

Music for Social Justice



Daniel Barenboim



Hamada Ben Amor



Joan Baez



Pete Seeger

SPEAKING TRUTH

Watershed Moments
in Global Leadership

High School Curriculum for Young Leaders



F F C

Introduction

Music has often been able to achieve social change. In this module, we will explore four activists whose music transformed the society around them. Through music, Israeli conductor Daniel Barenboim created human engagement between Arabs and Israelis in the Middle East. Hamada Ben Amor inspired the overthrow of a major dictator in his country, Tunisia, with powerful lyrics about corruption. Joan Baez and Pete Seeger protested what they viewed as unjust government policies in the United States with their songs. Each was inspired in part, and in their own way, by their faith backgrounds: Islam, Judaism, Quakerism, and spiritualism.

This module will consider how students can use artistic talents to create change in their communities. Students will have the opportunity to express themselves through poetry and music. They will also be able to explore complex issues through the humanizing and relatable lens of music.

Introduction



Computer Science for Fun.

<http://www.cs4fn.org/music/mp3gottachange.php>.

*“We cannot afford the luxury of pessimism” –
Barenboim¹*

Biographical summary²

Daniel Barenboim was born in Argentina to a Russian Jewish immigrant family in 1942. His family moved to Israel in 1950 because his parents, especially his mother, were attracted to the ideals of Jewish nationalism (Zionism) and the promises of the new State of Israel. Barenboim was already a musical prodigy by the time he moved to Israel. By the age of 15, he was conducting and performing on the piano around the world. Barenboim led many orchestras throughout his career, most notably as the music director for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for 15 years, where he remains “Honorary Conductor for Life.” He has also won prestigious awards, such as the Royal Philharmonic Society Gold Medal, and has been knighted by the Queen of England. His personal life also has been surrounded by music. In 1967, he married famed English cellist Jacqueline du Pre. She was soon diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis and died in 1987 at age 42. Barenboim then married his second wife, acclaimed pianist Elena Bashkistrova, with whom he has two children (both musicians).



BBC Arts Desk. “BBC Proms.” <http://www.theartsdesk.com/print/46073>.

Barenboim is at least as well known for his activism as he is for his music. He has also been an outspoken advocate for musical access for all people and for interpersonal peace initiatives between Arabs (especially Palestinians) and Israelis. This activism will be explored below.

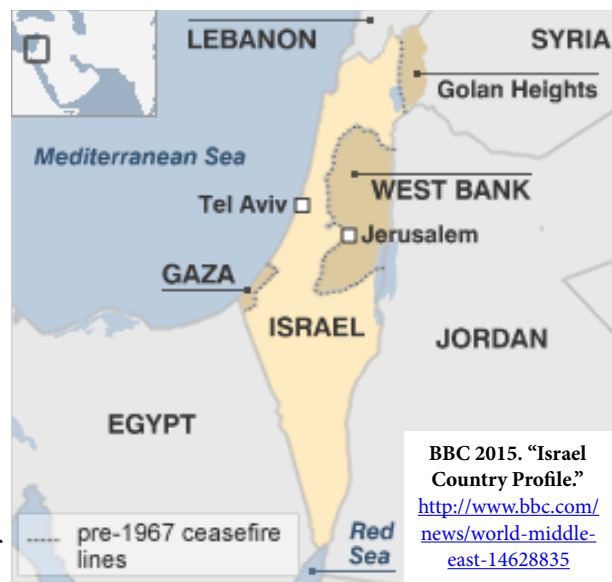
¹ Burton-Hill, Clemency. 2014. “West Eastern Divan Orchestra: Uniting Arabs, Israelis.” BBC. <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20140822-music-uniting-arabs-and-israelis>

² Summarized from Daniel Barenboim Official Website. “About.” <http://danielbarenboim.com/about/>

Music in Action: Daniel Barenboim

Country background

Although Jews and Palestinian Arabs generally lived peacefully with each other in the beginning of the twentieth century, the rise of particular nationalisms among their two communities, as they lived under the British Mandate of Palestine, created political difficulties that culminated in the establishment, by the United Nations, of the State of Israel in 1948. This began a war between the new country and its Arab neighbors along with its Palestinian residents, who felt that the partition of Palestine was wrongful and unjust. Around the end of this war, Daniel Barenboim arrived in Israel with his family. Small-scale conflict continued until tensions overflowed with the War of 1967 (also known as the Six Day War), in which Israel conquered Gaza (from Egypt), the West Bank (from Jordan), the Golan Heights (from Syria), and the Sinai Desert (from Egypt). Later, a cold peace agreement with Egypt allowed for the return of the Sinai Desert. In 1981, Israel unilaterally annexed the Golan Heights, an area Syria continues to claim as its own.³ The West Bank and Gaza (the Occupied Palestinian Territories) remained and continue to be under military occupation, which makes life very difficult for Palestinians living there in terms of human and civil rights. National and territorial claims continue to create political difficulties and violent encounters between Israelis and Palestinians. The Israeli human rights organization, B'tselem, estimates that between January 19, 2009 and July 31, 2016, 3,063 Palestinians and 151 Israelis have been killed in the conflict.⁴



BBC 2015. "Israel Country Profile." <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14628835>

To better understand the effects of conflict on the general population, listen to the 7 minute NPR story here:

<http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/08/14/489612597/in-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict-even-calm-is-deadly>.

(Warning: grieving relatives are quoted here and the story may be upsetting for some students).

³ BBC 2015. "Israel Country Profile." <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14628835>.

⁴ B'tselem. 2016. "Fatalities After Operation Cast Lead." <http://www.btselem.org/statistics/fatalities/after-cast-lead/by-date-of-event>.

Motivation

In such a divisive and volatile situation, interpersonal relationships suffer greatly.

Daniel Barenboim has been deeply motivated to change the nature of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. His inspiration comes from many sources, including early Israeli commitment to community. He says that the pre-state Israeli society was “a social-



Conversation between Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWQCy6_TU3A

ist state in the best sense of the word socialist,”⁵ because it was all about working for the betterment of the collective. This was because the state did not yet exist and, therefore, socialism could not devolve into a game of power. This helped him to form a commitment to connecting the individual with the collective, just like in music where “the conductor and the orchestra breathe as from one collective lung.”⁶

Music inspires Barenboim in other ways, too. When questioned about why he engages in controversial topics, he argues that music can only be music when it includes human engagement.⁷ Music has allowed him to enter into difficult conversations with multiple perspectives. He compares listening to various perspectives to leading an orchestra where you have to “leave space for others” in order to create music.⁸

A few of these diverse voices inspired Barenboim, and one of the most important was the Palestinian intellectual and music critic Edward Said. Barenboim happened to meet Said in the mid-1990s in a London hotel. This meeting motivated him to visit the West Bank and see the conditions under which Palestinians live. This trip inspired his extensive future work on interpersonal peace initiatives. The two men subsequently formed a close relationship. Said, who was once on track to become a professional pianist, followed Barenboim’s musical work, especially with the Chica-

⁵ MacKenzie, Suzie. 2003. “In Harmony.” The Guardian. April 4. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2003/apr/05/classicalmusicandopera.artsfeatures>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

go Symphony Orchestra, and loved to talk with him about music.⁹ Said also helped Barenboim write his autobiography, *A Life in Music*. Said spoke about the importance of the relationship for Barenboim's understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, explaining that he was able to introduce Barenboim to the Palestinian perspective because Barenboim had never gotten to know a Palestinian while living in Israel.¹⁰ After Said's death in 2003, Barenboim's inspiration also comes from his anger about the current state of affairs. He says that his wake-up call to the injustices against the Palestinians was when the then-Prime Minister Golda Meir denied that the Palestinian people existed. He felt there was something deeply wrong with the top levels of government ignoring an entire people and identity.¹¹

Spiritual motivation

Barenboim is also motivated by his Judaism. Barenboim says that the Jewish value of justice is central to the religion.¹² He believes that although the creation of the State of Israel was an act of justice for the Jewish people, it was one of "grief and tragedy for others" and believes both perspectives are important to recognize.¹³

His commitment to justice for Palestinians also comes from Jewish history. He says, "We, the Jewish people, should know and feel even more acutely than other populations that the murder of innocent civilians is inhumane and unacceptable."¹⁴ All of these inspirations allowed Barenboim to formulate views that support peace between peoples.

**JUSTICE,
JUSTICE,
YOU SHALL
PURSUE.**

Deuteronomy 16:20

⁹ MacKenzie, Suzie. 2003. "In Harmony." The Guardian. April 4. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2003/apr/05/classicalmusicandopera.artsfeatures>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Barenboim, Daniel. 2008. "The Illusion of Victory." December 31. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/jan/01/israel-gaza-bombings-hamas>.

Views

Barenboim believes that conflict between Israelis and Arabs, and, specifically, Palestinians, cannot be resolved by force.¹⁵ He is convinced that what is required is non-violent action in order to recognize Palestinians as equals to Israelis.¹⁶ Music is his nonviolent way of contributing to peace. Music is “an art free of all limits imposed by words, an art that touches the depth of human existence, an art of sounds that crosses all borders,”¹⁷ according to Barenboim. So, music allows us to transcend deeply seated differences.

Barenboim thinks about music’s power when trying to understand what he can do about the wall that separates most of the West Bank from Israel. He says, “I can’t make this wall tumble down, even if I were to enlist 300 musicians, but I shall do everything I can so that culture and music seep through every crack in it.” He believes that everyone has their own abilities to change the world. His connection with music allows him to break down barriers in his own way, to fight “against loud noise, but also against silence.” As a result, he has no problem with controversy. He says, “A person who is determined to do something constructive with his life needs to come to terms with the fact that not everyone is going to love him.”¹⁸ These are words that he lives by.

Activism in his life

Musical access

Barenboim is an activist through his music. One of his first major projects with his first wife, Du Pre, was to perform for Israeli soldiers on the eve the war of 1967. They were so close to the war’s start that they were evacuated while tanks were passing them on the road. Barenboim felt a commitment to bring music to those who were facing considerable physical and emotional pain.¹⁹

¹⁵ Barenboim, Daniel. 2008. “The Illusion of Victory.” December 31. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/jan/01/israel-gaza-bombings-hamas>.

¹⁶ Ben Zeev, Noam. 2004. “Daniel Barenboim: A Maestro who fights against loud noise—and Silence.” *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*. <http://www.wrmea.org/2004-july-august/special-report-daniel-barenboim-a-maestro-who-fights-against-loud-noise%E2%80%94and-silence.html>: 50-52.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Shelden, Michael. 2004. “My Affair?: I don’t think Jackie Knew.” *Telegraph*. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/classicalmusic/3620698/My-affair-I-dont-think-Jackie-knew.html>



West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. "Home."

<http://www.west-eastern-divan.org/>

The war resulted in the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. For the Palestinians living in both territories, the occupation has meant limited access to art and music because of lack of funding and severe movement restrictions. Barenboim showed his commitment to creating musical access when he started performing in the West Bank in 1999. He also performed in Gaza City with 36 of the world most famous classical musicians. Barenboim explained the experience, saying "it was a very important step in that it we didn't go in with a political mission, but with the humanitarian mission, for the people and civil society of Gaza."²⁰

Music education

Barenboim's activism expands beyond performance, as he has also initiated long-term educational programs. Most recently, he set up the Barenboim-Said Akademie in Germany, which will offer music degrees to students from the Middle East (including from multiple Arab countries, the Palestinian territories, and the State of Israel).²¹

Barenboim's most significant music education project, however, is the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, which he started with Edward Said.²² Like the academy, it brings Middle Eastern musicians together to travel and perform. The orchestra has played

²⁰ West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. "Home." <http://www.west-eastern-divan.org/>.

²¹ Schliess, Gero. 2016. "Barenboim Presents Berlin Music Academy as new Medicine for the Middle East." *DW: Made for Minds*. July 11. <http://www.dw.com/en/barenboim-presents-berlin-music-academy-as-new-medicine-for-the-middle-east/a-19392381>.

²² West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. "Home." <http://www.west-eastern-divan.org/>.

around the world as well as in the West Bank. Barenboim has already seen the positive impact of the engagement; for example, one child told him that he was the first Israeli she had ever seen who was “not a soldier or a tank.” A reporter who was invited to participate in the West-Eastern Divan orchestra found that the group worked against ignorance rather than simply for peace, as “it is a singular space in which human beings who are otherwise forcibly kept apart can come together to exchange ideas and views, learn about each other and, above all, listen to each other in a world that would otherwise keep them silent.”²³

The orchestra continues to be highly successful. Barenboim led the group in a tribute concert to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. The orchestra has also toured in the United States, Asia, Europe, South America, and the West Bank.

The work of the orchestra has not always been easy. As a result of the 2006 Lebanon War, not all of the musicians were able to reach the rehearsals. During the 2008-2009 Gaza war, political beliefs almost dissuaded many Palestinian and Israeli musicians from participating, but Barenboim’s human-centric focus inspired all the musicians to stay.

Barenboim also created the Palestine Youth Orchestra in 2004 to give Palestinian youth the ability to learn and perform orchestral music. At its inaugural concert, Barenboim acknowledged, “I know that it is hard for you to believe your eyes, but what you see before you here, on the stage—is reality.” He created institutions to provide seemingly impossible access to arts to underserved populations.

See the East-West Divan Orchestra perform here: <http://www.wrmea.org/2004-july-august/special-report-daniel-barenboim-a-maestro-who-fights-against-loud-noise%E2%80%94and-silence.html>.

Barenboim’s hope of humanitarian change turning into political change has led him into some controversies. He wished to perform for the Iranian people with a German orchestra, but his own country was highly critical of this decision and Iran eventually rejected his request to enter Iran because of his Israeli citizenship. The politics from both sides has limited Barenboim’s goal of cultural engagement.²⁴ On a more positive note, Barenboim was the first Israeli to ever receive a Palestinian

²³ Burton-Hill, Clemency. 2014. “West Eastern Divan Orchestra: Uniting Arabs, Israelis.” BBC. <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20140822-music-uniting-arabs-and-israelis>.

²⁴ Huggler, Justin. 2015. “Iran and Israel united in dislike of Daniel Barenboim after Tehran does not allow him in.” <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/11834859/Iran-and-Israel-united-in-dislike-of-Daniel-Barenboim-after-Tehran-does-not-allow-him-in.html>.

passport. Commenting on this occasion, Barenboim said, "We are blessed - or cursed - to live with each other. And I prefer the first."²⁵

Impact

Barenboim's work has changed attitudes. He speaks of being nervous about performing in the Palestinian city of Ramallah because he thought the audience may be unfriendly due to his nationality. Instead, they gave him a standing ovation. He thinks that this reception was as much related to the music as to his willingness, as an Israeli, to reach across divides.²⁶ Edward Said recounts how Barenboim met with a Palestinian woman whose husband had recently been deported. Barenboim's kind treatment of this woman and his honoring of her at his following concert showed his commitment.²⁷

Barenboim has often been recognized for his work. His recognitions include Israel's prestigious Wolf Prize given to one or two musicians every year. Barenboim dedicated the \$50,000 prize to music education projects for Israelis and Palestinians.²⁸

Suggested activities

- Watch this video and comment on what the music sounds like. How do the musicians work together? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2aEikKiGcc>
- Why do you think that making music—playing an instrument or singing a song—is an effective way to bring people from diverse viewpoints together?
- Think about something that you are good at doing. How could you use your talents to help solve a problem in your community? Discuss with a partner.

²⁵ Haaretz. 2008. "Israeli Pianist Daniel Barenboim Takes Palestinian Citizenship read more." January 13. <http://www.haaretz.com/israeli-pianist-daniel-barenboim-takes-palestinian-citizenship-1.237152>.

²⁶ MacKenzie, Suzie. 2003. "In Harmony." The Guardian. April 4. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2003/apr/05/classicalmusicandopera.artsfeatures>

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Wolf Fund. "Home." <http://www.wolffund.org.il/index.php?dir=site&page=content&cs=3020&language=eng>.

“I believe in God strongly, and that human beings can make the impossible possible”²⁹

“When I became a rapper
I wasn't looking for love.
I was looking to rap for the
good of the people.”³⁰

Music as Revolution: Hamada Ben Amor

Biographical summary

As the youngest son of a bookstore owner and a medic in Sfax, Tunisia, Hamada Ben Amor grew up in the middle class but identified with the struggles of the poor-



er members of Tunisian society. He saw how many of their problems were caused by gross abuses of power by the Tunisian government. As a result, he started political rapping in 2008. In 2010, as protests were beginning to rock his homeland of Tunisia, Ben Amor released “Rais LeBled,” a song that blames Tunisia’s then-president for the ills of Tunisian society. He immediately became a YouTube celebrity and a perceived threat to the government. As a result he was imprisoned on December 24, 2010 by the National Security Bureau but his fame protected him. International pressure led to his release. Although governments have changed in Tunisia, Ben Amor continues to be critical of those in power in order to protect the interests of ordinary Tunisians.³¹

Parker, Emily. 2011. “El General.” August 17. Tunisia Live. <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2011/08/17/hamada-ben-amor-el-general/>

²⁹ Bohn, Lauren. 2011. “Rapping the Revolution.” July 22. *Foreign Policy*. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/07/22/rapping-the-revolution/>.

³⁰ Walt, Vivienne. 2011. “El General and the Rap Anthem of the Middle East Revolution.” *Time*. February 15. <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2049456,00.html>.

³¹ Ibid.

Country background

Tunisia, with its strategically important location in the middle of North Africa and relationship to the Muslim world, has been both powerful and greatly abused. Before the 2nd century B.C., Carthage (in modern day Tunisia) was a cradle of civilization. Since then, however, Tunisia has been colonized by Romans, Arabs, Ottoman Turks, and, lastly, the French.

Tunisia won its independence from French rule in 1956 and its authoritarian president, Habib Bourguiba, took power for several decades. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali non-violently ousted Bourguiba when he was deemed too old for the job of president. Ben Ali was forced to resign by the public protest moment in Tunisia which started the 2010 “Arab Spring”.³²



World Atlas. “Where is Sfax Tunisia?”

<http://www.worldatlas.com/af/tn/09/where-is-sfax.html>

Motivation

Spiritual

Ben Amor is deeply motivated by his belief in Islam. He says he started rapping “to defend Islam through my music.”³³ When faced with the danger of arrest and possibly indefinite detainment, Ben Amor turned to his faith and recited the shahada, the Muslim declaration of faith which is traditional to say in perilous situations.³⁴ He believes that God allowed him to be successful in achieving his goals.

Ben Amor’s Islam also translates into his political beliefs. He is wary of Islamic political parties, however, like the El-Nahda party which currently holds power, because he is concerned that they are involved in the “dirty games” of politics.³⁵

³² BBC News. 2016. *Tunisia Country Profile*. September 2. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14107241>.

³³ Peisner, David. 2011. “Inside Tunisia’s Hip Hop Revolution.” *Spin*. <http://www.spin.com/2011/08/inside-tunisias-hip-hop-revolution>.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Bohn, Lauren. 2011. “Rapping the Revolution.” July 22. *Foreign Policy*. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/07/22/rapping-the-revolution>.

Still, it is an improvement on the Ben Ali regime for Ben Amor. He believes that the most important objective for Tunisia is that Muslims remain free to practice their faith, which was not always the case under the previous regime.³⁶ As such, Ben Amor feels that his Muslim beliefs made him fight political repression in order to gain freedom.



This is the symbol of El Nahda, the Tunisian Islamic political party which Ben Amor does not trust to correctly portray Islam. Al Aarbiya. 2016. "El Nahda."

Secular motivation

Ben Amor was motivated by the politics around him and the strong history of rap in standing up to corruption and political turmoil. Ben Amor listened to American rappers. He started listening to those rappers from the 1970s who rapped about prejudice and injustice. Ben Amor particularly admired Tupac Shakur and was impressed by the "revolutionary" lyrics which stood up to government oppression.³⁷ Ben Amor connected this to his experience in Tunisia because of pervasive corruption that left the poorest Tunisians vulnerable to the system.³⁸



Witner, Kevin. 2016. "Tupac Shakur's Mother, Afeni Shakur, dies at age 69." *CBS news*. May 3. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/tupac-shakur-mother-afeni-shakur-davis-dies-age-69>

Activism

For Ben Amor, music was always about activism. His first song was about corruption and violence. Its title was "Malesh," meaning 'Why?'.³⁹ The

³⁶ Naili, Hajer. 2012. "Day 4-5: Tunisian Rapper, 'El General,' calls for an 'Islamic Nation.'" January 12. *HajerNaili.com*. <http://www.hajernaili.com/day-4-5-tunisian-rapper-el-general-calls-for-an-%E2%80%98islamic-nation%E2%80%99/>.

³⁷ Walt, Vivienne. 2011. "El General and the Rap Anthem of the Middle East Revolution." *Time*. February 15. <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2049456,00.html>.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

Tunisia president, Ben Ali, and later served the basis for his famous motivating



El General. 2010. "Rais LeBled."
YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbMEYNnXCC4>

song, "Rais Lebled."

Impact

"Rais Lebled," the song that made Ben Amor a YouTube star also changed the world by helping spark the Tunisia revolution and the Arab Spring which was largely inspired by the success of the Tunisian people in overthrowing their government. Protestors in many countries sang Ben Amor's words at rallies. Countries throughout the Arab world, including Egypt and Syria, experienced protests against oppressive leaders. Not all of these protests created improved conditions for the people but in all the countries citizens were initially empowered to try to create change.

In Tunisia, Ben Amor feels that the government is still performing below what it should. He is committed to criticizing abuses of power from whatever government in his music. Despite all of the challenges, Hamada Ben Amor took deep motivation from his belief in Islam and commitment to justice and was not willing to back down.

Suggested activity

- Listen to Hamada Ben Amor's rap song, "Rais LeBled": <http://www.popdust.com/meet-hamada-el-general-ben-amor-the-tunisian-rapper-who-changed-the-wo-1889151786.html>
- Listen to rap songs with social justice messages
 - Tupac, Ben Amor's inspiration, rapping "Trapped": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWLkxVS5VXU>
 - ▶ Warning: Contains some mature language
 - Queen Latifa, start around 2 minutes , (fully censored for mature language): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twv4PP4QSPM>
- What makes them similar or different to Ben Amor's music?
- If you were to write a rap song about a social issue in your area, what would it address? Can you think of a chorus?

"I was overlooked. Mexican kids... well, no one paid any attention to them. Living in that society, feeling there was a prejudice against me, I think I was overwhelmed by it. And now I think that's why I began siding with the underdog."⁴⁰

Music as Protest: Joan Baez

Biographical summary

Joan Baez was born in 1941 to Mexican and British parents. She grew up in New York, California, and Massachusetts. She faced prejudice in school and had trouble fitting into either White or Latino social groups.⁴¹ She sang to gain appreciation from her peers. She began to sing professionally while in college at Boston University. Near the beginning of her career (the early 1960s), she was in a relationship with Bob Dylan and launched his career when she invited him to perform with her. Beyond her musical prowess, she was a central activist in the cultural change of the 1960s. She protested the Vietnam War, poverty, and racial/gendered oppression. Her songs became central to many of these movements. Her activism will be explored further below.



Brown, Mick. 2009. "Joan Baez Interview." Telegraph.
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/worldfolkandjazz/6173753/Joan-Baez-interview.html>

⁴⁰ Graham, Jane. 2014. "Joan Baez Interview: 'That Night Changed me Forever.'" *The Big Issue*. <http://www.bigissue.com/features/letter-to-my-younger-self/3528/joan-baez-interview-that-night-changed-me-for-ever> <http://www.bigissue.com/features/letter-to-my-younger-self/3528/joan-baez-interview-that-night-changed-me-for-ever>.

⁴¹ Donegan, Lawrence. 2014. "Joan Baez: Singer, Activist, Peacenik, Lover, Legend." *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/aug/31/joan-baez-singer-activist-peacenik-lover-legend-royal-festival-hall>.

Country background

In the United States, the 1960s was a time of activism. The politicians advertised a War on Poverty but did not properly fund it.⁴² The Vietnam War angered many for its excessive violence and the high costs of young American lives. Black activists were able to begin challenging Jim Crow laws that took away their rights and racism that resulted in murders and vandalism. Movements for freedom, equality, and justice sprung up all over the U.S., especially on college campuses. Joan Baez was both a voice for this cultural change and a product of it. She remains active in promoting a just and peaceful world today.

Motivation

Spiritual motivation

Joan Baez is motivated by her commitment to social justice and non-violence. Part of that commitment comes from her spiritual background. Baez recognizes her roots in Christianity and Quakerism. Within her mother's home country of Scotland, she feels particularly connected to St John's Church because her grandfather was a preacher there.⁴³ Her parents also created a strong faith foundation for Baez. Both of her parents were committed Quakers. Joan says that she took the lesson of "not killing anybody" from the Quaker tradition, as well as an appreciation of silence (Quaker services or "meetings" are conducted mostly silently).⁴⁴ Her parents' lived Quakerism may have especially inspired Baez. Because of his commitment to non-violence, Albert Baez



Joan Baez with her mother.

<http://www.latinheat.com/music/joan-baez-the-latina-aristocrat/>

⁴² The History Channel. "The 1960s." <http://www.history.com/topics/1960s>.

⁴³ Graham, Jane. 2014. "Joan Baez Interview: 'That Night Changed me Forever.'" *The Big Issue*. <http://www.bigissue.com/features/letter-to-my-younger-self/3528/joan-baez-interview-that-night-changed-me-for-ever>.

⁴⁴ Johnson, Ron. 2011. "Q&A: Joan Baez on Religion, the Occupy movement, and her rare T.O. Concert appearance." *Post City Toronto*. <http://www.postcity.com/Eat-Shop-Do/Do/November-2011/Q-A-Joan-Baez-on-activism-performing-in-TO-and-the-Quaker-tradition>.

(Joan's father) turned down a lucrative defense opportunity in his field of physics.⁴⁵ The family also valued independent thought and ideas, values promoted by their Quakerism. Baez also met her mentor in nonviolent practices, Ira Sandperl, through her Quaker community in Palo Alto, California. Sandperl taught Quaker Sunday school to 7th graders in Baez's community. While Joan was in high school at the time, the two activists met and formed a life-long partnership that resulted in the founding of the Center for Non-Violence in Carmel, California.⁴⁶

While Baez acknowledges her faith-based roots, she has never considered herself very religious. Recently, however, she has been singing lots of spiritual music, which was written by her producer Earle. She identifies with the spiritual nature of this music because she finds relatable lessons about second chances in the use of religious language.⁴⁷

Secular motivation

Joan was also motivated by several of her childhood experiences. When she was 10 years old, she went to Baghdad with her family, because of her father's work with UNESCO. This trip committed her to social justice because she was confronted with serious, highly visible poverty at the same time as she was reading Anne Frank's diary with its idea that people are essentially good.⁴⁸ She felt committed to



Joan Baez with
Ira Sandperl,
Jesse Jackson and
Martin Luther King, Jr.

http://www.irasandperl.org/wordpress/?page_id=5

⁴⁵ Brown, Mick. 2009. "Joan Baez Interview." *Telegraph*. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/worldfolkandjazz/6173753/Joan-Baez-interview.html>.

⁴⁶ Whiting, Sam. "Anti-War activist Ira Sandperl Dies." *SFGate*. <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Antiwar-activist-Ira-Sandperl-dies-4446447.php>.

⁴⁷ Bowen King, Ben. 2008. "Gosh, you Look older and when did you 'Get Religion.'" *ExploreFaith.org*. http://www.explorefaith.org/resources/music/joan_baez.php.

⁴⁸ Brown, Mick. 2009. "Joan Baez Interview." *Telegraph*. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/worldfolkandjazz/6173753/Joan-Baez-interview.html>.

change because of these experiences, but did not see how to play a role in bettering the world.

She understood the possibility for real change after hearing Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. speak at a Quaker event. She recalls, 'I'd heard these discussions in my family for years, but he was actually doing what I had heard and read about,' she says.⁴⁹ She was inspired to find her own ways to take action.

Her way of taking action was through music. She used music to cope with her own problems of social exclusion and reasoned that she could expand this to other. She saw how music could be used with larger social issues when she saw Pete Seeger (whose activism is discussed in the next section) use music to spread his ideas about peace and justice.⁵⁰

Baez's strong foundation in music as social justice allowed her activism to extend beyond the '60s and '70s when activism was in vogue.⁵¹

She also cannot be discouraged because she believes in "little victories and big defeats," which means that you see the little actions as significant "instead of trying to compare it to the big picture, which is too big and too complicated, and in many places, too awful to really want to deal with."⁵²



Smith, Claire. 2009. "Latest News." Joan Baez. <http://www.joanbaez.com/jan09seeger.html>

⁴⁹ Brown, Mick. 2009. "Joan Baez Interview." *Telegraph*. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/worldfolkandjazz/6173753/Joan-Baez-interview.html>.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty. 2016. "Interview: Joan Baez on 'Little Victories, Big Defeats.'" <http://www.rferl.org/content/joan-baez-interview-prague/25113986.html>.

⁵² Ibid.

Activism

Social justice defines Joan Baez's career. Even before she began singing professionally, she staged a walk-out in high school to protest war and violence. Once she gained national prominence, she started singing protest music. Her first protest-music concert was with Pete Seeger, her inspiration. They sang in an anti-nuclear organization benefit concert. They were assaulted with eggs, which only motivated Baez to do more, similar events.⁵³

Joan Baez participated in diverse social movements. She marched with Martin Luther King Jr. at the March on Washington and played her music before his famed "I have a dream" speech. She sang on Amnesty International's first tour and helped the organization establish itself on the West Coast. She campaigned with students at University of California Berkley. She also supported Cesar Chavez in his fight for the rights of the migrant workers. Baez withheld taxes illegally to protest military spending. She also spent a Christmas sitting vigil in opposition to the death penalty. She performed an entire album in support of those Chileans oppressed by Augusto Pinochet's regime. These are only a few of the social justice actions in which Baez played an instrumental part.⁵⁴



Joan Baez performing at the March on Washington.

<https://www.mprnews.org/story/2015/26/photo-mlk-dream-speech>

Some of Baez activism, as mentioned earlier, extended beyond the 1960s American cultural changes. She called for the cessation of violence in Northern Ireland with the Irish people. She campaigned to stop discrimination against gay people as

⁵³ Johnson, Ron. 2011. "Q&A: Joan Baez on Religion, the Occupy movement, and her rare T.O. Concert appearance." *Post City Toronto*. <http://www.postcity.com/Eat-Shop-Do/Do/November-2011/Q-A-Joan-Baez-on-activism-performing-in-TO-and-the-Quaker-tradition/>.

⁵⁴ Levy, Arthur. 2008. "Biography: Joan Baez." <http://joanbaez.com/officialbio08.html>.

teachers in the 1980s.⁵⁵ Even more recently, she performed in 2009, for Nelson Mandela's visit to Hyde Park.⁵⁶

Most recently, Baez was active in the Occupy Wall Street movement, offering music and support to younger activists. She said of her participation in the Occupy

Movement, "I need to respect that I'm from another time period and how can I be useful in this extraordinary moment – a movement against all odds."⁵⁷



UPI. 2011. "Joan Baez performs for Occupy Wall Street protesters who hold a Veterans Day concert in New York." http://www.upi.com/News_Photos/view/upi/46a170762e24e186ea85f739341221ee/Joan-Baez-performs-for-Occupy-Wall-Street-protesters-who-hold-a-Veterans-Day-concert-in-New-York/

Impact

Baez has received many awards for her music and her activism.⁵⁸ One of these awards, the American Civil Liberties Union's Earl Warren award, is given only to the most prominent civil rights leaders. She even has an award named after her by Amnesty International. The executive director of Amnesty International, Larry Cox said of Joan Baez, "Joan's commitment to human rights has known no bounds..."

⁵⁵ Levy, Arthur. 2008. "Biography: Joan Baez." <http://joanbaez.com/officialbio08.html>.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Johnson, Ron. 2011. "Q&A: Joan Baez on Religion, the Occupy movement, and her rare T.O. Concert appearance." *Post City Toronto*. <http://www.postcity.com/Eat-Shop-Do/Do/November-2011/Q-A-Joan-Baez-on-activism-performing-in-TO-and-the-Quaker-tradition/>.

⁵⁸ JoanBaez.com. "Awards." <http://www.joanbaez.com/awards.html>.

Her devotion is a constant reminder of what can be accomplished when one will put herself on the line to effect change.”⁵⁹

Joan Baez has also had a strong impact with several of her songs. She is particularly famous for singing We Shall Overcome in support of the Civil Rights movement and Saigon Bride in opposition to the Vietnam War. You can see both of these songs below.

Songs

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkNsEH1GD7Q> We shall overcome performed at March on Washington
- <http://pages.stolaf.edu/americanmusic/tag/joan-baez/> Saigon Bride

Suggested activity

- Have students write poems about a particular social justice concept in order to think about protest songs.
- Have students prepare a famous protest song to share with the class.

⁵⁹ Amnesty International. 2011. “Amnesty International Honors Joan Baez for ‘Outstanding, Inspirational Service in the Global Fight for human Rights.” *Amnesty International*. <http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/press-releases/amnesty-international-honors-joan-baez-for-outstanding-inspirational-service-in-the-global-fight-for> .

*"I've had preachers of the gospel, Presbyterians and Methodists, saying, "Pete, I feel that you are a very spiritual person." And maybe I am. I feel strongly that I'm trying to raise people's spirits to get together."*⁶⁰

Biographical summary

Born in 1919, Pete was prosecuted for his leftist views during the Red Scare (discussed below in 'Country Background') but celebrated for his political music in the 1960s and beyond. His ideals, however, never changed. Encouraged by his family which greatly valued education, Seeger gained admission to Harvard on a scholarship. He left Harvard, however, after losing his scholarship for failing an exam. He wandered around the country writing songs in the 1930s and performed folk music with a band called the Almanac Singers. The band disbanded when Seeger was drafted into the military for World War II. After the war, Seeger founded the folk magazine Sing out! and started a new band, the Weavers, performing original songs such as 'If I had a Hammer' and 'On top of Old Smoky.' Political opponents, however, labeled the Weavers as a Communist group, leading to its failure.



Moss, Mark. 2014. "Listen to a Pete Seeger Interview Radio Special." January 31. Sing Out.

<http://singout.org/2014/01/31/listen-pete-seeger-radio-special/>

Music as Resistance: Pete Seeger

Seeger continued to be prosecuted as "anti-American" because of his left-wing, anti-war views. During this difficult time, he never stopped working on new songs. With the activism of the 1960s, Seeger regained popularity and prominence. He has remained a prominent activist singer. He had four children with his high school sweet heart and life-long wife, Toshi, although one child died within a year of birth.

⁶⁰ Beliefnet. 2006. "Pete Seeger's Session." <http://www.beliefnet.com/entertainment/music/2006/08/pete-seegers-session.aspx?p=2#iW7KqOVMcWBhtMU9.99>.

Their three surviving children are Daniel, Mika, and Tinya.⁶¹

Country background

Pete Seeger's later career existed in the same political context as that of Joan Baez (read above). However, his early career occurred in a much less friendly political climate. He was born at the end of World War I, after the world had been shaken by an event so violent that assumptions about human nature were in question. Seeger left college during the Great Depression, a time of limited opportunity for many. Seeger lived a vagabond, homeless lifestyle, which common for young men at the time. World War II was also a major event during the time. The draft directly affect-



Roaming around the country, like Seeger's path, was common during the Great Depression.

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachdearamerica/depression.htm>

ed Seeger and many of his generation. His experience with the draft affected his later opinions towards the draft and the Vietnam War. Finally, Seeger lived through the Red Scare (also known as McCarthyism). After World War II ended, the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union (allies during the war) soured. The U.S. saw communism as the main threat to the Western world. The "Cold War" began. The Cold War was not characterized by the absence of violence but by proxy wars fought between the smaller allies of each country. It was also characterized by deep suspicion of people with diverse political views within both the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Pete Seeger, as a major dissenter, was a victim of this suspicion.

⁶¹ Biography.com Editors. 2014. "Pete Seger Biography." September 2. *A&E Television Network*. <http://www.biography.com/people/pete-seeger-9542618#musical-career>.

Motivation

Secular

Pete Seeger's motivation largely came from his "intellectual family," including his musicologist father and violinist mother.⁶² His parents even took Seeger and his siblings around the United States in order to listen to folk artists. Later in life, Seeger would take his genre and some of his ideas from these musicians in rural America.

He was also greatly influenced by Woody Guthrie. While hitchhiking around the country during the depression, he met Guthrie and began to sing and play with him. Seeger describes Guthrie as "the single biggest part of my education."⁶³

In addition to the people who inspired him, Seeger was motivated by his own experiences. His life covered many difficult events for the United States and the world, allowing Seeger to witness extensive injustice and violence. However, one event stands out in Seeger's life: the McCarthyite prosecutions. Seeger's unapologetic left-wing views made him a target of this anti-Communist witch hunt. He was pushed out of any public arena through censorship by the FBI. Seeger took this oppression and turned it into motivation. Although he could not work during this time, he wrote extensively and built his anger at the system which aimed to limit his expression.⁶⁴

Another event that changed Seeger's outlook was the death of his first child while he was in the army. His father's view of the situation made a strong impression on him when he wrote, "something good that has happened can never be made to unhap-



Pete Seeger, at age 2, with his parents. <http://evergreenculturalcentre.ca/8-things-you-didnt-know-about-pete-seeger/>

⁶² Beliefnet. 2006. "Pete Seeger's Session." <http://www.beliefnet.com/entertainment/music/2006/08/pete-seegers-session.aspx?p=2#iW7KqOVMcWBhtMU9.99>.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Goodman, Amy. 2014. "Pete Seeger's legacy to activists: Don't give up, we shall overcome." January 30. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/30/pete-seeger-persecution-songs-folk-justice>.

pen.”⁶⁵ Seeger’s difficulties in life pushed him to work harder for justice and non-violence.

Spiritual

Pete Seeger was not a religious man. His mother was briefly associated with a Unitarian Universalist church in New York. Seeger joined this church, but just to get a space for his choir to rehearse; however, Seeger has remained in contact with this church until the end of his life and even continued to occasionally sing there.⁶⁶ For Seeger, his spirituality was not connected to any church or religion.

He speaks about experiencing “microscopic electromagnetic waves” that connect people and ideas, which make us feel spiritual.⁶⁷ He believes in God, but not according to the traditional definition. He used to consider himself an atheist, but now thinks that his beliefs simply did not fit into others’ religious labels. He believes, “God is everything. Whenever I open my eyes, I’m looking at God.”⁶⁸ He feels most connected to God while in nature. He believes that everything, not just human beings, is a reflection of God, because he doesn’t “believe that something can come out of nothing.”⁶⁹

Activism

Seeger’s music has always had political undertones. His first musical group, The Almanac Singers, was formed by Lee Hays who had just come from political organizing in the South. Hays came to New York to create songs for the labor movement that would be just as recognizable as church hymns. The group called itself the Almanac Singers because they intended their music to be a guide to the realities of life for the rural poor, singing songs like “Talking Union.”⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Beliefnet. 2006. “Pete Seeger’s Session.” <http://www.beliefnet.com/entertainment/music/2006/08/pete-seegers-session.aspx?p=2#iW7KqOVMcWBhtMU9.99>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Donaldson, Rachel. N.d. “The Almanac Singers.” *The Ultimate History Project*. <http://www.ultimatehistoryproject.com/the-almanac-singers.html>.

Seeger's next band, the Weavers, brought his political views to the national stage. His band was blacklisted as Communist in Senator Joe McCarthy's aggressive anti-communist investigations. Seeger was called to testify before congress in his defense but, out of his convictions for free speech and justice, refused to answer questions saying, "I think these are very improper questions for any American to be asked, especially under such compulsion as this."⁷¹



Seeger testifies before Congress.

<http://evergreenculturalcentre.ca/8-things-you-didnt-know-about-pete-seeger/>

Seeger lent his musical skills to other activists. He met Martin Luther King in 1957 and sang "We Shall Overcome" for him.⁷² He sang for anti-Vietnam War efforts. In his first TV appearance in years (after being blacklisted), he sang a song about the war, "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy," which cri-

tiqued President Johnson for saying "to push on." The song was censored off of the TV program by the network; however, this resulted in protests and the song was aired several months later.⁷³

His activism did not stop after the period of intense American political activity in the 1960s and 1970s. Since then, his activist work has largely focused on nuclear disarmament and environmentalism. He started a non-profit to clean up the Hudson River in New York called Hudson River Sloop Clearwater. Seeger continued his activism until the end of his life.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Goodman, Amy. 2014. "Pete Seeger's legacy to activists: Don't give up, we shall overcome." January 30. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/30/pete-seeger-persecution-songs-folk-justice>.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Impact

Seeger's impact has created the arsenal of song that his original band, the Almanac Singers, had set out to create. Some of the songs Seeger wrote, like "This land is my land," and some he popularized, like "We shall overcome." Regardless, Seeger was instrumental in creating the social justice soundtrack on the 1960 and beyond.

Seeger is also credited with one of the best known religiously inspired musical pieces, "Turn, Turn, Turn." The lyrics for this song ["For everything/turn, turn, turn/There is a season/turn, turn, turn/and a time for every purpose under heaven"] come from the biblical book of Ecclesiastes. Seeger explains that he often looks through the Bible, even though he does not necessarily believe in its ideas. One time, this verse stood out to him. This song has been used by churches, as well as many other religious institutions.

Seeger's music and activism have changed the labor movement. He has received many awards for his work including the National Medal of the Arts and the Kennedy Center Honors.



President Bill Clinton gives Pete Seeger the National Medal of the Arts.

<http://evergreenculturalcentre.ca/8-things-you-didnt-know-about-pete-seeger/>

Conclusion

In this module, we have seen how faith traditions motivate artists and help them sustain their work. Daniel Barenboim takes motivation from the history of the oppression of the Jewish people. He wants to ensure that no group ever experiences the same threat. Joan Baez is motivated by the pacifism of Quaker faith. Ben Amor is driven by a commitment to Islam that requires him to make the best society possible for the Muslims of Tunisia. In each case, religion motivated a major activist project. This can allow students to answer the following questions:

- Which best fits you: Does your faith motivate you (like Barenboim), sustain your work (like Ben Amor), give you the foundation for your values (like Baez), or provide a background spiritual sense in your life (like Seeger)?
- Which activist inspires you the most?
- What are your artistic talents? How could they be used to promote social change? Which issue would you address?

Activity

- Use student work in each section above, to edit and improve their social justice poems or songs.
- Invite community members and family members to attend a performance of these songs or poems.
- Optional: collect money at the door of the performance to give to Seeger's organization Clearwater (<http://www.clearwater.org/about/the-clearwater-story/>) or another worthy charity.