemy's use of hip-hop as an indictment of police brutality and institutional racism, music has been and always will be a vital tool in the fight for human rights.

In an age where human rights both internationally and in the U.S. are under constant threat, it is of tremendous importance that educators take note of this power and integrate music education into human rights pedagogy. Four Chords to Freedom is a simple and powerful tool that may enable educators and activists to do just that, but it cannot be the only one. An important goal of this project and the development of Four Chords to Freedom as a pedagogical tool is that it will serve as an example for educators, activists, and students alike to continue exploring the power of music to bring about justice and inspire change.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Four Chords to Freedom was developed with a theoretical framework that draws upon Gramsci's (1971) conception of cultural hegemony, Althusser's (1971) description of how institutions such as the media and education serve the purposes of the Ideological State Apparatus, and Giroux's (2001) call for the development of liberatory pedagogies designed to oppose the proliferation of hegemonic, capitalist-reproductive forms of education. In order to root Four Chords to Freedom in the tradition of participatory, learner-centered pedagogy with the goal of increasing awareness of human rights and the development of radical agency, this field project draws upon these foundational works in critical educational and socioeconomic theory and further augments them with principles and research conducted in the fields of human rights education and radical music education.

An epistemological inquiry of this literature, for the purposes of this project, began with a foundation in Gramsci's (1971) conception of cultural hegemony, or the ways by which the state uses its influence, as opposed to its might, to coerce the masses into accepting its power. In contrast to the repressive state apparatus, comprised of the military and law enforcement which imposes social control by instilling fear of physical violence, the ideological state apparatus compels the subjects of the state to internalize and accept the hierarchies of capitalism and their prescribed collective fate as the oppressed (Althusser, 1971). Althusser (1971) subsequently implicates education as an Ideological State Apparatus, or a means by which capitalist societies indoctrinate its

young with bourgeois propaganda masquerading as enlightenment, rationality, and knowledge.

By drawing upon the theories of education as a form of cultural hegemony and an Ideological State Apparatus, this field project attempts to conceive of an educational methodology that will serve as a model of pedagogy and praxis for resistance. In the same way that oppressive forces can wield education as a tool for the social reproduction of unequal power relations and the inculcation of capitalist ideology, the development of pedagogical tools inspired by theory that calls for a comprehensive interrogation of the institutionalized inequality at the root of the modern world's dominant economic models can harness education as a site of consciousness-raising and resistance.

### **Significance of the Project**

Four Chords to Freedom represents an attempt at introducing and exploring the potential of radical music performance as a teaching tool for human rights education. As such, researchers, educators, and activists may draw upon the methodology, observations, and theoretical underpinnings of this project to integrate music performance into their own HRE praxis or to develop and pursue other new and innovative ways of engaging in transformative, rights-based pedagogy.

Four Chords to Freedom is also positioned herein as an example of an approach to education that unites disparate strands of theory and practice in pursuit of the common collective goal of liberation and empowerment. By introducing music performance to HRE, Four Chords to Freedom simultaneously raises the possibility of introducing human rights principles and frameworks into music education, a field commonly perceived as being objectively and rigid in its ability to accommodate social justice concepts

(McLaren, 2011). The significance of Four Chords to Freedom is thusly two-fold: to introduce novel ways of engaging in transformative human rights education and introducing the tenets of HRE to practitioners of fields that may not have been previously cognizant of its capacity for educating for resistance, self-actualization, and social change.

### **Plan for Developing the Project**

Because the parameters of Four Chords to Freedom are such that a group of students can create original works of art in response to Human Rights pedagogy, I aim to conduct sessions with volunteers in which the group will voice their reflections on the Human Rights issues facing their communities through music. Workshops may be conducted in any number of configurations, examples of which include: workshop conducted with a full set of instruments, with only a laptop and music production software, or with no instruments at all, simply the participants' voices, bodies and improvised instruments. It is therefore possible for groups to conduct Four Chords to Freedom workshops regardless of the resources available. Participants will then be asked to share their experiences and impressions of the activity with the researcher through qualitative assessment.

The activity, though guided by a facilitator, will be democratic in nature, with the group reflecting upon the issues most important to them as a community. The facilitator, if necessary, will then reframe the group's reflection using the framework of human rights and will identify specific rights under threat. With the knowledge that issues such as mass surveillance, police brutality and state violence, gentrification, and discrimination based on race, class, sexual orientation, gender, and ethnicity, are not mere

inconveniences but direct threats to Human Rights, participants will then break up into small groups to channel their reactions and proposed solutions into music.

A desired outcome of the Four Chords to Freedom pedagogy, and the use of a maximum of four chords, is to channel music at its most basic and visceral level as an artistic response to human rights violations, as many of the most influential artists and bands in history have done. With this guiding principle in mind, all participating groups will be limited to using the same four chords (or less), which they may arrange and play in any order. Chord progressions that can be used include E minor-D-C minor-A minor (the chords used in the Nirvana's "Come as Your Are") or E-G-C-B (those used in Black Sabbath's "N.I.B."). To facilitate the selection of chords, the instructor can play samples of popular songs, which utilize four chords, or less, and then have participants vote on which song they like best. The class will then use the constituent chords of the selected song to create their original works. Popular artists from diverse genres such as The Sex Pistols, Sonic Youth, The Everly Brothers, Smokey Robinson, and even Dr. Dre have all written songs that employ four chords or less and can serve as examples from which to draw inspiration. Limiting the group to four chords will also enable participants to more easily compose a song within the time frame of a class session, in addition to fostering equality by reducing disparities in musical expertise.

For the purposes of this field project, I plan to focus on the configuration that requires only a limited assortment of instruments and whatever items may be in the room. Undertaking the field project with this emphasis in mind will make it so that the data and observation reflects the most stripped-down and basic form of Four Chords to Freedom. These observations of the activity in its most primal state will not only demonstrate how

Four Chords to Freedom can be used in even the most underprivileged of circumstances, it will serve as the foundational framework of the activity, upon which instructors with access to more advanced instruments and equipment can readily build. The goal of Four Chords to Freedom and its application in Human Rights Education is to write a song that might not sell millions but just might be able to mobilize the masses, even if it starts with developing the radical consciousness of just one person. By combining human rights education and music performance, Four Chords to Freedom is a tool designed to combat the machinations of capitalist reproduction and hegemonic education by fostering in participants the power to imagine the more equitable world of tomorrow by creating its soundtrack today.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

The literature that undergirds the development of Four Chords to Freedom is united by a call for the development of critical, community-responsive, and learner-centered human rights pedagogy that identifies the role and function of education as a site where the discourses of domination are alternately perpetuated and challenged. Four Chords to Freedom was conceived with an understanding that alternative pedagogies rooted in a respect for human dignity, an understanding of current and historical struggles for justice and equity, and that views students as active agents of change instead passive consumers of information must be developed and promoted with the goal of halting the widespread acceptance of prescriptive, uninspiring, and reproductive educational models. Four Chords to Freedom and its development are predicated upon an analysis of literature that indicts education in industrialized societies as an institution governed that reproduce the

hierarchies of capitalism so as to ensure that an socioeconomic superstructure that serves to benefit the wealthy can continue for generations unabated. Gramsci's (2014) definition and description of cultural hegemony, Bowles & Gintis's (1976) work on social reproduction in schools, Giroux's (2001) writing on the pedagogy of the opposition, and Althusser's (1971) theories of education's role, along with religion and family as an Ideological State Apparatus form the theoretical framework of an analysis of education and the role it plays in perpetuating the inequalities inherent to life under the domination of neoliberal capitalism.

Because the field of human rights education (HRE) has already been established as an educational discipline whose practitioners are committed to harnessing education to inform students of their rights, and galvanize their passions in service of the greater good, HRE is presented here as an alternative to capitalist-reproductive education and the Ideological State Apparatus (Tibbitts, 2002; Bajaj, 2011; Osler, 2015). As such, *Four Chords to Freedom* has been developed as a contribution to the burgeoning literature on liberatory critical pedagogy and praxis. In addition to theories of social reproduction and HRE, the theoretical underpinning of *Four Chords to Freedom* is informed by a study of literature illustrating the potential of radical music education as a tool for HRE praxis, or the ability to take action based on critical reflection.

### **Social Reproduction and the Pedagogy of the Opposition**

An epistemological inquiry of this literature, for the purposes of this project, began with a foundation in Gramsci's (2014) conception of cultural hegemony, or the ways by which the state uses its influence, as opposed to its might, to coerce the masses into accepting its power. Bowles and Gintis (1976) contend that schooling in capitalist

societies is critical for the maintenance of an unjust status quo and that the role of the schools is to funnel the children of elite families into the ranks of the bourgeoisie whilst maintaining of a permanent underclass to exploit as wage labor. Bowles & Gintis (1976) support this assertion with various analyses of phenomena that dispute the connection between intelligence and academic or economic success. The researchers point to open enrollment admissions, which allow institutions to admit new students regardless of prior achievement, demonstrated that students with lower standardized test scores and grades statistically fared no worse in college than their classmates with higher grades and IQ test scores (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 108). Bowles & Gintis (1976) reference a study by the American Council on Education of students admitted through open enrollment at the end of one year of undergraduate study, that concluded that these students admitted performed at a level similar to their peers admitted through technocratic-meritocratic admissions.

The findings of the ACE study were subsequently supported after college, as Bowles & Gintis (1976) conclude that individuals who possessed economic wealth before entering the higher education system were significantly more likely to attain further wealth than students with similar IQs who nonetheless born into lower socioeconomic standing. Traditional markers of academic preparedness, such as high test scores, excellent grades, and matriculation from elite preparatory academies, thusly function as tools for the perpetuation of the ruling class. Bowles & Gintis's (1976) findings indicate that, though outliers exist, prosperity is not gained by hard work and intelligence but is rather passed on from one generation of elites to the next irrespective of merit or intelligence. The role of education, then, is to legitimate this unequal transference of



capital and power, by perpetuating the notion that privileged students who are able to attend selective institutions are unequivocally deserving of their social location. Such a mentality serves the two-pronged goal of consolidating the hegemony of the ruling classes whilst maintaining a permanent underclass fit for no role in society other than that of expendable wage labor, regardless of individual skill or qualification.

In tracing the theoretical, epistemological, and practical dimensions of a pedagogy for the opposition, Giroux (2001) critiques prescient yet rigidly pessimistic writing on education and the Ideological State Apparatus and social reproduction described by Althusser (1971) and Bowles & Gintis (1976). While Giroux (2001) agrees that public education, from its emphasis on discipline, drilling, and punishment can mold masses of students into obedient subjects of empire, the theories of social reproduction and the Ideological State Apparatus do not recognize the empirical fact that students (and for that matter, teachers) do not always simply and unreservedly allow the state to impose its will over their minds and bodies. The pedagogy of the opposition expands upon reproduction theory to account for the agency of actors and the acts of revolution and resistance inherent to schooling. Like the feminist and human rights educators mentioned later in this field project, Giroux (2001) views schools as a site in which students and teachers infuse the learning process with the truths of their own lives, as sculpted by their lived experiences, historical contexts, and personal ideologies. Because the school plays a significant role in shaping collective knowledge and, by extension the power dynamics, national priorities, and perceived realities, an education system that is undertaken in service of empire building is one that necessarily perpetuates injustice. The pedagogy of the opposition, by emphasizing the contested nature of knowledge creation, is an

approach to learning that is prepares students and teachers for the society founded upon the continual development of communities of compassion and understanding.

### **Human Rights Education**

Human rights education and the need for the proliferation of diverse ways to engage in human rights praxis stems from the conviction that an understanding of human rights should serve as the basis for all societal institutions and interactions, as opposed to the dominant discourses of capitalism, white supremacy, and Judeo-Christian morality. HRE is a powerful framework for teaching social justice because instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) provide an internationally recognized standard for the respect of human dignity. Drawing upon his work as an educator in countries recovering from conflict, Magendzo (2005) addresses the importance of specifically championing human rights education, as opposed to education for empowerment or social justice. HRE, as a scholarly discipline and pedagogical approach, recognizes that the understanding of human rights is imperative to the achievement of reconciliation and the creation of shared meaning:

The argument of those that were cautious was that human rights education produces political tensions, causes ‘unpleasant’ problems, and reminds us of a past that some would prefer to forget. Therefore they recommended the use of the terms ‘education for peace’, ‘for love’, ‘for mutual understanding’, ‘for conflict resolution’, etc., in state projects. However, it has been always my opinion that human rights education should maintain and preserve its nomenclature. We shouldn’t forget that language creates reality. Human rights violations are part of our experience, part of our memory. (p. 138)

Four Chords to Freedom is thusly designed to develop a specific set of skills aimed at fostering the ability to usher in a new reality, founded upon an understanding of human rights rooted in the historical contexts and contemporary struggles of marginalized communities. By exploring music as an outlet, Four Chords to Freedom demands that students and teachers think creatively about how individuals can reclaim their power from the superstructures of global capitalism to name, denounce, and transform the inequalities they produce. In order to develop the activity with this goal in mind, it was necessary to draw upon the work of human rights education scholars, and an understanding of HRE which contends that education is not only *about* rights, but conducted *through* rights, and *for* rights (Bajaj, 2011; Osler, 2015). That is, the tenets of awareness, social justice, and global citizenship are to be achieved through a curriculum that teaches human rights law, treaties, and instruments using participatory learning that demands that students, educators, and activists, take concrete action to enact positive change in their communities.

Scholars of human rights education (HRE) present participatory, action-oriented approaches to learning that represent pedagogies for the opposition made even more accessible through their grounding in human rights principles, laws, and instruments. HRE provides a pedagogical framework that views the promotion of universal and internationally recognized human rights, the recognition of human dignity, and the development of students as agents of social change (as opposed to the indoctrination into dominant ideologies) as the goal of education. The work of Tibbitts (2002), Bajaj (2011, 2012), Hantzopoulos (2012), and Osler (2015) serve as foundational texts that put forth a model of pedagogy and praxis for the real-life implementation of rights-based education.

Tibbitts (2002) describes three preeminent models of human rights education that maintain distinct pedagogical priorities: the values and awareness model, the accountability model, and the transformational model. Bajaj (2011) similarly introduces the terms HRE for Coexistence, HRE for Global Citizenship, and HRE for Transformative Action. While similar to Tibbitts's description of existing models of human rights education, Bajaj (2011) is careful to describe the nuances of how human rights education manifests itself in different ways, depending on the pressing needs and social location of the students and teachers involved. A comprehensive understanding of the models of human rights education as described by Tibbitts (2002) and Bajaj (2011), though unique, is crucial in developing programs and pedagogies about, for, and through human rights.

The values and awareness model typifies a surface level understanding of human rights which nevertheless represents the bulk of what most students will be exposed to in their journey through the education system. Programs under this model include integrating human rights into history and social studies classes, as well as public advertising campaigns designed to bring attention to specific human rights issues. Though programs within the values and awareness model can be dismissed as insignificant or insufficient, they serve an important discursive and pedagogical focus because they ensure that as many people as possible become aware of the language and principles of human rights. Students exposed to the values and awareness model are then prepared to participate in what Tibbitts (2002) describes as the accountability model, or specific programs that train students and professionals to apply human rights law to their specific areas of proficiency. Such programs include training police officers to recognize

the humanity of the citizens who inhabit the neighborhoods they patrol and preparing activists to recognize and name specific human rights violations committed in their communities and the ways by which perpetrators may be brought to justice.

HRE for Global Citizenship as described by Bajaj (2011) is similar to the Values and Awareness model in that it represents an entry point into human rights discourses, and programs that bear the hallmarks of this model posit a cosmopolitan ideal and international standards as aspirational. Programs based upon global citizenship include letter writing and fundraising campaigns that aim to teach students that they are part of a worldwide community as opposed to mere members of a specific nation-state. Though limited by a cosmopolitan and universalist conception of human rights, students engaged in HRE for Global Citizenship programs benefit from an introduction to the larger human rights framework and are prepared to appreciate the ways by which local struggles for human rights differ, though they may all appear aspire for similar aims of justice, equity, and peace.

While the HRE for Global Citizenship framework, like the Values and Awareness model, prepares students to understand the universality of human rights, HRE for Coexistence builds upon this knowledge to foster an understanding of marginalized groups and the different ways by which human rights may be upheld and social justice may be administered depending on the unique historical and sociocultural contexts of the struggle. Programs that fit under the umbrella of HRE for Coexistence are often built upon contact hypothesis, which hypothesizes that exposure to different cultures and groups will eliminate prejudice and stereotyping (Bajaj, 2012, p. 493). HRE for Coexistence adds important feature to human rights education by demonstrating that the

rights of minorities, including their right to seek the redress of historical injustice, is integral to the promotion of human rights themselves. HRE for Coexistence demonstrates that cosmopolitanism is insufficient for the true achievement of universal human rights as passed wrongs must be made right, or else the imposition of an international standard of rightness is merely a novel form of colonization via ideology.

Lastly, the transformational model of human rights education situates HRE in the community-responsive tradition of critical pedagogy but is “...geared towards empowering the individual to both recognize human rights abuses and to commit to their prevention” (Tibbitts, 2002, p. 166). Bajaj’s (2011) definition of HRE for Transformative Action is similarly rooted in coalitional solidarity, a critique of power relations and “the need for action to rectify the often-wide gap between current realities and human rights guarantees” (Baja, 2011, p. 493). These transformational models are very much concerned with how power is structured and the ways by which disparate yet similarly oppressed groups can join together to fight common injustices.

As such, HRE for Transformative Action represents the potential for education to serve as radical political action and is exemplified by collective protest, social action, and intervening when governments, corporations, and other power brokers are known to be violating both domestic and international laws. The transformation of individuals, from acquiescent subjects of an oppressive system built upon the coloniality of power and the inequality of capitalism, to agents of change rooted in the defense of human rights, is the cognitive and experiential goal of human rights education. The transformation of individual hearts and minds toward the defense of human rights is the only way to ensure that future societies are similarly founded upon the recognition and defense of universal

human dignity. As a pedagogical tool specifically designed to train participants to name the injustices facing their communities, re-contextualizing them as violations of human rights, and creating art as a symbolic response to the interrogation of injustice, Four Chords to Freedom is designed as an activity specifically designed to serve as an example of transformational human rights education.

Hantzopoulos (2012) provides an important touchstone for the conception of Four Chords to Freedom as a pedagogical tool specifically situated in the practice of human rights education because of the comprehensive nature in which her writing depicted a specific practice of transformative HRE sustained over a prolonged period of teaching and research. In response to prevailing public discourses around educational attainment that misguidedly equate proficiency with standardized testing, Hantzopoulos' (2012) research on Prep, an autonomous school located in New York city that "espoused a commitment to personalized, student-centered education, democratic practices, and critical pedagogy" (p. 39) is a powerful testament to the transformational potential of such programs. Prep students not only learn about human rights in class, HRE is infused into every facet of the educational experience, including the administration. Prep eschews high stakes standardized testing and evaluates students based on "performance-based assessment", in which students complete projects based on specialized subject areas, which are then presented to a committee prior to graduation. Such a project not only prepares a student for undergraduate and graduate level work in academia, it enables them to develop skills in critical thinking, personal responsibility and creativity whilst empowering them to create new knowledge as opposed to reproducing prescribed factoids and rote communiqués.

Prep also practices student discipline through restorative justice, in which students and teachers in conflict are forced to recognize and talk through their problems with the goal of reconciliation, as opposed to punishment. Students are also invited to influence school policy through town hall meetings in which they are invited to discuss their grievances and develop solutions to these problems. Such an approach to justice and discipline encourages healthy debate, open-mindedness, and the ability to form and adhere to compromises based upon dialog and mutual respect. In short, Prep trains students not to be single-mindedly adept at taking standardized tests, it teaches them to be capable members (and leaders) of a sophisticated and just democracy. The story and success of Prep serves as an important foundation for Four Chords to Freedom as it demonstrates the ways by which HRE can be integrated into all facets of the educational experience. Four Chords to Freedom, at its core, is designed to serve as a tool for educators seeking to embody Prep's commitment to HRE by describing a method for deploying music as a tool for raising critical consciousness rooted in an understanding and passion for human rights.

Osler (2015) expounds upon the basic definition of transformative HRE praxis and suggests that future HRE endeavors ought to also be rooted in a black and postcolonial feminism that situates human rights work as a critique of the coloniality of power that maintains oppressive conditions in spite of local and global struggles for liberation. In an attempt to map the theoretical underpinnings of human rights education, Osler (2015) concedes that her research is inextricably tethered to the specific social and historical context of Norway, where she lives and works. In acknowledging this reality, Osler (2015) notes human rights abuses, such as systemic discrimination against migrants and



the indigenous Sami population, occur even in a nation commonly perceived as progressive and peaceful as Norway. Osler (2015) thusly contends that human rights education should be rooted in the desire to stand in solidarity with oppressed people in distant places, but that solidarity begins by casting a critical eye toward human rights at home. Osler's (2015) work is central to *Four Chords to Freedom* because it calls upon the human rights educate to critique the provenance of mainstream understanding of human rights themselves particularly with regard to the ways by which human rights are distorted in a way the justifies colonial mentalities and the further oppression of marginalized groups masquerading as the empowerment of others. A contemporary example of such a phenomena occurs when corporations cite their right to conduct business without regulation, thereby justifying exploitative labor and resource extraction processes. In order to avoid using human rights as a tool for domination, Osler (2015) urges educators to undertake their work with the specific lens oriented toward black feminism, and decolonization. Such a framework trains students and educators engaged in human rights praxis to interrogate inequality with the goal of understanding the plight of the oppressed rooted in their unique histories and social dynamics, as opposed to forcing upon them a one-size-fits-all definition of justice. In order to situate *Four Chords to Freedom* as an example of transformational human rights education grounded in decolonizing feminist pedagogy, it is necessary to integrate research from the field of critical music education.

### **Music Education for Resistance**

In order integrate music performance with HRE, as well as to develop the specific practice of *Four Chords to Freedom*, Byrd & Levy's (2012) review on initiatives that use

music to teach social justice, McLaren's (2011) work on music education as a conduit for a transformative process called radical negation, which calls for students to actively challenge, resist, and transform the prescribed mentalities that have been forced upon them. Lastly, Vaugeois's (2007) call for music education as a site for postcolonial protestation, which integrates a critique of the discourses of charity, Western exceptionalism, and heteropatriarchy provided a theoretical basis for Four Chords to Freedom's grounding in discourses of postcolonial feminism, which is critical to ensuring that participants approach the activity with an understanding that human rights activism is rooted in horizontal alliance building amongst the oppressed and their allies.

As a tool for human rights education, Four Chords to Freedom is inspired by the work of groups such as Los Crudos, Bikini Kill, and G.L.O.S.S, artists whose music is a direct response to the human rights abuses and systemic inequalities that very much define their lives. An influential Latin-American hardcore punk band, Los Crudos used their platform to speak on subjects such as political murder and forced disappearance. Bikini Kill, originators of the Riot Grrrl movement, denounced both institutional and interpersonal violence against women. The songs of G.L.O.S.S. (Girls Living Outside Society's Shit), a band from Olympia, WA with multiple transgender members, are often composed with fewer than four chords to broadcast a defiance of transphobic mentalities and discourses, as well as to sound a clarion call for solidarity. The activity is also inspired by hip-hop music, whose artists often create art with non-traditional instruments (such as inexpensive keyboards, digital audio programs, and by sampling pre-recorded music) to develop, foster, and broadcast critical consciousness.

Byrd and Levy (2012) detail several US-based programs in a variety of schools and disciplines that have found quantifiable success using music to teach social justice. The variety of programs Byrd & Levy (2012) documented all utilized music to contextualize the often charged and controversial themes of systemic racism, historical injustice, institutional discrimination, and genocide in a way that allowed students to relate and react to the material without being overwhelmed or triggered. Byrd & Levy (2012) conclude that students found both performing and listening to music to be a useful tool for engaging students in lessons pertaining to social justice. Music allowed students to approach such potentially weighty topics in a way that fostered the conciliatory spirit of community and encouraged them to relate the lessons relatable to their personal experiences. While students surveyed in the study all reported being moved and inspired by the use of music to teach social justice, they also reported that music was not often used as a teaching tool in most of their other classes that covered topics pertaining to social justice. As such, the development Four Chords to Freedom was inspired by the fact that Byrd & Levy (2012) provide empirical evidence that music is an effective yet underutilized tool in teaching social justice. In doing so, they demonstrate the need for an activity that integrates music performance with the principles of transformative human rights education.

Though built upon my personal experience as a musician, it was necessary to ground Four Chords to Freedom in radical pedagogical theory so as to ensure that it would serve a deliberate cognitive and experiential purpose. One such theoretical foundation is McLaren's (2011) writing on the potential for music education to act as an incubator for a process he calls "radical negativity." Specifically, McLaren (2011) calls

for music pedagogy that explicitly challenges the inequalities inextricable from global capitalism, asserting that “a critical education in my view should provide the space for students to recognize themselves as the very source of the valorization of capital that oppresses them, but also as the primary source of capital’s undoing” (p. 139). Music education as radical negativity also sets forth specific learning outcomes that encourage students to develop the analytical skills needed to tackle both global and local inequality, as well as the ability to recognize the presence of injustice. Such cognition is achieved by guiding students through two stages of “negation.”

The first of McLaren’s (2011) negations is a vocal refutation of the very underpinnings of consumerist society. It “...occurs when we negate our status as objects of history, when we refuse to be commodities in the service of neoliberal capital, when we shout a resounding ‘No’ to serving as wage labor for capital. This is when we take the position: I am NOT wage labor” (p. 138). Simple as it may seem, the first negation is a courageous step that must also be handled gently, as it demands that students and teachers question the validity and provenance of deeply-held beliefs.

Once the first negation has been vocalized, students are then prepared to perform McLaren’s (2011) second negation, which calls for them to embody the first negation in real life. This process closely aligns with what Paulo Freire (1970) describes as *conscientizao* or consciousness-raising: the development of a critical consciousness, which comes from recognizing one’s agency and ability to influence the course of history. To achieve *conscientizao* is to negate the idea that individual people, with their political, financial, and physical limitations are powerless to defy authority. An education that guides learners through the development of their own critical consciousness is one

that prepares them to name, analyze, and challenge neoliberal capitalism and its necessary bedfellows: racism, heteropatriarchy, misogyny, homophobia, economic exploitation, environmental degradation, slavery, genocide, and war. The second negation calls on participants to build upon their knowledge and use the skills and resources available to them not just for personal empowerment, but to devise real alternatives to capitalism. McLaren (2011), however, stops short of describing how music pedagogy rooted in radical negativity would look and feel. *Four Chords to Freedom*, as such, is an attempt at implementing McLaren's (2011) ideas in formal and informal classroom settings.

In establishing a theoretical framework for *Four Chords to Freedom*, I found it important to augment McLaren's (2011) socialist, dialectical analysis with pedagogical theory that specifically takes into account the perspectives of critical race theory and postcolonial feminism. The understanding and embodiment of such perspectives is vital to the undertaking of human rights work, and Vaugeois's (2007) writing on music education as a site for postcolonial protestation is an inspiring foundational model. Before even undertaking the socialist critique of capital and the state, Vaugeois (2007) urges educators to first identify their own role in the perpetuation of injustice. Moreover, a critique of coloniality specifically derived from the lived experiences and historical contexts of women, people of color, and indigenous communities must be employed in order to do so. For educators to work toward social justice, we must first understand how discourses of enlightenment, modernity, and charity have the potential to serve as neo-colonial tools of oppression:

Salvationist narratives can be expressed in apparently generous acts when people

with privilege reach out to ‘help people less fortunate than themselves’ without exploring or addressing the factors that have created glaring inequalities. Liberalism teaches us that it is the citizen’s duty to ‘lift up’ the ‘underprivileged’ or the ‘underdeveloped’, and yet, this duty and the hierarchical relationships it fosters are predicated upon the notion of lesser Others- a notion developed assiduously during the Enlightenment. The notion of lesser Others situates us (citizens) squarely in charity narratives that fail to question how contemporary relationships have come to be as they are. (Vaugeois, 2007, p. 166)

Vaugeois’s (2007) critique informs a practice of human rights advocacy that denounces charity and equates human rights with standing in solidarity with those already embroiled in struggle against an oppressive status quo. The duty of those living in economically prosperous countries is not to rescue or enlighten, but to recognize the ways by which their privilege is built upon the exploitation of marginalized people. In order to achieve the true proliferation of universal human rights and to devise real solutions rooted in empathy and solidarity for those most affected by inequality, educators must first acknowledge the ways by which these inequalities are rooted in the legacies of colonialism and capitalism. True justice cannot occur if human rights educators and activists approach the work with the mentality that they are bestowing enlightenment upon a primitive populace, especially if they are not critical of their own complicity in the reproduction of inequality.

To locate the economic, political, historical, and epistemological sources of injustice is, for example, to understand that though female genital cutting is a serious human rights issue in central Africa, it was practiced in the US and Europe as recently as the 1930s (Gunning 1991-92, p. 207). Similarly, while human rights students, educators, and activists must recognize that violence against the LGBTQ community in sub-Saharan Africa is a grave threat to human rights in the region, a postcolonial lens sheds light on the fact that much anti-gay sentiment in the region is rooted in moralities and mentalities

inflicted upon subjugated populations by violent European colonizers. Even in the present day, Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2014 was heavily influenced and promoted by U.S.-based evangelical lobbyists, although the act was not eventually passed. An individual who approaches human rights with a feminist, postcolonial lens would also understand that there are already local movements, groups, and individuals fighting for human rights in their communities and it is not the job of Western organizations, governments, and militaries to provide salvation.

### **Summary**

Though *Four Chords to Freedom*, in practice is meant to be experienced as a free-flowing and open-ended teaching activity, it is nonetheless positioned as a socialist alternative to hegemonic and reproductive educational philosophies and an example transformational HRE infused with the tenets of radical music education. By combining Marxist and neo-Marxist critiques of power, education, and the state with human rights education and what McLaren (2011) describes as “radical musicking,” *Four Chords to Freedom* has the specific goal of helping people develop the skills to recognize the injustices they face and to take action to transform the power relations that cause them. The disparate strands of literature that comprise the theoretical foundation of *Four Chords to Freedom* coalesce and concentrate into a simple activity which nonetheless has a lofty goal- to transform society and usher in a new reality founded upon human rights, coalitional solidarity, decolonization, and the nurturing of a just and peaceful coexistence.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Description of the Project**

Four Chords to Freedom is a pedagogical tool that can be used in formal and nonformal education settings to teach human rights concepts through music [See Appendix A for the Tool itself]. Four Chords to Freedom draws upon a theoretical framework that recognizes the need for alternatives to repressive and reproductive approaches to education based on the defense and promotion of human rights. The activity has four distinct sections: 1) introductions, 2) discussion, 3) musical journaling, and 4) closing thoughts. As students walk into the classroom, they are provided an assignment sheet that contains background information, instructions, and a glossary of key terms (such as Human Rights, UDHR, ICCPR, ICESCR, and postcolonial feminism). Due to time constraints, the definitions included in the assignment sheet for the workshop described in this project were originally copied from Wikipedia, but they have since been updated to ensure accuracy and reliability. Once the students have settled into the room and have become familiar with the assignment sheet, the workshop is called into session.

A Four Chords to Freedom workshop then begins with a round of introductions, in which participants are prompted to volunteer their names and one or more issues that concern them. Once introductions have been finished, the facilitator is tasked with locating common themes within the concerns the participants mentioned and relating them to human rights. Issues of local importance, such as gentrification, privacy, and the rising cost of higher education, for example, can all be reframed as human rights issues that are specifically addressed in international instruments such as the ICCPR, ICESCR, and the UDHR. The goal of framing societal woes as potential human rights violations is



to foster a sense of solidarity within the group by assuring them that their concerns, though unique are nonetheless linked by larger systems of inequality.

Participants are then prompted to channel the reactions and emotions encountered throughout the course of the discussion and transform them into music. Depending on the resources available, students may be able to compose full orchestral suites based upon these reactions. More than likely, however, participants will be encouraged to make use of whatever they can find (examples of improvised instruments might include tables, pens, books, and furniture) to create a piece of music that symbolizes their reaction to a lively discussion surrounding human rights issues. In the spirit of punk rock, and the activity's name, no more than four chords ought to be used and the piece should be as reactive and visceral as possible. While Four Chords to Freedom allows students to harness the power of music performance as a tool for change, musical experience is not a barrier to entry. Composing music in the context of Four Chords to Freedom can certainly consist of creating an original piece of music, but lyrics, drum beats, and even silence are equally valid and valuable forms of musical expression. Though there are barriers to how participants can choose express themselves creatively, they will be required to make assured choices on how they wish to process to newly-developed human rights consciousness. This is by design, as educators and activists interested in undertaking human rights work must be able to exercise the cognitive ability to take decisive action based upon critical reflection on the issues most important to them.

Though elements of the activity can be repurposed and applied to all manner of teaching, Four Chords to Freedom is presented here as a tool for the promotion of an anti-capitalist, post-colonial feminist human rights pedagogy. As an activity that combines

McLaren's (2011) anti-capitalist negativity, the radical feminism of Vaugeois's (2007) postcolonial protestation, and the transformative approach to HRE, Four Chords to Freedom seeks to deploy music education in the fight for human rights and to challenge discourses that "lead to the valorization of the status quo in ways that occlude possibilities for imagining a world that does not accept violence and inequality as inevitable" (Vaugeois, 2007, p. 167). In order to stay true to Vaugeois's (2007) call for a reshaping of the discursive underpinnings of society itself, Four Chords to Freedom was conceived as an example of education that is expressly about, for, and through human rights.

In the spirit of participatory education, Four Chords to Freedom is structured as a learner-centered learning experience in which a facilitator is present to guide the conversation but defers to the group on specific discussion topics. In order to conduct a workshop in this manner, the facilitator must not only be versed in human rights treaties, principles, laws, and instruments, but willing to subjugated any specific ideological agenda to the larger the group dynamic. This type of educator represents an inversion of the omnipotent educator who engages in banking education. On the contrary, the facilitator of a Four Chords to Freedom workshop seeks to learn from the students more than to teach them. While the facilitator may influence how students can utilize a human rights framework when examining the issues facing their communities, a trained educator may similarly recognize new ways that human rights violations occur and unexpected scenarios in which an HRE framework can serve a community in its struggle for liberation.

### **Development of the Project**

Four Chords to Freedom was conceived of in four distinct phases, with each phase gradually refining the activity's theoretical frameworks, concepts, techniques, and applications until it best represented the ideal of an activity rooted critical, participatory, decolonizing, human rights education. At first, Four Chords to Freedom was a restrictive activity that prompted students to interrogate one specific human rights violation using one specific form of artistic expression. When it was first proposed in a Human Rights: Pedagogy and Praxis course at the University of San Francisco, Four Chords to Freedom was conceived as a way for students to write protest songs in response to mass surveillance in the United States. Moreover, students were to be prompted to compose music in response to a specific film, *Citizenfour* that addressed issues of mass surveillance. To add to the layers of specificity, students were to be limited to using exactly four chords, though the group would choose the specific chords. The initial conception of Four Chords to Freedom was certainly ambitious and addressed the need to introduce elements of music performance in the practice of human rights education, but it was far too specific and presumptive to be practiced on a wide scale. In its initial stage, Four Chords to Freedom relied on so many assumptions that it had the potential to alienate participants. Such assumptions included presupposition of musical knowledge and that all students would share sociopolitical views with the facilitator. Throughout the process of mapping Four Chords to Freedom as an exemplar of the liberatory and democratic nature of HRE, it became apparent that the activity could not be so rigid and exclusionary as it had originally been designed.

In order to ensure that it would be potentially useful in an educational context, Four Chords to Freedom was simplified in a way that unmoored the activity from a

specific issue and a prescriptive set of practical parameters. Instead of specifically addressing mass surveillance, Four Chords to Freedom was reimagined as an activity in which participants could examine any potential human rights issue. The de-emphasis on ideological and pedagogical prescription similarly extended to the creative portion of the project. Though the original idea was for students to channel the spirit of punk rock by composing short songs using four chords, the potential for exclusion could not go unaddressed. Though music is a universal language, punk rock only appeals to a small and specific subset of people and mandating the application of the aesthetic signifiers of punk rock seemed incongruous with an activity that is meant to demonstrate that all individuals have the capacity to transform their reality in the image of justice and fairness. As such, the core principle Four Chords to Freedom, that music can be a tool for lasting societal change based on the understanding, promotion, and defense of human rights, remained but the pedagogical approach and practical implementation would need to be dramatically simplified.

Four Chords to Freedom did not truly achieve a workable conception until the researcher consulted many of the specific works mentioned in Chapter II. The review of the literature grounded the final stages of development in educational theory and made clear the intended cognitive and experiential outcomes of the activity. In order for Four Chords to Freedom to teach *about* rights, any material advertising or summarizing the workshop would make clear that the topic of discussion is specifically the reframing of important sociocultural and economic issues through a human rights lens. To be *through* rights, Four Chords to Freedom must be conducted in a way that the group's autonomy and agency are respected. That is, participants are free to express themselves in the

discussion are therefore invited to influence and transform the nature of the discussion. Lastly, the musical element of Four Chords to Freedom must embody punk rock in spirit, but not necessarily in practice. In the revised conception of the activity, the notion that one can make music that could change the world using only four chords took on a symbolic, as opposed to literal, significance.

Though Four Chords to Freedom is designed to bring the punk rock experience into both formal and non-formal classroom settings, the requirement that students create fully developed songs or instrumental pieces using the same set of chords in a limited amount of time gave way to a less prescriptive musical journaling activity. There is no restriction on how students choose to process the discussion and act upon their reflections. Whether they write songs or lyrics, Four Chords to Freedom is more concerned that participants create *something* as opposed to creating a piece of art specific to one genre or medium. The creative element of the workshop, thusly embodies education *for* human rights. By learning to creative synthesize one's reactions, feelings, and questions about a discussions based on the call for solidarity with communities engaged in struggles for their rights, students are trained in the cognitive process of taking action based on critical reflection on the issues that most affect and impede both individuals and communities.

Once students have had time to channel their reactions in a positive and creative manner, the facilitator may ask participants about their emotional reactions to the activity and the creative process that informed their work. The facilitator should not force participants to perform their pieces. Rather, Four Chords to Freedom places deliberate emphasis on praxis, that is, it is more important that students are aware of the process, not the product. By encouraging students and teachers alike to acknowledge the mental and

physical skills learned and applied to create art out of a discussion on human rights, Four Chords to Freedom takes students on a complete cycle of praxis: discussion inspires reflection and reflection inspires action. Though the action involved in Four Chords to Freedom, preparing a musical journal entry, may seem insignificant in the larger fight for human rights, students who are able to make music out of their reactions to discussions on the issues most important to them are training their hearts and minds to take decisive action based on critical reflection.

Though rooted in specific literature pertaining to various approaches to transformative rights-based education, it was not only academic writing that inspired Four Chords to Freedom, as several community-based organizations are already combining music with social justice advocacy and their influence on this project cannot be understated. One such project is Global Street Drum, a drumming workshop in Oakland, CA specifically for “women, teen girls, and trans folk.” The electronic and digital elements of the activity draw their inspiration from Dub Academy in Austin, TX, which provides low-cost DJ and music production programs to local youth. Four Chords to Freedom seeks to carry on this tradition of providing opportunities for community members to express themselves through music. In doing so with a specific focus on human rights, Four Chords to Freedom takes the notion of music education for empowerment further by challenging individuals to take action to create a more equitable existence. In Four Chords to Freedom, the first step is to envision how this new reality will sound and how the distinct sounds that individuals are capable of producing can coalesce into an ineradicable collective demand for human rights.

### **The Project**

The first workshop under the official banner of Four Chords to Freedom was held at the University of California, Berkeley in early November 2015 with a group of volunteers. The group was comprised of students and university full-time staff, most of whom had no prior exposure to human rights education. The session began with a round of introductions wherein participants shared their names and an issue they considered important. These concerns included racism, immigration, women's rights, and the burgeoning influence of social media on everyday life. I then introduced foundational human rights concepts such as the UDHR, the ICCPR, CEDAW, and postcolonial feminism, as well as the idea that human rights provide an internationally recognized legal framework for challenging injustice. A lively discussion ensued, in which the group analyzed the ways by which the various forms of injustice they've experienced are interconnected and the result of sociopolitical and economic systems that are inherently unjust.

I then introduced the musical element of the workshop by asking the volunteers, either individually or in groups, to channel their reactions to the discussion through music. Only a limited number of instruments were available and not all of them were able to use one, meaning some participants would have to compose their musical reactions without musical instruments. I then played examples of songs composed with four chords or fewer, such as Terry Riley's "In C," Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit," and the Last Poets' "Mean Machine" to demonstrate the idea that it is possible, indeed common, to create sophisticated music with as few as three chords, or even with nothing other than a simple percussion instrument and one's voice. The group was then allowed 20 minutes to create a "musical journal entry" as opposed to a "song," so as to emphasize the process of

creation instead of delivering a finished product. They then set about working on song lyrics, instrumental pieces, and percussive works. Some students even collaborated on an original songs comprised of lyrics and musical accompaniment, which is no small feat given the limited time allotted.

After the musical portion of the activity, the larger discussion group reconvened and the participants were invited to share the thoughts that informed their creative processes. Due to the personal nature of music making, they were not forced to share their work, and none volunteered to do so. They were, however, eager to share how the activity made them feel and what specific emotions and ideas inspired their work. As a researcher and facilitator, I also found it more important and interesting to hear what thoughts and feelings inspired them and how their understanding of human rights informed their art. Feedback provided during the closing discussion was overwhelmingly positive, as the volunteers reacted well to being presented with the opportunity to speak, reflect, and act, albeit symbolically, on issues of great personal importance. One participant remarked in the feedback section of the assignment sheet that “it was great having the opportunity to talk about these issues, you don’t really get to do that in everyday life.” Another suggested “this would be a great activity for an A&E all-staff...” which suggests that the participant found that Four Chords to Freedom would make for an engaging session for the UC Berkeley Admissions and Enrollment Division all-staff meeting, which is usually attended by upward of 300 staff members. This feedback was encouraging in that it showed that the participants expressed interest in both attending the workshop again and in getting their friends and colleagues involved in future sessions.



A striking moment occurred when a participant who shared that she was most concerned with women's rights volunteered her thoughts on the activity. She chose a drum with which to conduct her musical reflection, and I initially assumed that she only chose the drum because it was the last instrument left. Instead of feeling limited by the drum, however, she found the act of drumming itself to be empowering because, as a Native American, she shared that the women of her tribal community are traditionally not allowed to play the drums. This instance demonstrated the transformative potential of Four Chords to Freedom in a way I had not previously considered; even the simple banging of a drum can constitute an act of resistance.

The workshop and its constituent discussions were not entirely positive and there were a number of instances that needed to be negotiated tenderly. The recent rise of the Black Lives Matter movement sparked heated debate, and some participants, under the pretense of "playing devil's advocate", gave voice to views that seemed to blame poor and working class black people for the high rates of poverty and crime that afflict their communities. The openness of the discussion, however, made it so that other participants were empowered to discuss these issues in greater depth and explain how the blame for systemic racism, discrimination, and disillusionment cannot be solely placed on its victims. Instead of responding with anger or defensiveness, the conversation took on an air of respectful deference to the testimony of those whose lives were directly affected by police brutality. Though unpleasant, these instances were valuable in that they illustrated how difficult and uncomfortable decolonizing and liberatory education can be, as well as how important it is for critical educators to be able deftly manage discussions around

charged topics and diffuse potential conflicts in a way that treats all involved parties with the necessary respect.

Another major difficulty I encountered stemmed from my own trepidation as an educator. In spite of my attempt to practice and embody McLaren's (2011) radical negativity, I found the direct implication of capitalism as the source of human rights violations difficult to vocalize with a mixed audience. Academic conversations about the validity of capitalism rooted in personal opinions tend to become uncomfortably contentious, and I did not want the workshop to serve as a platform for the promotion of a personal ideology. Foregrounding the discussion in human rights, however, made it easier for participants to agree that sexism, racism, white supremacy, and hetero-patriarchy are not isolated issues but are interconnected and inextricable from one another. This observation demonstrated that discussing social justice issues as human rights issues makes it so that concerns around women's liberation, LGBTQ rights, economic exploitation, and environmental degradation cannot be easily dismissed as liberal talking points. Instead, considering these topics as human rights issues inspired students to think of solutions to and the ways by which they themselves can affect change, regardless of their personal opinions and differences regarding politics and ideology.

Feedback from participants was unanimously positive, with the only suggestions for improvement being to make the workshops longer, to conduct them more often, and to do so with bigger groups, including high-level University administrators such as Deans and Vice Chancellors. The participants did not react negatively to the fact that the number of musical instruments was limited, and many of them were eager to create art out of whatever resources they had at their disposal simply because they had been provided a

time and space to do so. More importantly, the participants did not take offense to the nature of the workshop and situating the discussion of social justice issues in the framework of human rights. On the contrary, participants reported that speaking in terms of human rights and being provided introductory definitions of human rights terms and instruments such as CEDAW, UDHR, ICCPR, and ICESCR, eased many ideological differences amongst group members so that political nitpicking did not undermine meaningful discussions around universal human dignity. Several participants, who themselves were involved in social justice work, expressed that the workshop inspired them to begin integrating music performance and the facilitated-yet-open discussion format of Four Chords to Freedom in their own community organizing efforts.

The inaugural Four Chords to Freedom workshop was an encouraging experience that demonstrated its viability as a tool for the promotion of human rights and the development of radical consciousness. Despite its overall success, the session also highlighted areas that will be improved upon and refined as workshop continues to be developed. Researchers interested in further researching Four Chords to Freedom's socialist, feminist, and decolonizing approach to music performance and human rights education would do well to explore how the workshop may be conducted with youth and how it might be received in a geographical setting that does not boast the same level of ethnic diversity and progressive history as the Bay Area. The lessons learned from the first workshop will serve to inform and improve Four Chords to Freedom in the future and may serve as helpful guidelines for other forms of transformative HRE pedagogy and praxis.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Recommendations**

As a final project for Human Rights Law for Educators, a course taken at the University of San Francisco in 2014, I had the opportunity to record the oral history of Rupert Carangal Estanislao, an acclaimed Filipino-American punk musician, record label owner, and activist. Toward the end of the interview, he told me that, "...punk shouldn't be just one thing. It should be a lot of different things. It should be individuals. It should be groups and crews. It should be a better reflection of the world we have" (Estanislao, 2014). Since then, Rupert's testimony has continued to inspire me to bridge the worlds of punk rock, music performance, and human rights education because these seemingly disparate disciplines represent forces for positive social change that, when combined, have the potential to move masses to action. The result of this research and sustained inquiry is the conceptualization and development of Four Chords to Freedom, an attempt to introduce the community-building ethos, do-it-yourself mentality, and the calls to action inseparable from punk rock into the classroom. Though Four Chords to Freedom shed much of its overtly punk aesthetic and philosophy in pursuit of inclusiveness and efficacy, Four Chords to Freedom nonetheless seeks to combine music performance and critical reflection and dialogue surrounding human rights issues to envision, and ultimately, bring to fruition a world that is, indeed, "a better reflection of the world we have."

Though encouraging, this field project is limited in a number of ways and it would benefit the literature if future researchers were to expand upon the methods and concepts described herein. One major recommendation for the future study of the compatibility of music education and HRE is simply to conduct more workshops under

the Four Chords to Freedom banner using the theoretical and methodological frameworks described above. The effectiveness of using music as a teaching tool for promoting and defending human rights would particularly benefit from more data collected from Four Chords to Freedom workshops in which different variables may be altered. For instance, how would participants report the effectiveness of openly engaging in dialogue surrounding human rights issues and creating music in response to this dialogue if they had a full set of musical instruments at their disposal and a greater amount of time allotted for crafting their responses? Would the workshop conversely succeed if there were no musical instruments at all and if participants relied solely on improvised instruments fashioned from whatever supplies may be on hand? The data would also benefit from a greater diversity of participants so the ways by which the parameters of the workshop are altered when conducted with populations such as youth, adult learners, college students, and disabled students may be more clearly understood.

Ideally, this project will lead educators and researchers to further explore the development of alternative curricula and pedagogy rooted in both arts and human rights education. As evidenced by Byrd & Levy (2011), Vaugeois (2007), and McLaren (2011), much has been written about the effectiveness of combining music with education for social justice, but the ways by which music performance can be specifically deployed to achieve the cognitive and experiential goals of HRE remain under-researched. The findings of this project, and the continuing goal of Four Chords to Freedom, is therefore to encourage researchers and educators to not only continue exploring the use of music performance in HRE, but to explore the integration of HRE in arts education. HRE provides educators who are interested in the promotion of social justice causes a codified,

legal framework to contextualize such causes, and as a result, steers students away from the tendency to rank injustices or play devil's advocate for argument's sake. HRE calls upon students and educators to take definite action for human rights, and the combination of HRE with hands-on, reflective pedagogy such as radical music education allows them to take such action immediately and in the classroom, thereby simulating (and stimulating) the creative and intellectual processes involved in human rights work. Educational initiatives built upon Four Chords to Freedom's HRE framework undergirded by the theoretical frameworks of decolonizing, counter-hegemonic, postcolonial feminist education will thusly prepare students to tackle the pressing challenges of our shared reality and transform the educational sphere into one grounded in the tenets resistance, solidarity, and justice.

### **Conclusion**

Scholars and practitioners of human rights education share the contention that schooling, instead of reinforcing cultural hegemony and the ideological state apparatus, can be reclaimed as a site for postcolonial protestation, radical negation, and the creation of new realities undergirded by the universal respect for human dignity. By analyzing the current and historical state of education under the theoretical frameworks of social reproduction, cultural hegemony, and education as an Ideological State Apparatus, it is evident that there is a continued need to reinvent education as a space for liberation. In the wake of a post-recession economic rebound, cities such as San Francisco, Chicago, and New York City are rapidly gentrifying in a deliberate and comprehensive effort to displace the person-of-color and working class communities that were previously relegated to urban centers and reclaim the city for middle-class and affluent whites

(Lipman, 2011; Darder, 2014). Market-minded educational reforms such as high-stakes testing (administered by for-profit companies) and the charterization of underperforming schools are examples of the ways by which education is becoming increasingly perceived as a commodifiable product as opposed to a public good, let alone a human right (Fabricant & Fine, 2012).

Prevailing trends in education reform in the U.S. indicate that there is an ever-present need for the advancement of curricula and pedagogies that directly challenge the Ideological State Apparatus, the hegemony of the state, and the motivations of corporate interests that continue to assert financial and ideological influence on public education. The multifarious and complex issues facing both local communities and the world at-large, however, cannot be addressed with the rote memorization of decontextualized facts and the unquestioning observance of rigid disciplinary standards. To combat such complex issues as climate change, privacy and freedom of expression in a digital world, the corporate takeover of the public sphere, war, genocide, terrorism, and the degradation of the environment, students must be prepared to exercise critical thinking skills rooted in a nuanced and comprehensive knowledge of power relations and the ways by which the very fabric of reality is shaped by powerful entities with exploitative, profit-driven motives. Introducing radical music education to human rights education effectively bolsters the ways by which HRE can be conducted, and further research that explore the cognitive and experiential benefits of liberatory rights-based education to the growth and entrenchment of HRE as an academic discipline. Though the skills that an activity like Four Chords to Freedom is designed to develop may not be measured on a standardized test, such traits as inquisitiveness, critical engagement, the love of learning, creativity,

and compassion are very much the skills that must be developed in current and future generations in order to ensure peace, reconciliation, and coexistence, as well as economic bulwarks such as innovation, entrepreneurship, and highly-developed problem solving skills. That is, the achievement and continued sustainability of a world built upon mutual understanding and respect depends upon the fostering of a collective critical consciousness rooted in a categorical demand for human rights.

Human rights education is a direct challenge to the an educational climate rooted in the dehumanizing machinations of prescriptive curricula underpinned by institutionalized sexism and racism, the depoliticization of history, and corporate-backed educational reforms that deliberately disenfranchise marginalized populations. The current climate of education reform in the U.S. indicates that the role of education in perpetuating cultural hegemony and the Ideological State Apparatus is alive and well. It is, therefore, critical that scholars, activists, teachers, and students continue to demand that education be recognized as a human right and that schools be embraced as sites of postcolonial protestation, radical negation, and the development of critical consciousness in formal and non-formal educational settings.

The purpose of this project is comprised of two primary objectives: 1) to highlight the importance of human rights education to the task of rethinking education as a means of developing informed citizens capable of sustaining a peaceful democracy and 2) to provide a practical and conceptual framework for the integration of radical music education with HRE, thereby contributing to the growing and diversifying field of human rights pedagogy and praxis. HRE approaches schooling from a dialogical, learner-centered approach that, in contrast to the prescriptive reproduction found in corporate and



state-run schools, accepts that education is a contested public sphere. Instead of suppressing the agency of students and teachers in pursuit of acquiescent discipline and the mere signifiers of academic aptitude represented by test scores, HRE encourages dialogue, critical thinking, and direct action. By introducing music performance into an HRE framework undergirded by literature on decolonization and postcolonial feminism, *Four Chords to Freedom* serves as space for transformative praxis in formal and non-formal educational settings. Such programs will serve as the foundation for new modes of learning, teaching, and knowledge production that will transform education by, for, and through human rights.

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## APPENDIX A

Four Chords to Freedom: Human Rights Praxis through Music Performance

**THE DAMNED**  
CAN NOW PLAY THREE CHORDS

**THE ADVERTS**  
CAN PLAY ONE

HEAR ALL FOUR OF THEM AT

MAY  
FRIDAY 13 PORTERHOUSE RETFORD NOTTINGHAMSHIRE  
SATURDAY 14 MIDDLETON CIVIC HALL (NR MANCHESTER)  
MONDAY 16 TOP OF THE WORLD STAFFORD  
FRIDAY 20 SOUTHAMPTON UNIVERSITY  
SATURDAY 21 PIER PAVILION HASTINGS  
WEDNESDAY 25 SHEFFIELD UNIVERSITY  
THURSDAY 26 TIFFANY'S NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME  
FRIDAY 27 CORN EXCHANGE CAMBRIDGE  
SATURDAY 28 ERIC'S CLUB LIVERPOOL

JUNE  
THURSDAY 2 KEYNES COLLEGE KENT UNIVERSITY  
FRIDAY 3 PAVILION WEST RUNTON NR CROMER  
SATURDAY 4 ST ALBANS CITY HALL

TUESDAY 7 DRILL HALL LINCOLN  
THURSDAY 9 CLEETHORPES WINTER GARDEN  
FRIDAY 10 BARBARELLA'S BIRMINGHAM  
SATURDAY 11 BARBARELLA'S BIRMINGHAM  
SUNDAY 12 MAXIM'S BARRON-IN-FURNESS  
MONDAY 13 OUTLOOK DONCASTER  
WEDNESDAY 15 BRIGHTON POLYTECHNIC  
THURSDAY 16 CHELTENHAM TOWN HALL  
FRIDAY 17 BRUNEL ROOMS SWINDON  
SATURDAY 18 KURSAAL SOUTHEND  
MONDAY 20 LONDON  
WEDNESDAY 22 WOODS PLYMOUTH  
THURSDAY 23 THE GARDEN PENZANCE  
FRIDAY 24 EXETER UNIVERSITY  
SATURDAY 25 WIGAN CASINO  
SUNDAY 26 ELECTRIC CIRCUS MANCHESTER  
MONDAY 27 LANCASTER UNIVERSITY  
TUESDAY 28 ST GEORGES HALL BRADFORD

STUFF FROM STIFF.  
SEEZ I DAMNED DAMNED DAMNED  
BUY 10 NEAT NEAT NEAT  
BUY 13 ADVERTS ONE CHORD WONDERS

STIFF  
LONDON

### **BACKGROUND**

Four Chords to Freedom is an activity inspired by the anarchic early days of punk and is designed to encourage participants to critically and creatively engage with human rights issues. Today's workshop will begin with an open dialogue about the meaning of human rights and the most pressing issues facing our communities.

### **ACTIVITY**

Compose a piece of music based on your initial reaction to the discussion. In keeping with the traditions of punk rock and hip-hop, your work will represent a visceral and emotional reaction, regardless of your level of musical expertise. In the inspiration section, briefly describe what inspired you as you developed your piece. Participants will be invited to share their work with the group at the end of the session.

### **SONG TITLE**

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### **INSPIRATION**

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## FEEDBACK

What did you find enjoyable and/or valuable in this exercise?

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What suggestions could you offer for improvement?

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## Key Terms

- **Human rights** are freedom conferred upon all human beings regardless of their gender, race, class, or nationality and are protected as legal rights in domestic and international law.
- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** is a declaration adopted by the United Nations on December 10, 1948 and represents the first outline of human rights agreed upon on a global scale.
- **The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)** is treaty that commits its parties to recognizing and protecting civil and political rights such as the right to life, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and rights to due process and a fair trial.
- **The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** commits its parties to work toward the granting of economic, social, and cultural rights including labor rights and the right to health, the right to education, and the right to an adequate standard of living.

## APPENDIX B

### Four Chords to Freedom Lesson Plan

**Discussion:** what issues are most important to us? Frame the discussion in terms of human rights.

**Objective:** when we think of social justice issues as human rights issues, it becomes more difficult to think of abuses, injustices, and violations as inevitable. When we think of our struggles as human rights issues, it empowers us to take action because there is an entire field of legal and political discipline to support us.

**Activity:** participants without instruments can pair up with those who do to provide lyrics, percussion, etc. or they can develop a nonmusical piece. Emphasize the process, not the product. Introduce the activity with sample songs.

**Conclusion:** share work and/or inspirations. One of the difficulties of viewing the world from a human rights perspective is the feeling of powerlessness. It is difficult to imagine that any individual can do anything to fight systemic and institutionalized injustice. By engaging in dialogue about the issues most important to us and then reflecting upon that discussion to create music, everyone in the room has effectively “done something” to fight for human rights. Every act of resistance, no matter how small, counts and everyone has his or her own unique contribution to make.