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Hymnody of change: A study of classical African orature in a social justice context

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Hymnody of Change: A Study of Classical African Orature in a Social Justice Context

by

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Thesis

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Abstract

Communal music has been and is still a prominent method of cultural expression for generations, in particular for the generations of displaced Africans on American soil. The roots of this music, an amalgam of African tradition and a forced Christianity, have remained a constant companion to African American cultural response to inequity. Thus, it is imperative that communication tools be developed that allow analysis of this music, collections of communally sung works that communicate the destruction and continual reconstruction of a colonized culture. The purpose of this study is to explicate communally sung hymns, those sung in a social justice context, as an example of classical African orature. As such, these hymns utilize various aesthetics of nommo, the productive word. These aesthetics are used to move toward maat, realized as communal and spiritual harmony. In order to advance understanding of this process, I introduce binding and location as rhetorical moves that speak to past and future rhetorical legacy.

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Chapter 1: Not Just Any Kind of Music

November 6, 2017, at the Intellectual House on the Campus of the University of Washington in Seattle, a mass meeting was held. This mass meeting would not have been out of place in 1962. In fact, the feel was likely nearly the same as meetings that were held at the Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia. At one point, about a third of the way through the meeting, the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, founder of the Moral Mondays movement Repairers of the Breach, and co-chair of the New Poor Peoples' movement remarks about the importance of music and singing: "This is a mass meeting and mass meetings always have a certain atmosphere. In mass meetings we don't just sing just to be singing---not just any kind of music. But music draws us together" (Repairers of the Breach, 2017). He then introduces Yara Allen, an African-American woman, theomusicologist, and music leader for both Repairers of the Breach and the Moral Mondays movement. As she prepares the room to sing, she makes the statement, "When you walked through those doors tonight, you came to choir rehearsal" (Repairers of the Breach, 2017).

Ms. Allen then proceeds, in the tradition of a Bernice Johnson Reagon, to teach and lead the room in singing the African-American social justice hymn "Woke Up This Morning With My Mind Stayed on Freedom." This song, used extensively in the civil rights movement of the sixties, had its roots in the spiritual "Woke Up This Morning With My Mind Stayed on Jesus" (Sanger, 1995). The new words were provided by the Rev. Osby of Aurora, Illinois and by Robert Zellner (Carawan and Carawan, 2007). After being taught the song, the attendees began to sing. At first, Ms. Allen led, bidding the gathered to follow in a call and response manner. Soon, they were in unison, singing with and to each other in community, repeating over and over, "got my mind stayed on freedom." But then, the song takes on a new improvisation as Ms.

Allen sings “texting and tweeting with my mind stayed on freedom” as the community responds and sings this new variation, remarking on the change of technology and its use, before returning to the grounding phrase of the sixties version. Rhetorically, there is a wealth of movement in this meeting. There is a significant rhetoric that has a legacy dating back to the African continent in the musical traditions of the African nations, held long before forced relocation into bondage in the Americas. There is a rhetorical legacy intrinsic to the African continent that flows through diaspora to now, and it is presented in the context of a social justice movement.

In this same way, music that is an inherent part of such movements, in particular, those collections of hymns used to build African-American social justice movements should be analyzed in a culturally relevant way. Indeed, these hymns, a body of works sung in congregation, evolved from the repurposed Christian hymnbook imposed on slaves and constitute a body of work that comprised a communally sung repertory of messages (Southern, 1997). This was also found to be true for Bernice Johnson Reagon, founding member of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Freedom Singers, currently professor emeritus of history at American University and curator emeritus at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. Southern observed that “[M]ost of the singing of the civil rights movement was congregational.... The core song repertoire of the Civil Rights movement was formed from the reservoir of Afro-American traditional song” (p.106).

Music has been and is an integral part of the African experience long before being bound into servitude in the Americas. Kerran Sanger (1995) describes the tradition of singing as a long and tenacious one. It was a means of communication when our own languages were denied us. Sung words became code couched in a forced Christianity, a code that allowed us to maintain community, reaffirm our dissent in slavery, and pass information on actions and escape to

freedom. A similar use of sung music during the 1960's raises the question of a specific rhetorical frame for sung music in the context of social justice especially as a means for building identity, educating, and moving the African American diaspora to action based on this sung message of dissent.

Sanger (1997) takes the approach of looking to the activists for the effect of the music and its use in the context of the movement and I am doing the same, but looking for a thematic legacy grounded in rhetorical theory. Scholars like Sanger (1995, 1997) have stressed how the music affected those in the movement which has been useful in proclaiming the importance of this music culturally, historically, and personally from the viewpoint of those who were there. These stories of how song affected the movement give an indication of how identified tropes and expressions work within this hymnody. This work, then, can be seen as an extension, if not a confirmation, of Sanger's work since she also takes a rhetorical approach to her inquiry in search of an "implicit rhetorical theory" used by activists. However, most of what Sanger does is provide some general concepts by which this music operates. Sanger does provide four characteristics of the *singing* which are useful in my analysis with respect to hymnody as communal. These are:

1. Song is not ordinary communication, but rather a form of discourse that energizes those who engage in it and allows them to express themselves in ways not available in other forms of discourse.
2. Song is an especially powerful form of communication that achieves its power from the generation, expression, and venting of intense emotion.
3. The powerful rhetoric of song both derives from and enhances the spirituality of those who engage in it.

4. As discourse, the singing of freedom songs was inherently transformative. Those who sang not only expressed themselves but were changed – made new and better—in the singing (Sanger, 1997, p. 193).

Sanger (1997) concludes, “Singing was a means by which they could reach their rhetorical goals of building unity, providing a positive sense of themselves, and encouraging a high level of commitment to the movement ” (p. 193).

This community building and strengthening rhetoric fits well within an Afrocentric frame of analysis, specifically in terms of community in that this singing moves the community to act on its on behalf. But, before going further into Afrocentric frames of analysis, it is necessary to establish these groups of hymns as orature, first by addressing the historical and cultural legacies of this music, and second, by establishing these hymns as orature.

Importance of Historical and Cultural Research Approach

Whereas a number of scholars have studied the rhetorical influence of songs, such as delivery and affect (Dewberry and Millen, 2014; Hatch, 2016), researchers have called for using culturally relevant rhetorical criticism of music. In “Ethnic heritage as rhetorical legacy: The plan of Delano,” Hammerback and Jensen (1954) document the use of ethnic rhetorical legacies point to an intent on behalf of the rhetor, in this case Chicano movement leaders who were “digging up lost documents and proclamations other men saw fit to ignore” (p. 53). These authors turn to Ernesto Galarza, poet, labor activist, historian and professor who explained this mining of cultural heritage was “necessary for Mexican Americans to develop a positive image and self-confidence” and that it “exalted traditional heroes and forms of political address.” It is not, then, unusual to look to a cultural rhetorical legacy in the context of social justice for that culture.

Gyant and Atwater (1996) refer to Hammerback and Jensen (1954) in their article “Septima Clark’s Rhetorical and Ethnic Legacy: Her Message of Citizenship in the Rights Movement” in justifying this approach, first quoting Hammerback and Jensen with regard to the rhetorical dimensions of the [Delano] plan only becoming clear within the context of their own (Mexican) tradition (Gyant and Atwater, 1996). A second major point made by Hammerback and Jensen that has bearing on my analysis and proposed framework augmentation is this: “The rhetorical dimension of these Mexican-American documents become clear only within the context of their own rhetorical tradition, a tradition anchored in Mexican history and developed from the Mexican-American’s culture and experiences” (p. 54). With respect to this study, meaning and impact come from understanding the rhetoric of the African diaspora in America through its own rhetorical traditions. It is within those traditions that this rhetoric moves in the social justice context this study examines.

With respect to their analysis of Septima Clark’s ethic and rhetorical legacy, Gyant and Atwater (1996) move that “Likewise, to consider any African American orator, one has to acknowledge the impact and importance of the historical and cultural experiences of African Americans in this country to adequately understand and appreciate the contributions of each speaker” (1996, p. 578). Both Hammerback and Jensen (1954), and Gyant and Atwater(1996) note the importance of the longview of culturally relevant rhetoric and in recognizing the inherent ethnic proclivities in assigning meaning to culturally produced rhetoric.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a way to address the rhetorical legacy of hymns sung in community via an Afrocentric framework. To provide a context for this study, it is necessary to provide a space in which these hymns act. That space is the mass meeting as

they occurred during the classic civil rights era of the 1950's and 1960's. Scholars trace these meetings back to a meeting at the Holt Street Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, in December 1955 (Holmes, 2017). These meetings exhibited familiar church service structures, often taking place in churches of several denominations and faiths. So important to these meetings was the music that even Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King spoke to its significance, recounting that “an important part of the mass meetings was the freedom songs...I have stood in a meeting with hundreds of youngers and joined in while they sang, Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round” (as cited in Morris, 1986, p. 257). He goes on to note that “these songs bind us together, give us courage together, help us to march together” (as cited in Morris, 1986, p. 257). Mass meetings, then, are a place of power and it is here that this form of rhetoric exists in a social justice context. Thus, when hymns are referenced, it will be with regards to mass meetings as described.

Several scholars have particularly noted the function of music in mass meetings. Aldon Morris, in *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*, describes these meetings as “the pulse and lifeline of the movement” and “the occasion for inspiration, rejuvenation, and commitment by means of rousing sermons and unifying black spirituals” (p. 23). This is the location where these hymns were historically sung in community. Morris cites at one point a series of 65 such meetings during one stretch of actions in Birmingham, Alabama. Bruce Hartford touches on the historical importance, the link to church traditions, which are inextricably linked to African and slave traditions mixed with imposed Christianity (Floyd, 1996; Spencer, 1990; Southern, 1971); and how those songs built a community:

In many rural Black communities few people, if any, had ever participated in a political meeting before the Freedom Movement, but everyone was familiar with the character, traditions and rhythms of church service. So freedom meetings large and small were modeled on what folk knew and felt comfortable with. Since they were based on the music people knew—even if a few words were changed—freedom songs provided a touchstone of familiarity and reassurance to those choosing to risk their lives and livelihoods against great odds. And for some, they came for the singing and stayed for the struggle. (Hartford, 2011, Para. 7)

Holmes (2017) adds the punctuation to this point, expressing that this church structure held onto its West African traditions of *nommo* (p. 6). Thus, it is also necessary to establish the historical and cultural legacy of these songs as previous scholarly work as delineated. Moreover, the study of hymns in social justice context such as mass meetings must be located within the purview of Afrocentric rhetorical inquiry by placing these collected songs, this hymnody, into the realm of classical African orature.

By situating hymnody as orature, rhetorical legacy can be explicated by applying the Afrocentric concept of *nommo*, the creative or productive word. and introduce an extension to use an Afrocentric lens to honor the cultural lineage of hymns sung in community, particularly in a social justice context. Manifestations of *nommo* in these hymns identify them as Afrocentric and the use of these manifestations, such as repetition, call and response, and improvisation, can help map these hymns along the rhetorical trajectory. These comments are also a nod to Molefi K. Asanté and Afrocentric approaches to music. Quoting Asanté from *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, Spencer (1996) refers to Asanté's "Soul of Method," which "intervenes in the in the methodological process in order to bring a certain spiritual character to scholarly inquiry,

involves the researcher accessing the vitality of a project in order to activate the kind of creative energies...that seek comprehension for the sake of harmony and that avoid prediction for the sake of control” (p. 118). Consider, therefore, that a methodology to understand this music looks to culture, religious or ethnic (African-American), in search of harmony (or communalism) rather than a current state of subjugation (slavery, Jim Crow, the New Jim Crow, All Lives Matter). That being said, Afrocentric method becomes the front lens through which this music is observed.

Research Questions

While the scholars examine artifacts with respect to how they exhibit and use nommo aesthetic(s) in a rhetorical fashion, there is a need to examine a collection of related artifacts over time and something that this study seeks to address. Thus, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How does nommo manifest in hymns used in a social justice context?

RQ2: How does studying the manifestation of nommo in hymns extend Afrocentric rhetorical practice and theory?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides a literature review of how scholars have used nommo to examine a range of African American rhetorical discourse, including speeches (Howard, 2011; Lischer, 1997), literature (Kazembe, 2002; Montiero-Ferreira, 2009; Robinson, 2009; Walker and Kuykendall, 2005), visual images (Tyree and Krishnasamy, 2006), and music (Cummings and Roy, 2002; Dewberry and Millen, 2014; Karim-Kincey, 2006). In essence, I address these hymns as an example of nommo by way of an Afrocentric practice of orature. As Mutere (2012) explains, Afrocentric thought places knowledge in the hands of the community for the benefit of the community and a “self-conscious centering in the African experience and world view which includes respect for humanity in general, and for the African tradition and reality in particular” (p. 151). Hymns, when sung communally in the context of social justice mass meetings build communities by expanding their knowledge, fortifying identity and drawing the community along towards harmony as it navigates various exigencies.

Historical and Cultural Lineage of African American Hymns

Of those who have studied the history of African-American music, one of the most cited works is *The Music of Black Americans* by Eileen Southern, the first edition published in 1971. Former professor of music at York College of the City University of New York and professor emerita of music and Afro-American Studies at Harvard University, Southern approaches her history as a musician, emphasizing what the music meant, what it was about and from where it came. As an African-American, she placed great emphasis on the cultural importance of the music and the context in which it appeared, including a timeline of early music milestones from 1619 to 1760. One thing I’d like to point out about her writing is that it is somewhat patriarchal. In her preface, she refers to African-Americans with masculine pronouns as well as prefacing her

work with a nod to the duality of African-American musical contribution in light of the European music of the time. She states, “[And] ever since his arrival in the New World, he has enriched with his contributions the European-based musical traditions of the nation” (Southern, 1971, p. xv). It is also important to note that she makes a distinction between the heritage of the West Africans from whom she states most African-Americans can point to ancestry and those of African descents that may have more Spanish heritage based on origins in other locations. Again, Southern’s emphasis is of a musical historian, and she makes special effort to let those of the period speak for themselves. This is a tactic that others use in their research. In order to make my research relevant with respect to circulation, I also seek sources that use the words of those involved in the movement and music of the times. Like Southern, this approach give rhetorical and cultural relevance to such circulation of the music.

This same attention to cultural relevance is taken by Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., in his work, *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States*, published in 1995. At the time of publication, Floyd was the director of the Center for Black Music Research at Columbia College in Chicago, and his approach to this work was both musical and profoundly rhetorical in that his inspiration arose in great part from his reading of the original edition of Henry Louis Gates’ *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* published in 1988. However, where Southern maintains a historical perspective, Floyd (1995) delves deeper and asserts confidently the importance of the African roots of African-American music, stating in his introduction, “*The Power of Black Music* is based on the notion that African musical traits and cultural practices not only survived but played a major role in the development and elaboration of African-American music.” He goes on to say that

...African survivals exist not only in the sense that African-American music has the same tendencies, the mythological beliefs and assumptions, and the interpretive strategies of African-Americans are the same as those that underlie the music of the African homeland, that these tendencies and beliefs continue to exist as African cultural memory, and that they continue to inform the community and elaboration of African-American music. (Floyd, 1995, p. 5)

For the rhetorician, Floyd is adding paint to the picture of circulation for African-American music, in particular, the spirituals and hymns.

The third major source of historical research into this music comes from Robert Darden's (2014, 2016) two-volume work, *Nothing But Love in God's Water*. Darden, though not African-American, brings a deep understanding of this music from his experiences as former gospel music editor for Billboard magazine and current Professor of Journalism, Public Relations, and New Media at Baylor University. It is his recognition of the importance of this work that colors the detail with which he surveys song, community, and impact. As he explains in Volume 1, *Black Sacred Music from the Civil War to the Civil Rights Movement*,

I tried to tease out from the songs and singers how this music helped them get over... about what this music provided that enabled them to challenge the most powerful nation on the planet... armed only with love, justice, and song. It's all there in those old spirituals and those unstoppable, irresistible gospel songs—the stories, the laughter, the music. It's important" (Darden, 2014).

As with Southern and Floyd, Darden takes a historical long view of African-American spirituals, pointing to the circulation of this music through time. Point blank, he states,

While scholars say there were significant cultural differences among the Songhai, Akan, Yoruba, Ibo, Wolof, Oyo, Asanté, and all the people groups taken into slavery, the music they sang bore remarkable similarities. And singing, like dancing, was central to their lives. The very best guess by the very best scholars in the field is that long before Africans knew of Christianity, even as they became African - American slaves, they sang (p. 2).

In making this statement, Darden(2014) accomplishes two things: first, he indicates that though the tribes were diverse, they were also one community in their singing; and second, their singing was a core value before their forced Christianity.

Darden (2016) continues this historical long view in the second volume, *Black Sacred Music from Sit-Ins to Resurrection City*, where he continues to place this music in the context of social justice movement. This is critical, because there is the establishment of a clear contextual and cultural exigency in the intentional use of this music in a communal setting. This intentionality speaks to deliberate rhetorical strategies used in the context of a social justice movement.

Jon Michael Spencer, another noted Black hymnody historian and scholar, talks about these songs, the African spirituals and church music as a cornerstone of black church life. As songs of protest and freedom, he claims that they occupy an important place, not just within black hymnody, but also in the larger discourse of protest songs. This makes them critical discourse within the civil rights movement (Spencer, 1992).

There is precedent to consider African American spirituals as a unique cultural expression. Scholarship presented by Jeneva Wright at the South East Regional Seminar in African Studies (SERSAS) in 2013, speaks to both the uniqueness and agency of this cultural

medium, saying “Spirituals are evidence and legacy of African American agency, the will to subvert the demands of their masters, escape, fight, plot, triumph, and regain their freedom” (2013, p. 16). This presents itself as a culturally unique expression of dissent. But, a key concept is whether or not this medium provides a common cultural identity. Several authors have looked at the link between spirituals and the blues. Saliers (2007) gets at the connection between music and theology while others like Cone (1972) and Nichols (2008) get at the specific Gospel to Blues connection. Previous studies using focus groups centered on the appeal of Gospel music to various audiences (Banjo and Williams, 2014) and concluded that this music is a large part of social identity and that “Gospel music is integral to Black identity formation and meaning making” (p. 119).

Sullivan (2001) found that music was a means for African-Americans to address their subjugation by those seeking to eliminate the cultural aspects of their existence. This was a means to keep the community unified and hold on to cultural identity. Even music for entertainment served this purpose, whether to address slavery or subsequent discrimination. Music bound communities together and gathered strength to make moves to better their existence. Music can be called a deeply ingrained part of the African American experience. It is a natural choice for expressing dissent while building community, defining cultural identity, and motivating action.

Scholars have also looked at the potential of gospel music and spirituals as motivation for community action (Cone, 1972; Barnes, 2005). Neither, however, speaks from a communication view. Those that have (Banjo and Williams, 2014; Matula, 2000; Sellnow, 1996), either looked at specific artists’ catalogues for critical analysis or relied on feedback from focus groups. And although the results of the critical analysis lend validity to the rhetorical merit of this approach,

finding music “argues for its own authenticity within cultural parameters” (Matula, 2000, p. 235); the role of specific culturally identified music as dissent has not been approached in a communication inquiry.

Jon Michael Spencer, noted Black hymnody scholar, in *Re-Searching Black Music* advocates for an approach he calls *theomusicology*. Spencer, the Tyler and Alice Haynes professor of music at the University of Richmond when this work was published, argues that the theology of African-Americans bears substantial influence on the meanings of spirituals and thus cannot be separated from their interpretation and use. He references divinity scholar Clyde Steckel who holds that when interpreting music theologically, there is more to consider than just how religion is expressed. There is a social justice aspect in terms of restoration of justice and peace, as in God's blessed kingdom, that is also strongly portrayed (Spencer, 1996). Two takeaways from this are that using the term *hymnody* is an appropriate nod to the spiritual roots of much of this music and second, that there is an inherent intentionality in the quest for that world of restored justice and peace. This is a tangible, worldly quest beyond the spiritual. It is also a critical discourse on the human condition lived by those who are singing relative to those holding power.

Classical African Orature, Communally Sung Hymns and Nommo in African American Rhetorical Traditions

Communally sung hymns when used in a social justice context are an expression of orature. It can be surmised that African American hymns, as an oral expression of culture, can be called orature in that they carry the historical, cultural, and rhetorical forms of their culture. On the one hand, orature, in general, has been seen as a literary thing, an oral thing that harkens to the traditional oral expressions of Africans. But, with the diaspora spread across the globe and

here in the United States, with new means of expression, combined with traditional ones such as dance, orature must be expanded. How we look at orature, especially in the case of hymns in social justice context, must be expanded.

Models and paradigms of orature. Several scholars have explored orature in other endeavors, such as computational studies (Harrell, 2008), and dance (DeFrantz, 2016). It is the application of the orature structure that remains important. When dealing with rhetoric of the African diaspora, it is key that we consider how those forms of rhetoric change as new means of expression become available. In this way, even though I am using a frame constructed with oral traditions and literature in mind, there is freedom and purchase in expanding its application to current manifestations of the diasporic rhetoric. In this light, once characteristics that suit the model are found within the rhetoric being examined, especially nommo, then it speaks to an expanded understanding of what orature has become. Ochieng'O (2013) states the importance of music as orature in that the one aspect of this orature (music) that makes it so strong is that it can respond the exigencies and the happenings of daily life “essentially the immediate ongoing community’s history” (p. 35). This kind of relevance places models in a position to be used beyond the traditional oral and literary orature.

I also consider that the singing of hymns is an oral activity as in the oral tradition of orature and that this expression breathes with creativity. Onuekwusi (1997) found that misconceptions exist because of traditional views of African orature, views that leave out creative possibilities. “These misconceptions emanate largely from the intrinsic nature of African orature and indeed the easily perceived role of the oral artist namely one who speaks, narrates, sings, chants or act out well-known pieces in a tradition on occasions when he makes varying degrees of impact on an audience” (p. 335). When applied to hymns used in a social justice

context, you have established songs in a church tradition that are altered in performance to impact the audience; those creative alterations reflective of the nommo aesthetic of improvisation. Onuekwusi (1997) calls songs “one of the most widely spread genres of oral literature” (p. 337). This implies that hymns not only are included in orature, but that the definition of orature has expanded beyond literary and oratory.

An example of such an expanded definition of orature comes from Daniel Banks (2010) who posits that “orature fully integrates all elements of creativity and live performance. In orature, the verbal and vocal are preeminent and emanate from the body, as well as from a body of history, lore, and traditional thought” (p. 240). Banks links hip hop to African orature as like orature; hip hop shares “form, function, and the cultural history of its founders” (p. 240). Mwaura (2007) also offers an extended definition of orature in his study which looked at Gikuyu community and their music, wherein he notes, as I do with hymns in a social justice context (mass meetings), that performance is not linear, but inclusive to expecting the audience to participate as a response to real life, with deliberateness. He links Mau Mau songs of protest to historical heritage, with songs being an inherent part of Gikuyu daily life: “If the Gikuyu used songs to educate, mobilize, conduct rituals and ceremonies, mourn and sing praises, these expressions bound a place in the Mau Mau songs during the war of liberation” (p. 207). In other words, this expression of orature had cultural and historical legacy. The crux of this statement rests in Mwaura’s establishing these songs as orature, combat orature to be precise. Mwaura took orature as the sum of creative expression, particularly song, that was an indelible part of the daily cultural life of the Gikuyu, as I am taking hymns as an indelible part of the rhetorical expression of the African diaspora in America.

Whereas previous scholars provide an array of models to describe and assess African orature, Adetokunbo F. Knowles-Borishade (1991) offers a systematic paradigm of African orature, which can be used to place hymns within a cultural rhetorical tradition. Knowles-Borishade characterized African orature as “classical based upon four factors drawn from the African world experience” (p. 488). She describes these factors, thusly:

The first factor is historical in that the African oratorical format, style, and dynamics can be traced back to the time of Egyptian antiquity (Budge, 1973, p. 44-78). Second, African orature conforms to particular African cultural expectations, so that it is standard and authoritative; in other words, it is traditional (Albarry, 1990). Third, the orature of African people is an art form that can be analyzed in accordance with an approved and recognized set of traditional standards (Budge, 1973), Fourth, with the submission of this study, African orature is now codified - arranged in a relevant, articulated system that is congruent with actual phenomena.(1991, p. 498).

In a critical departure from the Western three-part (speaker, speech, audience) frame, Knowles-Borishade (1991) presents five elements to classical African oratory: Caller-Plus-Chorus, Spiritual Entities, nommo, Responders, and Spiritual Harmony). Communally sung hymns demonstrate these elements. First, with Caller-Plus-Chorus, Knowles-Borishade makes the statement that the “Caller is not a solitary voice in sending out the Word (nommo). S/he is flanked by a Chorus whose role is to validate, to bear witness to the truth of the Word” (p. 494). In a way, this is very descriptive of a call and response style that is characteristic of communal hymn singing as practiced in Social Justice movements. For example, see the description of the New Poor People’s mass meeting from the introduction.

Another consideration comes from understanding Knowles comments regarding Classical African orature as occurring “within a particular ritualistic format” (p. 491). Religious liturgy is the very definition of ritualistic, being a formal set of actions and it is in this context that hymns operate. Even though in singing these hymns, a formal religious service is not always in session, the formal structure of mass meetings follow the same general construct. Knowles-Borishade also repeats the notion that there is no difference between secular and spiritual in African oratorical events, her description of which could be exchanged for descriptions of social justice mass meetings, which share both secular and religious/spiritual tendencies.

The Chorus is the counterpart to the Caller only in the sense that they are responding to and adding their voices to the rhetorical flow; a comment and compliment to the Caller. This makes perfect sense when the audience and the rhetor are the same, as with the communal singing of hymns. In the model provided by Knowles-Borishade (1991), the Caller plus Chorus occupy one node of her paradigm of classical African orature, opposite Responders. With communal hymns, these two nodes are the same. She calls Responders “the community who come to participate in the speech event and are secondary creators in the [speech] event” and “sanction or reject the message....” (p. 497). Again, this makes sense for a situation where the rhetor and the audience are the same; where the singers are singing to each other as part of a community, codifying the community.

Knowles-Borishade’s (1991) Spiritual Entities are “the judges, witnesses and enablers for African rhetorical events.” (p. 495). This includes deities, powers, spiritual beings, and for this study, ancestors. From a purely genre standpoint, hymns are by nature appeals to spirit, whether God or secular power. However, it is the religious evolution of these songs, spirituals to hymns, that situate them in the appeal to spiritual entities.

Next, is nommo. Nommo is the productive or creative word (Asanté, 1998). It is the means through spiritual energy is used to bring communal harmony into being. Essentially, it is the Word that is used to manipulate spiritual energy in order to bring about harmony, which as seen in Knowles-Borishade's model, is at the center of all nodes. Hymns sung communally in a social justice context are used as a rhetorical tool to build community, communal harmony with intent to move the community to act. That is, these hymns use nommo to apply energy to move the community toward whatever the proscribed resolution of the exigency that motivates the community to sing.

Nommo across creative expressions. Given that Knowles-Borishade places nommo as a functional node of Classical African Orature and as a pillar of Afrocentric theory, it is important to see how scholars have used nommo to examine other creative expressions of the African diaspora in America.

Nommo and oratory. Sheena Howard (2005) presents her analysis of Barack Obama's command of communication and how it manifests nommo ostensibly via delivery style and his facilitation of nommo aesthetics. Howard (2005) also makes a focus of the way in which then President Obama "contains the continuity of African culture" (p.738) when addressing a predominately African American audience by involving the crowd in an Afrocentric manner. Interestingly, Howard followed Cummings and Roy (2002) in randomly choosing which of the 10 aesthetics or characteristics of nommo to use for analysis. Of the 10 outlined by Cummings and Roy (rhythm, soundin' out, call and response, lyrical quality, improvisation, historical perspective, repetition, indirection, and mytication) Howard chose rhythm, repetition, call and response, and mythication. Indeed, it comes across as President Obama's rhetoric having the qualities of a classic African American sermon in terms of cadence (rhythm) and audience

response. And although it is not specifically mentioned, President Obama's references to Dr. King serve as a call to recent historical perspective, a tacit use of a fifth style of *nommo*, and a reference to the historical legacy from which his words emerge. But again, this is not her focus.

Richard Lischer's (1997) *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King Jr., and the Word That Moved* takes an in depth look at how Dr. King's preaching moved people, making a specific reference to *nommo*, saying "At Ebenezer King absorbed a synthesis of traditions regarding the Word. There the rafters sang with the power of *nommo*, the creative spoken word, the creative spoken word, only three generations removed from Africa" (p. 22). This reference to the Word, is a reference to the Christian Word as in Word of God which is the expected reference for a minister. However, the preached/spoken word of Dr. King functioned as and was recognized by Lischer as an iteration of *nommo*. The key item in Lischer's statement, though, is the reference linking Dr. King's rhetoric to traditions and its origins three generations and more into Africa. Again, there is a nod to an historical and rhetorical legacy.

Nommo and literature. Monteiro-Ferreira (2009), in *The Power of nommo: the case of African Literature in Portuguese language*, makes a clear distinction in a Eurocentric interpretation of the piece, *Sleepwalking Land*, versus an Afrocentric perspective. Originally, one of Mia Couto's African narratives entitled *Terra Sonâmbula*, translated by David Brookshaw into English, is illustrated by Monteiro-Ferreira as a complex novel for the Eurocentric reader. But, for the Afrocentric reader, this is "orality in the traditional transmission of history", as if hearing it from the lips of a griot. The key point made for the purpose of this study is the preeminence of orature in addressing critically, African discourses; that it regains "oral African traditions of storytelling, proverbs, singing and dancing, call and response...means to question the location of the work of contemporary African writers and their role as agents in

the African history” (Monteiro-Ferreira, 2009, p. 335-336). The connection between orature and agency cannot be ignored, not just with respect to literacy and reclaiming African identity, but with nommo, the power of the spoken word, becomes an agency healing and restoration.

Lasana Kazembe approaches nommo in her 2012 dissertation, *Beyond nommo: Contextualizing the Literary Genealogy Within Radical , Socially Responsible Black Poetry*, with respect to the Black arts movement (1965-1976), wherein nommo becomes the superstructure of a critical literary pedagogy. What makes this work significant for this study is that Kazembe recognized the aims of the Black arts movement to “define, cultivate, and synthesize a functional Black Aesthetic informed by the complex cultural and political contextualization and responsiveness of Black life” (p. 95-96). However, it is her definition of moving beyond nommo that holds appeal, stating it is to

continue to critically explore, interrogate, incubate, and leverage the complex [yet marginalized] epistemology (history, folkways, traditions, experiences, memories, etc.) of African people (continental and Diasporan) and ensure that our epistemology remains accessible, decipherable, and functional for current and future generations. Indeed, this epistemology (which includes the African American literary genealogy) is rightly regarded as a cultural artifact of the African Diaspora (2012, p. 13).

She is speaking to legacy and the need to include such exploration in order to maintain the Diaspora’s link to culture, community and heritage. This is to recognize the literary genealogy as cultural artifact, which I would place as rhetorical and cultural legacy. It is clear that she sees nommo as pedagogy, at least fundamental to pedagogy for the African and the African Diaspora. Even with her study limited to the Black arts movement of the mid 1960’s to mid 1970’s, the

approach to nommo over time is presumed a significant approach to pursue in extending nommo as a framework of rhetorical analysis.

Rachel Robinson's (2009) dissertation, *Tryin'to Make a Dolla Outta Fi'teen Cents: Why the African-American Canon Has Wrongfully Excluded Popular Urban Literature*, bemoans the lack of consideration for contemporary literature in the African American canon, going on to describe how nommo is present in this literature and making assertions toward contemporary music as well. In her study, she is attempting to make connections between the classic and the contemporary, establishing a rhetorical legacy and cultural continuance of nommo aesthetics. Again, there is a need to include legacy and contemporary to get a fuller view of nommo aesthetic over time.

Walker and Kuykendall(2005) in *Manifestations of Nommo in Def Poetry* also establish def poetry performance as a unique Afrocentric orality and sought to explicate how nommo is manifested in def poetry by examining five nommo aesthetics across several pieces. These scholars focus on rhythm, soundin' out, repetition, call and response, and mythication, concluding that nommo was indeed a force within def poetry (Walker and Kuykendall, 2005).

Nommo and visual media. Bates, Lawrence, and Cervenka(2008) move to establish a space for Afrocentric examination of visual media in their 2008 article, "Redrawing Afrocentrism: Visual nommo in George H. Ben Johnson's Editorial Cartoons", published in the Howard Journal of Communications. They move in contrast to the established Eurocentric rhetorical examination to recognize a non-White way of knowing. The authors take great pains to recognize Johnson's own history as a second generation African American cartoonist following in the steps of Henry J. Lewis and John Mitchell, Jr., noting a rhetorical heritage. These authors note that an African past is literally non-existent in a Eurocentric paradigm, which I contend

means a disconnect from an historical and rhetorical legacy that defines meaning in the African diaspora. The social justice consequences of visual nommo are not lost on Bates and colleagues as they argue that the contemporary state of the Negro was caused by the forgetting of their history and that knowing this history can be empowering and transformative (Bates, 2008). In their analysis, as with other nommo based analyses, the authors concentrate on select manifestations, repetition, stylin', and mythication, as indicators of nommo. In creating this space, Bates, Lawrence and Cervenka pave the way for others in looking at visual media and nommo.

Tyree and Krishnasamy (2011) take up that mantle of Afrocentricity and visual media by their examination of the Boondocks comic strip drawn and scripted by Aaron McGruder. Using a qualitative textual analysis, the authors found the Boondocks did exhibit Afrocentric thought and five of the ten manifestations of nommo as expressed by the strip's characters. An important aspect of this study is the historical perspective provided in the comic, as the authors note consistent references to how African Americans have been treated in this country addressing "how future generations of Americans will remember the current era of Black history" (Tyree and Krishnasamy, 2011, p. 38).

Nommo and music. As with literature and other creative expressions, music has also been the subject of nommo centered analysis. Cummings and Roy (2002) in *Manifestations of Afrocentricity in Rap Music*, view and use Afrocentric theory is a valid method for understanding and explicating rap music through a lyrical analysis. By doing so, the authors provide a precedent for looking at contemporary music through an Afrocentric lens. Cummings and Roy randomly selected five nommo aesthetics to analyze: Rhythm, soundin' out, call and response, repetition, and mythication, but briefly mention historical perspective, quoting Hamlet

(2008) as have others, that African American discourse uses historical perspective to be inspired, grow strong to survive in this racist country (2002, p. 68; Hamlet, 1998).

Dewberry and Millen (2014) treat music as rhetoric to “explore the ‘music bite’ and the affective nature of music” (p. 81). These authors’ main consideration, though is the delivery - style and eloquence. John B. Hatch (2016) analyzes the “accidental racism” of the Brad Paisley LL Cool J duet, “Accidental Racist”.. He depends a great deal on what I feel is an accurate condemnation of the contrived dialogue as heavily influenced by neoliberal constraints. And though there is a reference to afrocentricity in the footnotes, the opportunity to compare Eurocentric to Afrocentric analysis in conversation, is lost.

Karim-Kincey (2005) examined hip hop and concluded that this genre complies with the rules for Afrocentric discourse as set by Asant but, that differences in individual artists and content, leave some uncertainty as to whose rhymes can be considered Afrocentric rhetoric and whose can not aside from that clearly identified as Afrocentric in theme. One of the aspects of hip hop music as examined by Karim-Kincey is that these songs are seen in performance as opposed to communal. In that regard, one can draw a practical distinction between speaker and audience that distinguishes this genre of music from that used as hymnody in social justice movements. That does not disqualify such songs from inclusion if used with that intent and sung communally, thus taking them out of the realm of performance and into the space occupied by community building. One thing to consider, however, is that Hip Hop may occupy its own Afrocentric rhetorical space that may create communities via the word, doing so in unique ways. This remains to be studied.

By applying Knowles-Borishades’(1991) model to a non-literary form, I am extending the definition of classical African orature depicted in her model by showing how these hymns

meet her model's criterion. This work follows in the footsteps of Mwaura, Banks, Onuekwusi, and Ochieng'O in broadening the concept of African orature to include more creative expressions beyond literature and oral traditions of storytelling. Therefore, as an iteration of African orature, an Afrocentric approach is required. With this lens established, I intend to offer an extension to previous studies that use nommo as a method of analysis by presenting additional points of analysis that point to the rhetorical legacy of these hymns so that scholars may establish and observe the flow of energy within and outside of the ethnic Afrocentric rhetorical community.

Chapter 3: Methodology

It can be safely argued that once a rhetorical artifact can be considered as orature, it has become part of the Afrocentric realm. This holds true for communally sung hymns as previously examined, meeting the codification presented by Knowles-Borishade (1991). This alone justifies an Afrocentric theoretical framework for proper analysis as the intentional use of such hymns in service to the manipulation of spiritual energies via the creative and productive word to build communities and lead them to spiritual harmony. As classical orature, *nommo* is an inherent aspect of this hymnody. While I recognize and expect that not all songs considered a part of a body of communally sung hymns will exhibit all constructs of *nommo*, the presence of multiple principles within the body of songs being sung, points to implicit, if not inherent manifestations of *nommo*.

Theoretical Framework

This music has a particular cultural importance and therefore requires a culture-based theoretical approach to maintain context and meaning.

Afrocentricity. Molefi K. Asanté can be called the father of Afrocentric theory, especially with respect to rhetoric. He is both an Afrocentric scholar and a communication scholar. As such, no literature review on Afrocentric theory would be complete without mention of *The Afrocentric Idea* (Asanté, 2011). Asanté states, “Rhetoric, in an Afrocentric sense, is the productive thrust of language into the unknown in an attempt to create harmony and balance in the midst of disharmony and indecision” (p. 46). He posits this in the consideration of Afrocentric theory as a meta theory, indicating that “African communication behavior will have possible implications for a more general theory” (p. 46).

This study uses *nommo* to study hymns as an Afrocentric discourse. In essence, I address these hymns as an example of orature. As Mutere (2012) explains, Afrocentric thought places knowledge in the hands of the community for the benefit of the community and a “self-conscious centering in the African experience and world view which includes respect for humanity in general, and for the African tradition and reality in particular” (p. 151). Hymns, when sung communally in the context of social justice mass meetings build communities by expanding their knowledge, fortifying identity, and drawing the community along towards harmony as it navigates various exigencies.

Asanté is cited by Reviere (2006), where she uses him to provide an Afrocentric method by giving two key concepts to consider, *Maat* and *nommo*: the quest for “justice, truth and harmony,” and “the productive word,” or creating knowledge for the benefit of the community (Reviere, 2006). Although the tenets of Afrocentric thought have a history of several thousand years, Asanté is most credited with packaging these tenets in a form useful to scholars, particularly rhetorical scholars. Asanté also bears particular distinction as not only an Africologist, but a rhetorical scholar, as well. It is his outline of Afrocentric method that provides the grounding for my methodology. I take to heart his statement in *The Afrocentric Idea* that “my aim in writing *The Afrocentric Idea* was to inject the agency of Africans into the equation of social and political transformation” (Asanté, 2011, p. 20). To that end, discussion of how these artifacts, collections of communally sung hymns, sung in the context of creating a more just society, sit squarely in the realm of *nommo* as an example of orature purposed to change the world. It is a tool of agency that utilizes the flow of spiritual energy described in Knowles-Borishade’s (1991) model of classical African orature.

The concept of Maat brings these powerful and complex forces together. According to Karenga (2003), Maat evolves through seven virtues of truth, justice, propriety, harmony, balance, and reciprocity. In addition, Asanté (2011) notes that Maat applies to all Black culture, and “what we observe with the practice of Maat is the inevitability of good overcoming evil, of harmony replacing disharmony, and order taking the place of disorder” (p. 52). In other words, Maat encompasses all. As Obenga (1989) concurs, “Maat is Order, Truth and Justice, Felicity supreme, inviting man in society to do and speak, to think and act...” (p. 317-318). Thus, following Alkebulan, as interpreted by Jackson and Richardson (2003), it is necessary that an Afrocentric rhetorical scholar “assembles the ideas concerning nommo and Maat in a cohesive framework that engages the relationship between language, rhetoric, and spirituality” (2003, p. xvii).

By using the codification of classical African orature presented by Knowles-Borishade (1991), I follow the rubric set by Alkebulan by maintaining the cohesive framework provided. It is through the use of nommo, its aesthetics, as the rhetorical vehicle for directing spiritual energy, that the goal of Maat is striven toward. As orature, the hymns or songs sung communally serve a traditional purpose of education and edification of the community. It is the use of nommo that propels the community in time and location, with location referring to the rhetorical place that contemporary exigencies reside. Thus, as those exigencies are dealt with, the community moves forward toward the next exigency, thrust to that rhetorical location by the spiritual energy driven by nommo.

Nommo. For this work, nommo is the rhetorical umbrella. As the productive word, nommo is being used to demonstrate the Afrocentric nature of the artifact, collections of communally sung hymns, that are used intentionally. The words of these songs, used with intent

in various traditional nommo styles, is not art for art's sake; it is functional (Asanté, 1998). It has to *do* something: "As a philosophical concept, nommo is the animative ability of words and the delivery of words to act upon objects, giving life" (Blanchard, 1999, p. 2). It is from this cohesive framework that scholars have articulated the *manifestations* of nommo in Afrocentric discourse, and might, as I will illustrate, capture a way of *mapping* the motion or circulation of nommo in Afrocentric discourse across time and space.

The major difference in previous observing nommo traditionally and nommo as an agent of motion is an acknowledgment of the movement of energy in the use of the productive word. It requires the acknowledgment that the energy of the creative word has a path, both as legacy and as a future course. Where Asanté brings delineation for the rhetorical use of nommo and various styles of orature used in the expression of the productive word, Janheinz Jahn provides insight into an understanding of how energy flows in nommo. Jahn (1961), in *Muntu: African Culture and the Western World* delves deep into the philosophical underpinnings of ancient African culture, most notably that of the Dogon culture, whose current lineage can be traced back several thousand years. Man, in the context of this discussion refers to human, humanity and will henceforth be referred to as such unless directly quoting an author. Jahn in his description of Dogon philosophy states that "All magic is word magic... Through nommo, the word, man establishes his mastery over things" (p. 132). He continues by making a comparison to the the Christian gospel of John, Chapter 1, Verse 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" as interpreted in the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. There are a couple of observations I'd like to make with respect to this comparison. First, the respect of the spoken word as a creative force is basic to both traditions. This helps legitimize naming the collection of African American rhetorical artifacts, communally sung songs, a

hymnody. Second, both traditions show the word as being the catalyst, a tool used with *intent to create*. The difference between the two, Afrocentric nommo and Christianity, is that in Christianity, the power of the Word remains with God, only in flesh in Christ. But, in nommo, the power of the creative word, though also with Amma (God), remains with Muntu (humanity), after the beginning. This means every muntu/human has the force or power of the creative word, though not to the degree of Amma/God. This gives humans, in this context, Africans, agency.

Asanté (1998) adds a caveat to this idea when considering agency. He states “traditional African philosophy cannot make the distinction of ‘speaker’ and ‘audience’ to the same degree found in rhetorical traditions of Euro-American society...in African society the coherence among persons and things accords, so that music, dance, or nommo must be a collective activity” (p. 78). The key is that the hymns used in the context of social justice also make no distinction between speaker and audience. Those participating are effectively both speaker and audience. A Westernized analysis would be looking solely at how Euro-centered observers interpret what they see and hear in analyzing this music; considering what the external affect is, or has been. In other words, a Eurocentric approach asks, “What happened?” Explicate this artifact in this place and time. An Afrocentric approach asks, “What is happening? What are we creating?” It is not a question constrained by momentary considerations. Asanté (1998) quotes Jahn, “The central significance of the word in African culture is not a phenomenon of one particular time” (p. 81). In that regard, then I offer a review of literature where nommo has been used as a rhetorical frame.

Karenga (2003) describes African rhetoric as a rhetoric of community, evolving in ancient African culture as communal deliberation, discourse and action directed at bringing good into the community and the world; it is a rhetoric of possibility. As an expression of orature that

is from the community, to the community, to build and maintain the community, social justice hymnody carries on this tradition of African rhetoric, not only through the inherent use of nommo as demonstrated by the application of Knowles-Borishade's model of classical African orature, but also by applying Karenga's above description. In a social justice context, the hymns used in this context are deliberate discourse, intentional in their pull to community and drawing on the legacy of the past to prepare for the future envisioned in lyric, channelling the spiritual energy directed via use of nommo aesthetics. Thus, as Jackson and Richardson (2003) posit, the study of orature, in the form of African American rhetoric, is a significant advance in communication beyond the traditional treatment of it as simple public address.

Study Context: Social Justice Hymnody and the Civil Rights Movement

It is important to clarify what social justice hymnody means. This is not a study that is centered around the effect of hymns against social justice exigencies. social justice hymnody is not even limited to hymns per se, other than to connect the term hymnody as a collection or body of songs sung in communion by and for a community for edification, education, and identification in the struggle for a better world through the use of nommo aesthetics. It is classical African orature used in a traditional way in the African diaspora. It is not my intention to explicate the meanings in the songs included in this kind of hymnody. The purpose is to show that nommo aesthetics are found in these songs as they move within an expression of orature, specifically, how they channel the energy of the productive word within the community that is singing. Social justice hymnody, therefore, is more rightly an extension of Knowles-Borishade. This leads to the place and time context wherein this examination of social justice hymnody takes place.

Whereas previous studies have focused on a number of historical and rhetorical context of nommo, including Karim Kinsey (2000,) who examined the rhetorical significance of hip hop culture through its music using nommo; Cummings and Roy (2002) who explicate the manifestations of nommo also in rap music; Walker and Kukendall's (2005) exploration of Def Poetry Jam; Hudson-Weems (2007) examination of the history of Africana womanism and nommo; Hamlet's (1998) overview of nommo in African American oratory delving into cultural and historical significance; Howard's (2011) look at President Barack Obama's speech and nommo to assess rhetorical and historical significance, this study centers on what I call "social justice hymnody," that is the body of communally sung songs in a social justice context. Researchers have consistently analyzed music within the context of social justice. For instance Robert Darden's (2014, 2016) previously cited two volume set *Nothing But Love In God's Water*; Guy and Candie Carawan's (2007) compendium *Sing for Freedom* which purports to tell the story of the civil rights movement through song; and Eileen Southern's (1971)*The Music of Black Americans*, which followed the history of African American music from its African continental heritage, through dissent in slavery, sorrow and work songs, to the civil rights movement and early 1970's.

Additionally, scholars have studied Afrocentric contexts of social justice. Examples of this include Jon Michael Spencer's (1990) *Protest and Praise, Sacred Music of Black Religion*, which looks at music and its social justice contexts; Hemmons's(1996) *Black Women in the New World Order: Social Justice and the African American Female*, which addresses the status of African American women in light of a dominant Eurocentric narrative and briefly looks at how Afrocentricity be fostered institutionally for the benefit of African American women; or George and Dei (1998, who directly question the role of Afrocentric discourse in social justice.

In this study, I focus on the ways in which a body of hymns function within the context of social justice through characteristics of Afrocentric discourse, namely *nommo*. As Southern (1971) and Spencer (1990) note, hymns have long been part of the struggle for freedom and equality. The civil rights movement has been a focal point for such studies. In Reiland Rabaka's (2016) *Civil Rights Music: The Soundtracks of the Civil Rights Movement*, Rabaka makes the point that music is the primary vehicle by which the "motto and mission of African American movements" is communicated above other rhetorical methods such as political speeches, protests, or pamphlets (p. 3). The previously mentioned works by Darden and the Carawans, along with Rabaka seem to point towards the civil rights era as a time when music, especially hymns and group singing were an important part of the rhetorical life of the African diaspora in America. The tradition pointed backwards, as historical legacy and thanks to current technology, images of the New Poor Peoples' campaign show a future rhetorical legacy. Hartford (2011), himself a veteran of the civil rights movement makes it clear that it was this music, not in performance, but in communion, that made the difference. He makes it clear that political songs were sung for a *listening* audience. Hartford explains:

when Movement veterans speak of 'freedom songs' we mean the songs that we all sang together. Songs that we sang not as a performance or for entertaining others, not as something to be passively listened to, but as something we ourselves created anew each time we lifted our voices. And it was the act of singing, more than the beauty of the songs, that gave them meaning and power (2011, para. 1).

Being poised at a historical and rhetorical place in time that exemplifies the use of song, especially communally sung song in a social justice context, notably the most prevalent domestic social exigency of the last century, I have chosen to set my study in the era of the civil rights

movement. What follows is the data collection for gathering representative samples of social justice hymnody within the context of the civil rights movement.

Data Collection

Several archival resources were used to locate a potential hymn useful for applying an Afrocentric rhetorical analysis. Guy and Candie Carawan's (1990) *Sing For Freedom: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement Through Its Songs* was consulted given its authors close relationship to the music and participation in singing hymns in the context of the Civil Rights movement and various events therein. The songs they have collected are there due to their use in this context. The resource provides a first hand accounting of hymns used. In addition, Kerran L. Sanger's (1996) *When the Spirit Says Sing!: The Role of Freedom Songs in the Civil Rights Movement* was consulted given its total focus on the singing. In particular, Sanger has a collection of lyrics included in her study, among which is the song "Don't Let Nobody Turn You Roun'" which became "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round" as used in the Civil Rights movement. This resource provides historical legacy in examining this artifact. In other words, this study shows movement and circulation within the exigent context of a social justice movement. whose context is provided by the civil rights movement of the 1960's. In order to further specify one representative sample to study, the following three inclusion criteria was applied to the two archival resources: the song must have been (a)performed in more than one situational context, (b) sung during the Civil Rights Movement, and (c) an archive of first-personal testimony of those who have used or witnessed the song in these situations. The hymns "This Little Light of Mine" and "Woke Up This Morning With My Mind" meet all three requirements for an exemplar. Both hymns have documented use during the Albany movement

in the early 1960's and various other moments during the civil rights era, with lyrics improvised for various situational exigencies.

Analysis

This study performs a close lyrical reading to see what themes or tropes come to the forefront in a more detailed analysis beyond what is described I intend to use the Afrocentric concept of nommo as my lens in examining the songs sung in community. Nommo translates to the productive or creative word (Asanté, 1998). In general, because of the clearly Christian connotations of the Word, this approach seems appropriate. Tyree and Krishnasamy (2011) list ten qualities that frequently manifest in the presence of nommo: rhythm, soundin' out, call and response, stylin' lyrical quality, improvisation, historical perspective, repetition, indirection, and mystification, also called mythication. Gilyard (2004), in his introduction to *African American Rhetoric(s): Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Richardson and Jackson (2004), provides eight elements --- rhythm, soundin', stylin', improvisation, storytelling, lyrical code, image making, and call and response. Howard (2011) also provides four values expressed in nommo: humanism, communalism, empathetic understanding, and rhythm.

The analysis follows in prior footsteps in applying selected principles of nommo, in particular Cummings and Roy (2002), who randomly chose five of the aesthetics. This is more than just a "yes or no" on whether these concepts exist, however. I will let discovery, in the course of analysis, dictate which elements will be further discussed. The songs should have an explicit appeal to each in the context of the social exigence being dissented against. The nature of this music is dwells deep in community building, thus this aspect should be found in its use. In the analysis chapter of this work, the hymns "Ain't Nobody Gonna Turn Me 'Round," "This Little Light of Mine," and "Woke Up This Morning With My Mind" are used to show the

presence of nommo aesthetics and, with a few testimonials, will be shown to have community building influences, which is the primary goal of social justice hymnody.

Chapter 4: Analysis

This chapter examines my artifacts in light of lyrical content in the context of the social movement during which they were used. Several scholars have viewed African American discourse through the manifestations of nommo (Clarke, 2004; Cummings and Roy, 2002; Yancy, 2004). Ten characteristics often manifest themselves in the presence of nommo: rhythm, soundin' out, call and response, stylin', lyrical quality, improvisation, historical perspective, repetition, indirection, and mystification. These manifestations have been identified in many places, including speeches, closing arguments in legal cases, poems, spirituals, and rap lyrics. These prior studies approached their analysis by engaging in a close reading analysis of the chosen Afrocentric discourse. The close reading approach is defined as word - level examination for meaning. I will employ the same method with the goal of explicating what manifestations of nommo may exist in my chosen expression of classical African orature: social justice hymnody.

Historical and Rhetorical Context

The results of the archival research revealed “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me ‘Round” as a representative hymn that was used in multiple contexts, including during the Civil Rights Movement, and includes interviews with those who performed and/or heard the song in collective during the movement.

Noted historian Howard Zinn described one such time, the Albany movement of the early 1960's. His observations were prefaced by Leslie W. Dunbar, activist and executive director of the Southern Regional Council, who called Albany as having a “crucial importance for the national interest” and that “as the civil rights movement penetrates the Deep South, and into smaller cities and rural areas, there will be other localities, and perhaps many where a similar pattern of events will occur. Albany has had its predecessors, so it will have its successors” as

cited in Zinn (1962, p. viii). With this brief observation, Zinn posits that this situation has and will circulate beyond Albany at that time. His observation also indicates Albany is a good choice to look at hymnody for samples of its circulation. However, with the civil rights movement being fluid and subject to a variety of different exigencies, this study will consider hymns that were sung in the context of mass meetings, as part of a collective hymnody. The hymn “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me ‘Round” is one example.

It was introduced in Albany by the Rev. Ralph Abernathy in the Summer of 1962. According to the Carawans, he taught it to a mass meeting held at Mt. Zion Baptist Church, known for being a meeting place for the movement at this time (Carawan and Carawan, 2007). But use of this song goes back further. Sanger describes this song as one that activists used to show resolve to not give in. More importantly for this study, it is one chosen for its ease of improvisation. Sanger explains:

This song was of the type folklorists describe as advancing its theme through incremental change; folksingers call it a ‘zipper song.’ It consisted of very simple verses with minimal changes in each verse -- a new word could be “zipped in,” which detailed the variety of people and tactics that might attempt to obstruct the movement (1995, p. 135).

This “zipping in” is essentially the use of improvisation to add to and move forward the message of the song.

This also has implications for addressing historical and rhetorical legacy, which will be addressed in the second part of this analysis. In addition, other songs that have been commonly used in this context, such as “This Little Light of Mine” and “Woke Up This Morning With My Mind”, will also be used as samples demonstrating the existence of manifestations of *nommo* via

particular aesthetics. These additional choices are contemporaries of “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me ‘Round” noted by progressive historian Howard Zinn who was present during this time period. (Darden, 2016).

Repetition. Repetition can be likened to a perpetual motion machine; once started, the flow of energy has to keep going, at times, to a fervor. It is this energy that builds the community, a shared excitement that Sanger addresses. According to Sanger, (1995) this is a deliberate choice, a song form designed so that the first verse was an appeal to emotion on an “abstract, universal level and to provide concrete points of reference for the emotion and inspiration as well.”

Walker and Kuykendall (2005) give a useful definition of repetition as it relates to nommo, defining it as involving the repeating of a phrase or words for intensification, indicating that more repetition increases audience participation. Looking at Russell Simmons’ Def Poetry Jam television series, Walker and Kuykendall point to examples of works by artists Poetri and Beatty, who both use repetition in nommadic fashion. Poetri, in his poem “My Money’s Been Actin’ Funny,” repeats that phrase consistently, personifying money as if he is in a relationship with it to convey economic woes common to the African American community. Cummings and Roy (2002) utilize repetition in their analysis of the manifestations of nommo in rap music citing it as a means of intensification (Rose, 1994) and also indicating it incentivises audience participation. Their 2002 study uses the song, “So Fresh, So Clean” by Outkast wherein the phrase “so fresh and so clean clean” is sung out by the audience during the chorus of the song, itself repeated, as choruses are, in the context of popular song structure. They observe that the more the group repeats “so fresh, so clean” the more the audience gets involved, not only in the singing, but in acting out the preening described in the lyrics.

In the earliest version of “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn You ‘Round,” provided by Sanger (1995), repetition appears only in the first verse. These words are the words that continued to be repeated in the civil rights era versions also noted by Sanger and the Carawans. The early version, titled “Don’t You Let Nobody Turn You ‘Roun’,” is a clear spiritual, having been sung in Black churches as part of an oral tradition before adopted by the civil rights activists:

Don’t you let nobody turn you ‘roun’

Turn you ‘roun’

Don’t you let nobody turn you ‘roun’

Keep the straight and narrow way. (as cited in Sanger, 2005, p. 174)

Music is repetitive in nature, each verse containing the same melody, variations or improvisations on harmony and lyrically bound to key phrases such as “turn you roun’” in this song. As such, in the civil rights era version, repetition appears over similar lyrical phrasing evolved to exclaim “Ain’t gonna let nobody turn me ‘round.” From here, variations changed ‘nobody’ to whomever or whatever the contemporary exigence was. For example, “Aint’ gonna let Chief Pritchett, turn me round,” or Mayor Kelley, or segregation. Each repetition intensifies the resolve of the community to not let anything turn them around from the proscribed action.

One such person affected by this song was Sheyann Webb of Selma, Alabama, one of the youngest marchers on Bloody Sunday, March 7, 1965, when demonstrators were beaten and tear gassed by police in Selma. She says of this song, at a meeting where she encountered Dr. King, “It started off with Rachel [a friend] and me going to meetings. We’d sit in the front row and sing. The first song we learned was “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn me “Round.” That song

itself told me a lot about what freedom was. It naturally meant there was going to be a struggle for rights that were owed to the black race” (as cited in Levine, 1993, p. 152).

It is interesting to note that one of the recent recordings of this song, performed by The Roots and appearing on the album, *Soundtrack for a Revolution* (2009), is sung nearly identical to the civil rights era version, including lyrical changes representing sites of dissent. Again, repetition is consistent. This collection, *Soundtrack for a Revolution*, is literally the putting together of a hymnody, at the very least a hymnodic study of the music of the civil rights era. It accompanies a 2009 documentary of the same name. Although this represents circulation of these songs, it does not meet the standards for use of the artifacts in the context of a hymnody as this recording was performance and not communal. One thing that is critical to note, is that through its use of historical footage, this documentary makes connections to historical legacy, which also serves to move these artifacts (hymns) in circulation. This is performance and commemoration. This is circulation: keeping the music visible and extending it to other audiences, which is different from internal circulation when hymns are communally song. One serves a community building function and the other is more suited to external expression of dissent and protest or archive.

Other examples of lyrical repetition are found in other hymns of that era, notably “This Little Light of Mine” and “Woke Up This Morning With My Min.” (see Appendix D). Within the chorus, the phrase “this little light of mine” is repeated three times, the magic number for rhetoricians, and again, the chorus itself is a repeated element. Then, the repetitive form continues with each ensuing verse structured as a exigential phrase followed by “I’m gonna let it shine.” For example,

We’ve got the light of freedom, I’m gonna let it shine

We've got the light of freedom, I'm gonna let it shine

We've got the light of freedom, I'm gonna let it shine

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

With "Woke Up This Morning With My Mind," the same pattern is utilized in the original hymn:

"Oh it ain't no harm to trust in Jesus,

Oh it ain't no harm to trust in Jesus,

Oh it ain't no harm to trust in Jesus,

Get on board, get on board."

And again with the civil rights version, first verse:

Woke up this morning with my mind

(My mind it was) Stayed on freedom,

(Oh yes I) Woke up this morning with my mind

Stayed on freedom.

(Well I) Woke up this morning with my mind

(My mind it was) Stayed on freedom,

Hallelu, hallelu, hallelu, hallelu,

Hallelujah!

Later verses start to address specific exigencies or life statuses after the repeated refrain, Like "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around," these songs also have a long history. "Woke Up This Morning With My Mind" has a predecessor that dates back to 1919, referenced by Newman I. White, to be revised by a Reverend Ormsby of Aurora Illinois while jailed during the civil rights movement (Sanger, 1995). The lyrics to "This Little Light of Mine" and "Woke Up

this Morning With My Mind” are shown in Appendices B and C. This is the song structure, one common with older spirituals and hymns. It is a design to reinforce messages. But, aside from the lyrical repetition, the performance aspect also incorporates repetition. In the context of mass meetings, these songs are often repeated in total several time. It might be just the chorus or several verses depending on the feel, the energy. If you have attended an African American church revival service, a similar thing takes place.

Call and response. It is the nature of many songs used as hymns, secular and non-secular, to use a call and response method. Jackson (1995) defines “call and response is the final element which offers a culmination of all these elements into an interactive discourse atypical of European communities. It is the idea that one should affirm by clapping, saying ‘amen,’ or responding in some way” (p. 154). Where repetition can be seen as a perpetual motion machine, consider call and response the continual revving of that engine, punctuating the power and the energy that is flowing through it and the community. Cummings and Roy (2002) explain that in African American communication settings, that the communicator is not a solo actor citing a “high level of synergy” between the communicator and audience. Cummings and Roy (2002), using rap music as an example, observed that there was a communal sense to the music, with the audience usually taking part in the communication in a pattern of give and take that allows interaction and participation with the artist, becoming part of the performance themselves. As Cummings and Roy (2002) depict, this communication as an art form that “provides the audience with an opportunity to react favorably to the message while helping the communicator establish a common ground between himself or herself and the audience” (p. 69). Thinking back to my adjustment in Knowles-Borishade’s (1991) model of classical African orature, the audience and the communicator, to use Cummings and Roy’s language, are one and the same. For Knowles-

Borishade, the Responder and the Caller/Chorus are one and the same, reflecting that these songs or hymns are sung communally to and for each other as members of the community. It becomes a circle of affirmation that “revs up” the spiritual energy, demonstrating the common ground of membership in the community that is both calling and responding to itself. In rap parlance, the community, engaged in communal singing, has become its own hype man. In a purely performance situation, this definition would seem obvious, as an audience would repeatedly affirm their participation in the music with various vocalizations, clapping and movement.

It is also important to know that in the case of call and response, someone or a group of someones who know the hymn to be sung may act as a song leader. This does not change the analysis in that these singings are not directed at the source of discontent, but directed back at the community. With those leading the songs being community members, “we” language is prominent, identifying their membership in the community, acting much in the way a strong runner will be chosen to push the playground merry-go-round, to rev it up for the other riders before hopping on with them. The song leaders get the community going in a call and response aesthetic, but does not separate themselves, using inclusive lyrical content. Unfortunately, this is not something found via just a close lyrical reading. This is a participatory and reciprocal rhetorical happening in the heat of a moment. It is spontaneous. If you have had occasion to visit a rocking Black church, you’ve experienced this, the key word being *experienced*. Again, I turn to current video archives via YouTube showing Yara Allen leading songs for the New Poor People’s Campaign. The example presented in the introduction is one such example that uses my main song choice, “Woke Up This Morning With My Mind.” Another, also from the New Poor Peoples’ Campaign is documented in a video featuring Yara Allen at a mass meeting that took

place January 15, 2016 (TeGreensboro, 2016). She introduces and teaches the community present two songs.

In the TeGreensboro (2016) video, when Ms. Allen takes the podium, the first thing she does is keep the audience standing. They had just heard one speaker and were about to sit down when she tells them to remain standing, which they do. She then gives this standing audience purpose by calling the gathered together for the purpose of singing by stating, “I travel together with one of the biggest choirs, altos, sopranos, tenors, all of you,” pointing to various sections of the audience. Then telling them, “So, we’re going to sing this song.” At this point, thirty seconds into the video, two things are happening: first, she has called the gathered a choir which does one thing - sings together; second, she gives them as task - to sing the song she is about to teach them, “When We All Get Together” (TeGreensboro, 2016). She prefaces the song with a brief personal history lesson, telling of her church experience with this hymn with lyrics *when we all get together, what a day of rejoicing it will be*. But then, she adds a twist, telling the audience that the lyrics will be sung as *when we see justice, what a day of victory it will be*. And then, she sings to demonstrate (TeGreensboro, 2016). This is the call.

The response that comes is first in the form of spontaneous clapping, emulating Ms. Allen’s self-accompaniment, in rhythm to Ms. Allen’s singing. Then slowly, but surely, the congregation joins in and soon they are singing together. This is observed near the fifty second mark of the TeGreensboro video (2016). However, a more telling example of response comes in the teaching of the second song, “Somebody’s Hurting My Brother”.

The call in this song is less discreet than in the previous. Four minutes into the TeGreensboro (2016) video, Ms. Allen teaches the gathering of congregants their response to the verse as *far too long*. She says, “I’m gonna say *somebody’s hurting my brother* and um you’re

gonna say, *far too long*.” The congregation and Ms. Allen begin to sing, Ms. Allen leading and the congregation vocally responding with the proscribed lyric as well as rhythmic clapping. As Ms. Allen goes on verse after verse, she changes the lyrical content as the congregations keeps singing the refrain of *far too long* and *we won't be silent anymore*; this last phrase to be sung all together as Caller and Responder, observed from five minutes and twenty seconds into the video until the end (TeGreensboro, 2016). Note that this demonstrates the merger of Caller and Responder into one body. She may have a particular role, but Ms. Allen is also a part of the singing body whose responsibility it is to make that body whole in song even getting those bodies moving in what she calls a “pentecostal rock” from side to side.

The singing ritual in the call and response then shifts with the addition of another manifestation of nommo --- *improvisation*. The lyrics to which the congregation responds are changed to address current exigencies. Ms. Allen sings, “Well, somebody’s poisoning the water, and it’s gone on...” with a congregational response of *far too long*. “We’ve been just a little too quiet, and it’s gone on”... Somebody’s been takin’ our votes, y’all, and it’s gone on... And back to somebody’s hurting my brother... .” This demonstrates nommo aesthetics can and do work in concert with each other. It also shows that improvisation is used in modern social justice contexts when communal singing is involved, much like it was used during the civil rights era.

Improvisation. Hamlet (1998) says of improvisation that it is a unique feature of African American oratory, common among African American speakers to speak without a script, notes or to move from a script with relevant examples and other information that comes to mind. Improvisation is a stylistic device which is a verbal interplay, and strategic catharsis often resulting from the hostility and frustration of a White-dominated society. It is spontaneity (Jackson, 1995). Cummings and Roy (2002) note that in the Afrocentric view of rhetoric, a

rhetorical act contains a great deal of improvisation (p. 68) The communicator, as they name the rhetor, is moved by the “spirit” as the song progresses. This is likened to “free-style,” ideas and concepts advanced by the audience get instantly responded to in performance. In the case of communally sung hymns, those in a social justice context, it is the exigency of the moment that informs the moves of the rhetor, usually an experienced song leader or recognized leader who takes the song and modifies the lyrics to fit the exigency. The example from the introduction regarding the New Poor People’s Campaign is again, a prime example of how this works, with the song “Woke Up This Morning With My Mind.” Surely, texting was not a classic civil rights move barring the development of said technology late in the 20th Century. Yet, that subtle upgrade serves to connect the current community of singers to that of the past. It was a response that reflected the conditions that currently exist in a lyrical frame that referenced the past, a deliberate choice based on past knowledge and the skill of the song leader who melded back into the community of singers as the spiritual energy moved among them.

The various lyrics of “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me ‘Roun” accomplish the same task. Sanger (1995) remarks on the title phrase that “Although that might seem the final word on the subject, ...the verses enumerated the people and other obstacles capable of slowing the progress of the movement. These verses kept the song current because new details could be, and were, added easily (p. 111). The most frequently used verses appear in Appendix A, confirming the response of lyricists/singers to contemporary exigencies such as Sheriff Laurie Pritchett, Mayor Kelley, and the threat of the jailhouse. Each of these verses is a direct response to a contemporary exigency that is added to the lyrical lexicon of these songs. With “This Little Light of Mine,” the addition of lyrics specifying Chief Pritchett is another example. I doubt he played such a prominent biblical role that he was included in the original, traditional song. Per Sanger

(1995), activists changed verses to adapt to their needs (p. 194-195). This adaptation to exigency is improvisation. Bettie Mae Fikes, movement veteran from Selma, Alabama, describes this process in action on the Civil rights Veterans website, collated by Hartford 2011):

When people started attending the mass meetings, young people provided the music. So we formed a young people's freedom choir, a children's freedom choir, and we put songs together. We began with our regular gospel songs, but then I started changing the music, the tempo, and the lyrics. One of my classmates, Walter Harris, was a piano player, and together we would improvise right off the top of our heads in mass meetings. That's how the Selma version of "This Little Light of Mine" came about. Our version was more upbeat and contemporary sounding than the traditional gospel version.

Darden (2016) notes a movement veteran who suggested every song that came through Albany referring to the Albany movement circa 1961 to 1963 in Albany, Georgia changed in some way. This observation confirms what may be considered a difficulty in providing a definitive analysis of improvisation. Carawan and Carawan (2007) concur, stating:

It should be realised that these words and tunes are sung with some variation from area to area and person to person. Words are often adapted to new situations and ad-libbed on the spot....[T]he improvisational style in which they are sung cannot be completely captured by orthodox musical notation...[T]he Freedom Singers from Albany, Georgia exemplify this improvisational style -- combining the best of the old-time religious singing style with modern gospel and rock n' roll (p.6).

For scholarly purposes, then, archival video, such as that posited in the introduction offer the best modern method of observing improvisation in action.

Barbara Howard, a middle schooler at in the early 1960's recounts her experience with improvisation thusly: "Songs---that was the key, that was the spirit lifter. 'Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round', 'We Shall Overcome,' of course, and 'O Freedom....This was during George Wallace's time, and Bull Connor, so we put their names in the songs" (as cited in Levine, 1993, p. 80).

Bernice Johnson Reagon referred to the song, "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody turn Me 'Round", as one of the that had evolved from earlier spiritual context (Sanger, 1995). The importance of this is not only the historical linkage, but the response to contemporary exigencies as expressed by Sanger (1995): "[A]s singers acknowledged the obstacles, they simultaneously asserted their intention to overcome such obstacles, and thereby established the capacity of the of the activists to stand firm in the face of any outside threat" (p. 174). Darden (2016) also describes Dr. King as ending mass meetings with this song. In the same volume, Darden refers to mass meeting participant Taylor Branch, who described how the spirit or energy of song would work up the crowds. Specifically commenting on "Ain't Gonna Let Then Turn Me Around," Branch indicated when this song of defiance was sung with the lyrics 'Ain't gonna Let Chief Pritchett turn me around', observers were amazed to see the community [church] fully participate in singing against power (Darden, 2016).

Dr. King was aware of the need to build and sustain communities during the civil rights struggles. Darden (2014) notes, "King, though new to the leadership, also instinctively knew the sustaining power of the emotional mass meeting/church services, which featured the ecstatic singing of sacred African music" (p. 132).

This study has illustrated that three aesthetics are prominent in this example of hymns or songs sung in communion. These songs do not have to all be sung in the same meeting or event.

These songs can be secular or non-secular. It is the manner in which they are used, particularly in light of the presence of nommo aesthetics and how spiritual energy of the productive word is moved. The telling aspect of these songs is whether or not the community, those who participated in the singing were affected. Here, archival testimony provided by Sanger, Darden, and the collection *Freedom's Children* provide some insight. The testimonials selected detail experiences of singing communally, whether in a mass meeting, march, or other situation where a community, predominantly African American, addressing social injustice, sang.

Naming This Practice

At this point, these three aesthetics are shown to be prominent in this example of hymns or songs sung in communion. I am calling this practice social justice hymnody. Loosely defined, social justice hymnody is the collection of songs sung in community in the context of a social justice movement. These songs do not have to all be sung in the same meeting or event. These songs can be secular or non-secular. It is the manner in which they are used, particularly in light of the presence of nommo aesthetics, and how spiritual energy of the productive word is moved.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study has defined hymnody as a body of songs sung in community, focusing on how this body serves to build community identity, educates the community regarding the source of their dissent, and invites the community to act on its own behalf. These practices take place through the use of a form of classical African orature which utilizes nommo aesthetics to channel the community's spiritual energy in creating harmony. That is, after all, the point of social justice movements; to bring society into harmony by redressing inequalities. Remember, social justice hymnody, as used in this context, is sung within, by, and for the signing community. This music is political (Martinielo and Lafleur, 2008). However, the study also begs a number of questions for researchers and activists: How can we understand the ongoing legacy of hymns? In the face of social injustice, can hymns be a strategic tool? If so, what resources are available to study and use such a tool. The Smithsonian Institution's Folkways Recordings website, *Voices of Struggle: The Civil Rights movement, 1945 to 1965*, offers one demonstration of how one might address these questions.

In their discussion and history of the song, "We Shall Overcome," the *Voices of Struggle* web page provides commentaries on research, citing the work of Zilphia Horton of the Highland Folk School, exploring how the song changed over time. This method demonstrates circulation in light of the situation (social justice mass movements of the 1960's), and comments on its meaning stating "We Shall Overcome" and the numerous songs of the civil rights movement "speak deeply of the determination, nonviolent resistance, and spirit of this turbulent time. Wherever and however they were sung, the freedom songs reflected their roots in African American cultural tradition" (*Voices of Struggle*, n.d., para. 5). Although not deliberately Afrocentric, even this cursory look shows an Afrocentric nod in the research direction.

By analyzing the communal function of “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me ‘Round” and other songs as an *Afrocentric rhetorical legacy*, this discussion further extends rhetorical theory of African American discursive practices in six ways: situation and circulation, invitational, improvisational, motion, praxis, and archive. Doing so allows the building of a composite framework for identifying when a social justice hymnody exists, its circulatory patterns (in the examination of select songs), and how theory may indicate a praxis for social justice hymnody which will be discussed in further detail in the final discussion section of this thesis. Thus, it can also extend rhetorical analysis in the use of nommo similar to other scholarship in Black studies (Bates, Lawrence & Cervenka, 2008; Karenga, 2013).

Whereas this study has assessed the manifestations of nommo within the body of songs being sung, it also points to an implicit, if not inherent, nommo appeal over time and across collections of related artifacts, such as a collection of hymns or a hymnody. As such, looking at an example of this type of artifact can provide indication of the usefulness of tracing the rhetorical legacy of such artifacts.

Extending Nommo Analysis Towards Rhetorical Legacy

Ethnic Heritage as Rhetorical Legacy: The plan of Delano, by John C. Hammerback and Richard J. Jensen (1994) is useful for explaining the significance of using culturally relevant frameworks. Hammerback and Jensen document the use of ethnic rhetorical legacies point to an intent on behalf of the rhetor, in this case Chicano movement leaders who were “digging up lost documents and proclamations other men saw fit to ignore” (1994, p, 53). These authors turn to Ernesto Galarza, poet, labor activist, historian and professor who explained this mining of cultural heritage was “necessary for Mexican Americans to develop a positive image and self-confidence” and that it “exalted traditional heroes and forms of political address.” It is not, then,

unusual to look to a cultural rhetorical legacy in the context of social justice for that culture. A second major point made by Hammerback and Jensen that has bearing on my analysis and proposed framework augmentation is this: “The rhetorical dimension of these Mexican-American documents become clear only within the context of their own rhetorical tradition, a tradition anchored in Mexican history and developed from the Mexican-American’s culture and experiences” (Hammerback and Jensen, p. 54).

Gyant and Atwater refer to Hammerback and Jensen in their article *Septima Clark’s Rhetorical and Ethnic Legacy: Her Message of Citizenship in the Rights Movement* in justifying this approach, first quoting Hammerback and Jensen (p. 54) with regard to the rhetorical dimensions of the Delano plan only becoming clear within the context of their own, Mexican tradition. With respect to their analysis of Septima Clark’s ethic and rhetorical legacy, Gyant and Atwater(1996) move that “likewise, to consider any African American orator, one has to acknowledge the impact and importance of the historical and cultural experiences of African Americans in this country to adequately understand and appreciate the contributions of each speaker” (p. 578). Both Hammerback and Jensen 1994), and Gyant and Atwater(1996) note the importance of the longview of culturally relevant rhetoric and in recognizing the inherent ethnic proclivities in assigning meaning to culturally produced rhetoric.

This is a different approach than assessing the potential legacy of any individual artifact. It is not a valuation of said artifact, but a recognition that the cultural/ethnic rhetorical history of a people has valence and can be accessed to continue its future impact. In essence, it is like a battery of knowledge, rhetorical energy that can be released in the orature of the creative word. And it is that flow of energy that must be considered when discussing nommo, beyond the traditional view of explicating which aesthetics appear in an artifact, what are those attempting to

accomplish at the moment and were those efforts successful. Even these two examples of applying cultural legacies do so in the context of a traditional analysis, not looking to how traditional cultural rhetorical aesthetics link together and then bind themselves in an unbroken chain of cultural, historical and rhetorical legacy. However, by adding those elements to a nommo based examination of a culturally distinct rhetorical artifact one can provide a deeper understanding of how the creative word moves and creates within the culture with implications for exigencies external to the culture.

However, Afrocentric scholars recognize the generative power of language or nommo (Cummings and Roy, 2002). According to Yancy (2004), nommo is the creative "power of the word" that identifies life as its beginning and end. Yancy (2004) adds nommo is a means to define the Black self and lived experiences, has the power "to move Black folk toward a greater sense of community," and provides what is "fundamental to the traditional African worldview" (p. 293-296). Thus, studying "movement" or "motions" of nommo offers an analysis of how Afrocentric discourses manifests and transforms people through its circulation across time and space, yet maintaining the central goal of harmony and liberation. Here I draw up Jahn's (1961) concept of nommo, not as motionless but full of force and movement. As Jahn (1961) talks about nommo, it is "the life force, is the fluid as such, a unity of spiritual- physical fluidity, giving life to everything, penetrating everything, causing everything" (p. 124). Knowing this, I agree with Jahn (1961) in that with nommo, the word, this force is received, shared, and "fulfills the meaning of life" (p. 124).

Jahn (1961) further explains by using a poet's language as an example. The poet uses words as a creation activity, calling things into being that the listener or reader sees in the communication of the verse. The images we imagine from those words are the creation of the

poet: the caller. In his words, “We see the ‘things’ when we read the verse. The poet made them in the word” (p. 135). Finally, the, it is this making of things in the word that moves life and creation. It is the energy of communication motion which Jahn refers to as a life force. As Jahn (1961) concluded, “the word itself is force. If there were no word, all forces would be frozen, there would be no procreation, not change, no life (p. 195). I assert that nommo, has a movement component that must be described. Thus, drawing from Jahn, Asanté, and Tyree and Krishnasamy, I describe three manifestations of nommo as they relate to motion, and then offer two other related concepts drawn upon Afrocentric discourses of energy and/or life force: repetition and improvisation.

In *Afrocentric Visions*, Hamlet (1998) explains repetition of Afrocentric discourse is signaled as intensification: “The speaker ensures that the gist of what he or she is trying to communicate is not lost in the emotionalism of the audience” (1998, p. 96).

Wyatt Tee Walker, African American pastor and civil rights leader so eloquently states, “Black sacred music is the primary reservoir of the Black people’s historical context and an important factor in the process of social change” (as cited in Darden, 2014, p. 119). In this reservoir is the shared history and knowledge that provide a base for improvisation. Similarly, researchers might consider how nommo moves across time and space in order to continue locating power through the word, and establishing harmony and liberation beyond one single event or discourse.

The second part of my analysis looks more directly at the movement of social justice hymnody as its artifacts circulate in space and time. Here, I introduce two additional moves of nommo-based African American rhetoric: Binding and Location.

Binding. Binding, as a rhetorical concept has been considered in light of historical events. In *Finding the People's War: Film, British Collective Memory, and World War II*, Geoff Eley (2001), looking to map the historical and rhetorical legacy of World War II with respect to British collective memory, states,

To form the rhetorical binding of the postwar consensus, it [World War II] entered British cultural memory as a narrative of popular democratic accomplishment, require elaborate and extensive dissemination. In essence, he points to appeals strong in community history and memory cement the relationship the community has to its past via the rhetorical tool of choice (p. 821).

In this case, the tool of choice is the hymn (secular or non). Litwak's (2009) *Fight the Power! The Legacy of the Civil Rights Movement* is an example of such a call to legacy. In a sense, it is a history lesson that shows how creative artists such as Walter Mosley and James Baldwin pulled from cultural histories to infuse their rhetoric with a cultural context that extends beyond the moment, into the past. As Jahn (1961) states, "since the word has this power, every word is an effective word, every word is binding. There is no 'harmless' noncommittal word. Every word has consequence" (p. 133). Taking this clue from Jahn, this study refers to the process of binding as connecting and solidifying the relationship of the community to its past, culturally and rhetorically: legacy.

The question here is how does binding manifest in this expression of orature? It happens in the act of singing. Lyrically, these songs, particularly the hymns with spiritual roots, serve the purpose of making that link to legacy and the energy contained therein. Yara Allen (2013) explained during a Freedom Songs workshop that took place in Greensboro, North Carolina,

“Music speaks to the sentiments of those activists who came before us...that it reaches back and it brings that energy from those who were before...that’s why those songs feel so powerful to us. That’s why movement songs have so much impact” (Freedom Songs Workshop, 2013). Allen is describing the spiritual energy expressed in the use of social justice hymnody, and how the energy of legacy connects the contemporary singing community to the power of their ancestors so that their current expression of energy, this manifestation of *nommo*, can continue to express that energy. Binding, then, is a consequence of using orature. This expression of *nommo*, manifested in various aesthetics with the result of connecting the legacy flow of spiritual energy is reflected in the legacy of these communally sung hymns. Indeed, as Asanté states, “It is precisely the power of the word, whether in music or speeches that authentically speaks of an African heritage. Thus to omit orature in speeches and songs from any proper investigation of African American history is to ignore the essential ingredient in the making of our drama” (Asanté, 1995, pg. 97).

As an example of Traditional African orature as defined by Knowles-Borishade, hymns sung communally in a modern social justice context have a lyrical legacy reflected in the original texts of these hymns. For example, the original lyrics of “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me ‘Round”, known as “Don’t You Let Nobody Turn You Roun”, speak directly to the spiritual history, a Christian history, however. The legacy is found in the vehicle, itself - the orature. The use of a traditional African rhetorical vehicle in itself binds the rhetor/audience to tradition, whether recognized by the rhetor/audience or not. It is inherent in classical African orature.

Location. Location, in the case of social justice hymnody, is the relationship of the community to the exigence that precipitates communal song. Asanté (2011), in *The Afrocentric Idea*, places location in a historical and cultural context, citing Cheikh Anta Diop, who posited

that our understanding of Africans, and I include all those who belong to the African diaspora, must link Africans to their classical past (1998). He does so by casting scholarship that speaks of *double consciousness* and the *Black Atlantic* as concepts that bow to Eurocentric supremacy, mistating “the agency,” the “ownership of action...of Africans” (Asanté, 1998). Specifically, Asanté takes Paul Gilroy (1993) to task in regards to his differentiation of continental Africans and those of the diaspora as imposing a “mulatto consciousness” as an African one. That is, casting diasporic consciousness as one that is tempered in Eurocentric sensibilities, a dilution that preferences the hybridity and countermands the agency of Africans, continental and diasporic.

The telling difference with location, as a further effect of nommo, is that it is important to consider where the spiritual energy is cast. By looking at the improvised lyrical content of hymns sung in a social justice context, we see that energy being cast in the direction of contemporary exigencies. Every mention of Chief Laurie Pritchett, or the jailhouse, for example, in “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me ‘Round” or “This Little Light of Mine,” there is a projection of spiritual energy to address a new exigency. With improvisation being a choice, this becomes an example of the community not only exercising energy, but also *agency*.

Having agency implies that Africans control the energy to move their world to a state of spiritual harmony. This is the essence of Maat, wherein the productive word, nommo, is expressed via aesthetics of classical orature, to wield spiritual energy in the creation of a better world. In this world, Africans wield the Word to change the world via their own agency. With agency and energy, movement is inevitable. Location, becomes an effect of the expression of nommo. It is the utilization of agency to express the spiritual energy contained in the creative or productive word.

From here, this discussion breaks down into three areas where rhetorical scholars can utilize these new terms: social justice hymnody as invitational; social justice hymnody as improvisational; and social justice hymnody as traveler (situation and circulation)

Extending Social Justice Hymnody Towards Rhetorical Theory

Social justice hymnody as invitational. Foss and Griffin (1995) introduced the concept of invitational rhetoric as a way to counter the patriarchal persuasion only bent of rhetorical theory. It is a feminist approach that places importance on two communicative options – offering perspective and the creation of external conditions that allow others to also present perspectives without fear and with a sense of equality. The point being, for social justice hymnody, there is implicit invitation to community when singing, not an attempt to persuade or control, but to join. There is no pressure to change as with a purely persuasive strategy, but the invitation can lead to transformative behavior (Foss and Griffin, 1995). However, it is the flexibility of the rhetor in invitational rhetoric that adds interest for looking at social justice hymnody. Foss and Griffin put it thus when defining invitational rhetoric, referencing Burke,

Invitational rhetoric is characterized, then, by the openness with which rhetors are able to approach their audiences. Burke (1969) suggests that rhetors typically adjust their conduct to the external resistance they expect in the audience or situation: ‘We in effect modify our own assertion in reply to its assertion (p. 237)’ (p. 6).

To put this into musical perspective, when a jazz musician improvises, they do so based on their knowledge of musical modes and scales in response to audience. A rhetor can do the same thing. In the case of social justice hymnody, the rhetor and the audience are the same. The question becomes what practical things can the activist take from this rhetoric in terms of

advancing their agendas. In particular, how can African Americans use these cultural tools with an awareness of the Afrocentric roots to continue community building and inviting acting?

Sanger (1995) breaks it down for “Burke” intimating that the invitation comes from the transformation of turning *me* around to turning *us* around. Using the aesthetic of repetition, by way of frequent use of the song, activists encouraged individuals to act cooperatively while noting the commitment and responsibility were still the individual’s. They have a choice; they have agency. Singing in communion, then, expressed that agency and the energy engaged in the expression of nommo. The singing was an encouragement to act in concert, to join and be an active part of the community. Communionism created in the use of the productive word. Mary Gadson, a high school student during the early 1960’s civil rights movement, testified “At the meetings, we did a lot of singing and talking. ‘Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me ‘Round’ was like an incentive” as cited in Levine, 1993, p. 103) Mary indicated that she often attended mass meetings at church without her parents knowledge. This is the draw of community.

Social justice hymnody as improvisational. There is also the notion of an improvisational rhetoric at work. Improvisational jazz has mostly been used as a metaphor outside of the music discipline in organizational studies. Hatch (1999) and Kamoche and Cunha (2003) are two examples. Musically, when you think of improvisation, there are similarities in how social justice hymnody changes in respect to the situation. Much like a jazz musician will riff on a theme in response to audience reaction and her knowledge of the theme, songs in the Hymnody may be changed spontaneously in response to the exigency and the song leaders’ or group’s knowledge of the song and situation.

Gates (2014) in his work, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*, provides a number of tropes that can be used to analyze African -American texts, and

though he is looking through a literary lens, it is reasonable to pull these tropes in relation to the lyrical content and purpose of the messages contained in Social Justice Hymnody texts. In other words, we can look at the differences over time with specific songs as to whether they are for testifying or signifying as a means of inviting the community to sing along and act. The distinction is testifying as explication and signifying as interpretation aimed at the African-American audience. Gates puts testifying as one of many aspects of signifying, but after analysis of the songs, that may not be the only trope present. Furthermore, in the 2014 twenty-fifth anniversary edition of his work, Gates takes time in an updated introduction to examine hip-hop as an execution of tropes (Gates, 2014). His observations are germane to the future implications of social justice hymnody with respect to how it may move in new rhetorical circles. This branching out of musical styles represents another African American musical trope, one found mostly in the realm of jazz --- improvisation. Spur of the moment lyrical decisions and choices based on experience and audience reactions move improvisation, fostering perhaps a deeper relationship. It is improvisation that likely acts as the means for adapting songs to new situations.

Rap music has currently been studied in this light. Karim-Kincey (2005) relates this to the traditional Aristotelian notion of invention, citing McCroskey, stating, “Invention, according to James C. McCroskey (1997), is “the process by which communicators adapt to an audience what they have determined to be fact or truth, in order to accomplish a predetermined purpose” (p. 60). This is what nommo does when improvisation is in play. This may indicate that the next collection destined for hymnody may come with a hip hop beat.

One other exigence to consider is technology. With rap, scholars such as Karim-Kincey (2005) and Cummings and Roy (2002) discuss hip hop in view of performance rather than collective singing. What bodes well for hymnody, however, is that call and response is also

prominent in Hip Hop (Cummings and Roy, 2002). In essence, this follows Knowles-Borishades' (1991) original model, but still allows the energy to flow. If you consider the back and forth inherent call and response, this relationship could potentially evolve into the adjusted model of a community moving toward spiritual harmony and Maat. Technology comes into play when social media communities are introduced. With so much of this music experienced online and the active response that it still gets, it may be possible to consider this a community under the influence of *nommo* much like Rastafarians say "I and I," where their community is through their shared individual experiences of Jah. Regardless, there is much room for further study.

Social justice hymnody as traveler. Bitzer (1968) offers seven conditions under which a situation is rhetorical: the discourse comes into existence because of a situation (exigence); the artifact gets its rhetorical significance because of the situation (how it functions --- to educate, to motivate to action, to build community identity); the situation is there and is a mandatory condition of the discourse; the situation may rise and fall without response; there is an invitation to participate which means outsiders can alter the experience; the discourse is rhetorical in its function as a fit response to the situation or the situation calls for this type of response; and the situation has control over the rhetorical response as a question controls the answer.

A major premise of this study is that the music of a social justice hymnody moves through time and in various rhetorical spaces; it has circulation and varying trajectories. This means considering Bitzer's rhetorical situation in the sense that the experience of communal song is a rhetorical situation, consisting of the *exigency* of social dissent, the *constraints* of segregation and social injustice in the guise of dominant social norms, and the *audience* – in this case, the audience and the sender (those joining together in song) are one and the same; a view supported by Sanger (1995) who quotes John Lovell, Jr.'s *Black Song: The Forge and the Flame*,

the “African rarely plays *for* someone as Westerners do; he usually plays *with* someone. An inactive audience to a musical performance simply does not exist” (p. 21).

Given those seven aspects of rhetorical situation, Social Justice Hymnody fits into the category of a rhetorical situation, meeting most, if not all of those seven aspects. First, social justice hymnody, or more specifically, the songs that are present in social justice hymnody are sung as a response to the exigency of social inequality. For the history of African-Americans, music has fulfilled this function from slavery (Southern, 1971) to the civil rights movement of the 1960's (Sullivan, 2001). It is an expression of dissent. Freedom songs of the civil rights era, for example, were “...the paradigm of militancy; blacks were not just singing about freedom, they were seeking it” (Spencer, 1990). Second, the body of social justice hymnody and specific songs therein, maintain their importance for the duration of the exigence. That is, songs used in the context of a social justice hymnody do so repeatedly; this is circulation. As these songs are used at different times and spaces of the exigence, they are used because the message and meaning of these songs remain relevant to the social context the community is dissenting against. Each appearance demonstrates an intentionality in the social justice campaign in response to the situation.

Apart from the rhetorical theorists noted, there is a decidedly romanticized view of this music with respect to African-American theological tendencies. Although a great deal of this music, including these specific piece that I examine, are either hymns themselves or based in hymns, I am not limiting my definition of hymnody to religious-oriented music. I am defining hymnody as the collection of works themselves, secular and non-secular, sung in communion in the context of social justice movements. It is the intentionality of their use in this context that provides the exigent action. The spiritual inclination, however, is still relevant as one of the

cornerstones for meaning and in tracing the cultural lineage of the images alluded to in religious terms. It becomes a means of tracking the circulation of these themes and how those themes change based on the rhetorical space they move to inhabit.

Social justice hymnody as motion. A key difference in this proposed framework is in how it extends the use of nommo as a rhetorical tool. As with most traditional approaches to rhetorical study, in terms of method, not lens, Afrocentric method also leans toward analysis of an artifact in-situ. That is, the artifact is examined in place – a physical place, a chronological place, a situational place. It is a snapshot that allows for a deep consideration of an artifact in the context of a particular space, time, context. This is vital when the question is “What happened?” And as rhetoricians, explicating what happened rhetorically is our bread and butter. In fact, those who use in-situ rhetoric as a methodology point to the need for an extended tool.

Dave Tell (2017), of the University of Kansas looks at the memory of Emmett Till in a recent study of looking at how place, race, and memory affected the rhetorical sites associated with the murder of Emmett Till. Because several sites are involved in the situation that encompasses the death of Emmett Till, each with its stated commemoration per Tell, and noting that these places were not in effect at the same time, it can be stated that the situation that encompasses plural indicates plural places and that the situation travelled. In motion means there is more to the rhetoric; there is a historical legacy implied in the state that the sites of murder have been transformed in its commemoration. So, even as we study these hymns, the sites of study and our veneration of these hymns give need to a movable rhetoric; for the Afrocentric, this is nommo in motion as opposed to traditional nommo in-situ, where the artifact is confined to a situational place and time.

Perhaps a better example is needed here. Rhetoricians generally take an artifact and perform the equivalent of a rhetorical post mortem. Not to discount the information that can be gleaned from such an examination, this practice generally results in detailed analyses that can be likened to high definition photography - a highly detailed snapshot of one moment in space and time. This is incredibly valuable when assessing what happened. But like taking the middle frame of feature film, there is much that came before and much that comes after; and the whole length of media needed to tell the story.

Beyond these three extensions, there are also the issues of archive and of praxis.

Social justice hymnody as archive. It should be noted that the archival work related to this project consists of existing collections of songs. These songs have been collected with a Western historical perspective. Among the most cited early collections of slave songs is *Slave Songs of the United States*, an anthology published in 1867 edited by William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison. The 1995 Dover publications reprint is a direct copy of the original including the introduction of the authors (Allen, Ware, and Garrison, 1995). One of the key facets of this collection is that it has songs divided by where they were sung, such as the Southeastern slave states, the Northern Seaboard slave states, and Inland and Gulf slave states. This regional breakdown is handy for looking at the regional circulation of root hymns to their future variations. Spencer, Darden, Southern, and Floyd all make reference to this work, which makes their historical observations useful in tracking hymns used in the pursuit of social equality.

While Allen is the most respected work for the First Reconstruction, the Second Reconstruction is also full of sources, especially those that have been mentioned earlier. Darden, Spencer, Southern, and Floyd are the pre-eminent historians of this music and this time. The

works of Guy and Candie Carawan will also provide insight. Their listings of songs are comprehensive and varied. What makes them authoritative for circulation is that their methods include placing songs in their respective movement uses by place and time. And finally, I will utilize first person accounts of how this music affected those who sung it in the context of social justice during the civil rights era utilizing a collection from Ellen Levine (1993), *Freedom's Children: Young Civil Rights Activists Tell Their Own Stories*.

There is literally no official accounting of how this music affected this audience. The accounts are rare and I was lucky to find the mentions where I have. These are the reported words of those involved in the movement, testifying that they not only sung, but how it affected them. It is piecemeal because no one has yet looked at this idea from any point. It's always outwardly directed as is most examinations of "protest" songs. *Freedom's Children* is unique in that it is a collection of first person accounts living in the movement with the benefit to me that several of those interviewed experienced communal singing and tell about it. Other examples are found in the historical accounts gathered by Darden, Floyd, and Southern --- those who have some other personal accounts of the singing. This is part of the issue: no one has taken the time to gather these accounts with the communal singing in mind; we study the artifact of the song instead. Also, the scholarship around it, when not romanticized, is not Afrocentric. It is a historical account or rhetorical criticism. This is perhaps the greatest shortcoming in the data. Plus, with those who lived those times dying out, recovering their experiences is unlikely. What that means, is that based on my work in putting these few pieces together in showing that this hymnodic communication strategy is a mode of community building.

While this information allows for specific event to be looked at, such as the Albany movement, this is a period when songs such as "We Shall Overcome" and "This Little Light of

Mine” were prominent and that prominence begs to be researched with legacy in mind, past and future. However, the haphazard way in which this data must be collected, from these disparate sources, points to a need to collect what information can be collected into a uniform rhetorical, historical, and cultural archive for the posterity of all disciplines. This is necessary archival work, required to maintain a valid base of Afrocentric source material for studies like this.

I can speculate that the lack of such an archive, even with myriad museums being built to contain African American historical artifacts, testimony, and oral tradition, may be due to their being scorned by the ivory towers of academia. Indeed, our academic institutions are still bastions of Eurocentric thought. My hope is that this study helps illuminate both a need and opportunity to expand the source material available to rhetoricians and others, not to dismantle the ivory towers, but to add an inclusive splash of culture and color where it is sorely needed.

The good thing about this legacy approach is that it is archival in nature. By establishing the rhetorical legacy of hymnodic works, scholars can open a wealth of historical information and trace its relationship to current exigencies in a social justice context. And with the advent of current media technologies, gathering such information as what songs were used, in what context, who was there, and what is happening now, can take place in real time thanks to live streaming, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The New Poor People’s Campaign live webcasts its events, such as the one described in the introduction. In doing so, they are an active example of an agency that is self-archiving in reference to the historical and rhetorical legacy of the movement(s) that preceded them.

The Civil Rights Movement Veterans website, as cited in this paper, is also a contemporary archive of the experiences of those who lived the civil rights movement. However, the connections that need to be made on a scholarly level, an Afrocentric level, are not

addressed. A scholarly approach to gathering these materials may prove more insightful into the deeper treasure held in an Afrocentric analysis. Knowles-Borishade (1991) gives us a model by which classical African orature can be identified. Archives, such as the civil rights movement Veterans website, provide evidence of how iterations of orature affected movement community members. Since we are now in an era of social media, It is critical that scholars use these digital remembrances to continue building relevant orature archives.

To put it another way, this method honors the expression of orature for modern African-American social justice movements. Orature was and is the means by which the African diaspora maintains and transmits culture. Using the word and language to preserve legacy and create a future via *nommo* aesthetics, African Americans, not just African-American scholars or rhetorical scholars, have the opportunity to use a culturally relevant tool to build and maintain their community in the face of growing social instability. Communities can, in this way, become the agency of their own cultural archives. It is the public as griot. That is what orature does.

Social justice hymnody as praxis. My interest in this music does not lie in its protest leanings. This music does have the outward effect of being protest. That is the nature of expressing dissent. What makes this music interesting to me is its direction towards the community that is singing it. Although some, such as Elizabeth Kizer, assistant professor of speech at the University of St. Louis, have remarked, “To protest is to verbalize a dissatisfaction with the status Quo. Usually, the lyricist registers a complaint, either overtly or covertly, but occasionally the song also includes a reference to a specific desired change” (Kizer, 1983, p. 3). Among these studies, a number a scholars have analyzed protest music during the civil rights movement (Floyd, 1995; Sellnow and Sellnow, 2001; Southern, 1971; Sullivan, 2001). That being said, the study of protest music is not new. There are numerous tomes on the protest music

of the iconic 1960's (Auslander, 1981; Knupp, 1981; Rodnitzky, 1999) and those previously cited with an interest in the civil rights era.

These hymns have never disappeared, tracing their lineage from the slave era to modern African American churches and others. However, it is their application in the context of justice in times of trouble that draws attention. Using the chronological device of Reconstruction as a framework, noting three periods of Reconstruction: the First Reconstruction period post-slavery; the Second Reconstruction of the Civil Rights movement; and now, a Third Reconstruction as addressed by the New Poor People's Campaign spearheaded by the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber and The Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharris (Barber and Wilson-Hargrove, 2016). Although, this study centered on an exemplar hymn from the Second Reconstruction, the New Poor Peoples' Movement is working squarely in the third and using those same hymns, evidenced by the example cited in the introduction..

In this day, documentation for the use of music is as close as Facebook or YouTube. The New Poor People's Movement has taken its cues on the use of hymns from their immediate predecessor and documented this in video. In what could be called new iterations of mass meetings, hymns are again being used in the context of social justice. It is an inherent and default practice, evidenced by the video archive of mass meetings held by the New Poor People's Campaign.

The key is that the use of these songs is intentional. It is a rhetorical practice designed to reach an end. Granted, they serve the purpose of protest to those outside the community. But to those in the community, members who are singing to, for, and about themselves, it is an entirely different practice, an Afrocentric one as a modern iteration of classical African orature rather than a Eurocentric artistic expression. Once established as orature, the praxis of these hymns

carry a rhetorical legacy back to Dogon. But, with the awareness of how the spiritual energy of nommo in practice can bind together and move a community to action, practitioners of this rhetoric can open their rhetorical toolbox a little wider and scholars can look to where the energy of those hymns want to go. This is also useful for anyone interested in social justice or social action; having a tool that provides a proper context for analyzing movement rhetoric.

But, again, what can we do with this kind of information? As someone who considers himself a rhetorical activist, this way of using nommo offers a means to be proactive in building communities. Notice that I did not say to protest injustice. There will always be music that is outwardly oriented to speak truth to power. These performances will remain necessary. But, though they express dissent, the problem of how one builds cohesive communities that can address the exigencies that produce dissent still lies with the world changing influence of the productive word.

For those of the African diaspora in America, songs, freedom songs and hymns was the rhetorical and historical legacy upon which a movement was built in the fight for civil rights. One of the more personal websites that gives testimony to this legacy is the Civil Rights Movement Veterans website at <http://www.crmvet.org/>. This website has provided a place for movement veterans to express themselves and to reconnect with their peers. It is also a place where the impact of this orature can be heard.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

One of the original Freedom Riders brings home the importance of these songs, equal to learning non-violence. Ernest Patton, has remarked, “Music brought us together--we can’t all talk at the same time, but we can all sing at the same time. It gives you that spiritual feeling. It was like our glue” (as cited in Darden, 2016). As a musician, myself, I feel for what Patton says. Indeed, I view this social justice hymnody from a musical standpoint as well as an Afrocentric one.

With respect to Research Question 1, social justice hymnody, as an example of classical African orature, exhibits nommo aesthetics via the lyrical content of the hymns included in the sung body of works. In this case, the selected hymns exhibited the aesthetics of repetition, call and response, and improvisation. These aesthetics also take on the moves of binding - to connect the community to its cultural rhetorical legacy in the use of hymns. In this way, as the hymns are sung to and for each other as members of the community. As for considering the historical legacy of a song, I have found that where a nommo aesthetic is used, one must be cognizant of the inherent legacy building and passing manifestations of nommo. The inclusion of new observation points that open nommo analysis to location and time-sensitive views is critical to having a long view of the impact that an Afrocentric rhetorical artifact may have on its community. This model, especially with respect to social justice hymnody and the structure given by Knowles-Borishade, allows us to use nommo as the ancestors used it, recognizing the productive word as a world creation tool and a means to react to injustice in order move the community to harmony in Maat. That boils down to including an analysis of what the energy of the creative word is doing within the chosen nommo aesthetic.

This leads to Research Question 2, and how scholars can use this knowledge. I've mentioned that in traditional nommo analysis, scholars tend to examine an artifact in the way medical examiners do autopsies --- to see what happened. However, in doing so, there is no ability to trace the energy inherent in the productive word. By assessing how this energy binds a community to the past and how that energy locates the community rhetorically against new exigencies, scholars can speculate on the rhetorical path of communities, particularly those in a social justice struggle. In this way, scholars can assess the weight of an artifact's history, selected hymns' history, or hymnody's history in analyzing its relevance, and thus impact on the community. Remember, these songs are not presented as performance for those outside of the community, but as imparters of meaning, identity, socialization and vision. Knowing the root of said song's cultural meaning provides a firmer foundation on which to speculate contemporary impact.

The New Poor Peoples' Campaign seems unique in that it not only recognizes the historical legacy of singing hymns in a social justice context, but also in the employment of a theomusicologist to lead the acquisition and lead performance in communal singing. As far as praxis, this model of using a theomusicologist, may be the new standard for effective, culturally responsive community building and a means of honoring the traditional African orature by honoring the use of nommo to wield the productive word.

But, this is not the end of where this tool can move. One of the ideas that kept announcing itself is that of decolonization. This is a process, that in itself, is an archive-rebuilding experience as Western colonial indoctrination is replaced with an active, legacy based, African based collection of communal knowledge and identity. I view this as part of the

communal educational process that traditional African orature embodied. It is a means of getting “woke,” to use current vernacular.

Musician and scholar Bed Sidran is a noted jazz musician. In the introduction to the 1971 DaCapo edition of his book *Black Talk*, he laments that “there is an ...irony in the fact that, since the initial publication, the thesis of *Black Talk* --- how the music of Black America created a radical alternative to the values of Western literary tradition” -- has not been developed by scholars more qualified than myself to examine larger implications” (Sidran, 1971). Since that statement, we have had the works of Asanté, Karenga, Gates, Monteiro-Ferreira, and others who’ve laid groundwork for challenging that Western literary tradition across disciplines. As a rhetorical scholar/activist, I find it part of my work to add to this body of scholarship by introducing a tool, also steeped in the Afrocentric concept of nommo, that can view musical artifacts within their rhetorical and historical legacy as well as situational exigencies.. Both approaches are critical to giving a more full accounting of people and the meanings they express to each other in those artifacts. By adding social justice hymnody to those tools, I submit a small contribution to explicating an important Afrocentric historical and rhetorical legacy.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round

Don't You Let Nobody Turn You Roun'

(Early version, noted as sung in Black Churches prior to the Albany Movement)

Don't you let nobody turn you roun'
 Turn you roun'
 Don't you let nobody turn you roun'
 Keep the straight and narrow way.

“Twas at the river of Jordan,
 Baptism was begun,
 John baptized the multitude,
 But he sprinkled only one.

The baptis' they go by water,
 The methodes' go by land,
 But when they get to heaven,
 They'll shake each other's han'.

You may be a good baptis'
 An a good methodes' as well,
 But if you ain't the pure in heart
 Yo' soul is boun' for hell.
 (Sanger, 1995)

??Ain't??Gonna??Let??Nobody??Turn??Me??'Round

Ain't??gonna??let??nobody
 Turn??me??Sunday, November 4, 2018round
 Turn??me??Sunday, November 4, 2018round
 Ain't??gonna??let??nobody
 Turn??me??round
 ISunday, November 4, 2018m??gonna??keep??on??walkinSunday, November 4, 2018
 Keep??on??talkin
 Marchin??into??freedom??land
 [Follow??the??above??pattern??for??other??verses??such??as??
 Ain't??gonna??let?? add??the??name??a??prominent??segregationist??or??a??racist??public??
 figure??
 Ain't??gonna??let??no??jailhouse
 Ain't??gonna??let??no??policeman??
 ?? Powell??
 ????

Additional lyrics as provided by Carawan and Carawan as an adaptation of traditional song by participants in the Albany Movement

VERSES (usually improvised on the spot):

2. Ain't gonna let Nervous Nelly turn me 'round...
3. Ain't gonna let Chief Pritchett ...
4. Ain't gonna let Mayor Kelly ...
5. Ain't gonna let segregation ...
6. Ain't gonna let Z.T. (reference to Sheriff Z.T. Mathews of Terrell County, Georgia)
7. Ain't gonna let no jailhouse ...
8. Ain't gonna let no injunction ...

(Carawan and Carawan, 2007)

Appendix B: This Little Light of Mine

This Little Light of Mine (civil rights version)

This is copied from Sanger (1995) as reprinted from Sing for Freedom © 1963, 1990 Sing Out Corporation.

This little light of mine,
 I'm gonna let it shine (oh)
 This little light of mine,
 I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine
 Let it shine, let it shine

BRIDGE

The light that shines is the light of love,
 Lights the darkness from above,
 It shines on me and it shines on you,
 Shows what the power of love can do.
 I'm gonna shine my light both far and near,
 I'm gonna shine my light both bright and clear,
 Where there's a dark corner in this land
 I'm gonna let my little light shine.

VERSES

We've got the light of freedom.,
 We're gonna let it shine...

Deep down in the South,
 We're gonna let it shine...

Down in Birmingham (Mississippi, Alabama, etc.),
 We're gonna let it shine...

Everywhere I go,
 I'm gonna let it shine...

Tell Chief Pritchett,
 I'm gonna let it shine...

All in the jail house,
 I'm gonna let it shine...

BRIDGE

On Monday he gave me the gift of love
 Tuesday peace came from above
 Wednesday he told me to have more faith

Thursday he gave me a little more grace
Friday he told me just to watch and pray
Saturday told me just what to say
Sunday he gave me the power divine –
To let my little light shine.

This same version is found in *Sing for Freedom* by Carawan and Carawan, 2007

Appendix C: Woke Up This Morning With My Mind

Woke Up This Morning With My Mind

Presumed precursor to the contemporary version, collected in 1919 by Newman I. White (Sanger, 1995).

Oh it ain't no harm to trust in Jesus,
 Oh it ain't no harm to trust in Jesus,
 Oh it ain't no harm to trust in Jesus,
 Get on board, get on board.

Rev. Osby and Robert Zellner Civil Rights Version (Sanger, 1995; Carawan and Carawan, 2007)

Woke up this morning with my mind
 (My mind it was) Stayed on freedom,
 (Oh yes I) Woke up this morning with my mind
 Stayed on freedom.
 (Well I) Woke up this morning with my mind
 (My mind it was) Stayed on freedom,
 Hallelu, hallelu, hallelu, hallelu,
 Hallelujah!

Ain't no harm in keepin' your mind
 In keepin' it stayed on freedom,
 Ain't no harm in keepin' your mind
 In keepin' ti stayed on freedom,
 Ain't no harm in keepin' your mind
 In keepin' it stayed on freedom,
 Hallelu, hallelu, hallelu, hallelu,
 Hallelujah!

Walkin' and talkin' ' with my mind
 My mind it was stayed on freedom

Interlude:
 You got to walk walk
 You got to walk walk
 You got to walk with your mind on freedom
 You got to talk talk,
 You got to talk talk
 You got to talk with your mind on freedom
 Oh oh oh you got to walk walk, talk talk.

Singin' and prayin' with my mind
 My mind it was stayed on freedom...

Doin' [the twist with my mind
My mind it was stayed on freedom.