

Protest Songs for Everyone and Everywhere!

Thank you for coming to the Protest Songs workshop! I have listed some of my favorites and what I could find to be favorites across decades and generations. I have kept these song sheets to 'singable' songs, but there are a whole lot out there, especially in the last 10-20 years, by people and groups I had never heard of, that are pretty awesome!

List Compiled by Lisa Stiller

If you have any ideas about other protest songs to include, please let me know: koffeenut@yahoo.com

Thanks for showing up today!

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1. The Times they are A-Changing Bob Dylan

Come gather 'round people wherever you roam,
And admit that the waters around you have grown,
And accept it that soon you'll be drenched to the bone
If your time to you is worth savin'
Then you better start swimmin'
Or you'll sink like a stone
For the times they are a-changin'

Come writers and critics who prophesize with your
pen
And keep your eyes wide,
The chance won't come again,
And don't speak too soon
For the wheel's still in spin
And there's no tellin' who
That it's namin'
For the loser now
Will be later to win
For the times they are a-changin'

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Come senators, congressmen,
Please heed the call
Don't stand in the doorway,
Don't block the hall,
For he that gets hurt
Will be he who has stalled,
There's a battle
Outside and it's ragin'
It'll soon shake your windows
And rattle your walls
For the times they are a-changin'

Come mothers and fathers
Throughout the land,
And don't criticize
What you can't understand
Your sons and your daughters
Are beyond your command,
Your old road is rapidly agin',
Please get out of the new one

If you can't lend your hand
For the times they are a-changin'

The line it is drawn,
The curse it is cast,
The slow one now will
Later be fast,
As the present now
Will later be past
The order is rapidly fadin'
And the first one now
Will later be last
For the times they are a-changin'

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2. Down by the Riverside, Study War No More

Gonna lay down my sword and shield
Down by the Riverside, Down by the Riverside
Gonna lay down my sword and shield
And study war no more
I ain't gona study war no more (6x)

2. Gonna put on that long white robe...
3. Gonna put on that starry crown...
4. Gonna walk with the Prince of Peace...
5. Gonna shake hands around the world...
6. Gonna lay down those atom bombs....

Trad. (Black Spritual)

3. We Shall Overcome

We shall overcome, we shall overcome
We shall overcome some day
O, deep in my heart, I do believe
We shall overcome some day!

We are not afraid (3x) today...
The truth will make us free...
We shall live in peace...
The whole wide world around
We'll walk hand in hand...

(Inspired by African Am. gospel singing, members of the Food and Tobacco Workers Union, Charleston, SC, and the southern civil rights movement)

4. For What it's Worth

There's something happening here
What it is ain't exactly clear
There's a man with a gun over there
Telling me I got to beware

I think it's time we stop, children, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down

There's battle lines being drawn
Nobody's right if everybody's wrong
Young people speaking their minds
Getting so much resistance from behind

It's time we stop, hey, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down

What a field-day for the heat
A thousand people in the street
Singing songs and carrying signs
Mostly say, hooray for our side

It's s time we stop, hey, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down

Paranoia strikes deep
Into your life it will creep
It starts when you're always afraid
You...

Paranoia strikes deep
Into your life it will creep
It starts when you're always afraid
You step out of line, the man come and take you away

We better stop, hey (4x)

Co 1966 Stephen Stills

5. Who's Gonna Build Your Wall

I've got 800 miles of open border
Right outside my door
There's minute men in little pick up trucks
Who've declared their own damn war
Now the government wants to build
A barrier like old Berlin 8 feet tall
But if uncle Sam sends the illegals home

Chorus:

Who's gonna build the wall?
Who's gonna build your wall boys?
Who's gonna mow your lawn?
Who's gonna cook your Mexican food
When your Mexican maid is gone?
Who's gonna wax the floors tonight
Down at the local mall?
Who's gonna wash your baby's face?
Who's gonna build your wall?
Now I ain't got no politics

So don't lay that rap on me
Left wing, right wing, up wing, down wing
I see strip malls from sea to shining sea
It's the fat cat white developer
Who's created this whole damn squall
It's a pyramid scheme of dirty jobs

Chorus

We've got fundamentalist Muslims
We've got fundamentalist Jews
We've got fundamentalist Christians
They'll blow the whole thing up for you
But as I travel around this big old world
There's one thing that I most fear
It's a white man in a golf shirt
With a cell phone in his ear

Chorus

Co 2006 Tom Russell

6. Eve of Destruction

The eastern world, it is explodin',
Violence flarin', bullets loadin',
You're old enough to kill but not for votin',
You don't believe in war, but what's that gun you're

totin',
And even the Jordan river has bodies floatin',

Chorus

But you tell me over and over and over again my
friend,
Ah, you don't believe we're on the eve of destruction.

Don't you understand, what I'm trying to say?
And can't you feel the fears I'm feeling today?
If the button is pushed, there's no running away,
There'll be no one to save with the world in a grave,
Take a look around you, boy, it's bound to scare you,
boy,

Chorus

Yeah, my blood's so mad, feels like coagulatin',
I'm sittin'...
Yeah, my blood's so mad, feels like coagulatin',
I'm sittin' here, just contemplatin',
I can't twist the truth, it knows no regulation,
Handful of Senators don't pass legislation,
And marches alone can't bring integration,
When human respect is disintegratin',
This whole crazy world is just too frustratin',

Chorus

Think of all the hate there is in Red China!
Then take a look around to Selma, Alabama!
Ah, you may leave here, for four days in space,
But when your return, it's the same old place,
The poundin' of the drums, the pride and disgrace,
You can bury your dead, but don't leave a trace,
Hate your next door neighbor, but don't forget to say
grace,

And you tell me over and over and over and over
again my friend,
You don't believe we're on the eve of destruction.
No, no, you don't believe we're on the eve of
destruction.

Lyrics: P. F. Sloan, Steve Barri Co 1965

Sung by Barry McGuire

7. Blowing in the Wind

How many roads must a man walk down
Before you call him a man?
Yes, 'n' how many seas must a white dove sail
Before she sleeps in the sand?
Yes, 'n' how many times must the cannon balls fly
Before they're forever banned?

The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

How many times must a man look up
Before he can see the sky?
Yes, 'n' how many ears must one man have
Before he can hear people cry?
Yes, 'n' how many deaths will it take till he knows
That too many people have died?

The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

How many years can a mountain exist
Before it's washed to the sea?
Yes, 'n' how many years can some people exist
Before they're allowed to be free?
Yes, 'n' how many times can a man turn his head,
Pretending he just doesn't see?

The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

Co. 1962 Bob Dylan

8. You Can Get it if You Really Want

Chorus
You can get it if you really want
You can get it if you really want
You can get it if you really want
But you must try, try and try, try and try
You'll succeed at last, mmh, yeah

Persecution you must fear
Win or lose you're about to get your share
Got your mind set on a dream
You can get it though hard it may seem now

Chorus

Listen, Rome was not built in a day
Opposition will come your way
But the harder the battle, you see
Is the sweeter the victory now

You can get it if you really want
You can get it if you really want
You can get it if you really want
But you must try, try and try, try and try
You'll succeed at last (2x)

Jimmy Cliff, Co 1970

10. Revolution

You say you want a revolution
Well, you know
We all want to change the world
You tell me that it's evolution
Well, you know
We all want to change the world
But when you talk about destruction
Don't you know that you can count me out
Don't you know it's gonna be
All right, all right, all right
You say you got a real solution
Well, you know
We'd all love to see the plan
You ask me for a contribution
Well, you know
We're doing what we can
But if you want money for people with minds that
hate
All I can tell is brother you have to wait
Don't you know it's gonna be
All right, all right, all right
You say you'll change the constitution
Well, you know
We all want to change your head
You tell...
You say you'll change the constitution
Well, you know
We all want to change your head
You tell me it's the institution
Well, you know
You better free you mind instead

But if you go carrying pictures of chairman Mao
You ain't going to make it with anyone anyhow
Don't you know it's gonna be
All right, all right, all right
All right, all right, all right
All right, all right, all right
All right, all right

Paul McCartney, John Lennon, Co 1968

9. Imagine

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people living for today
Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people living life in peace, you
You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will be as one
Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need...
Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people sharing all the world, you
You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will be as one

John Lennon Co. 1971

11. Ella's Song

Chorus (sung between each verse)
We who believe in freedom cannot rest
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes

Until the killing of black men, black mothers' sons
Is as important as the killing of white men, white mothers'

sons

That which touches me most
Is that I had a chance to work with people
Passing on to others that which was passed on to me

To me young people come first
They have the courage where we fail
And if I can but shed some light as they carry us through
the gale

The older I get the better I know that the secret of my
going on
Is when the reins are in the hands of the young, who dare
to run against the storm

Not needing to clutch for power
Not needing the light just to shine on me
I need to be one in the number as we stand against tyranny

Struggling myself don't mean a whole lot, I've come to
realize
That teaching others to stand up and fight is the only way
my struggle survives

I'm a woman who speaks in a voice and I must be heard
At times I can be quite difficult, I'll bow to no man's word

Written by Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon
Co. 1991 Performed by Sweet Honey in the Rock

12. Quiet

Put on your face
Know your place
Shut up and smile
Don't spread your legs*
I could do that

But no one knows me no one ever will
if I don't say something, if I just lie still
Would I be that monster, scare them all
away

If I let the-em hear what I have to say

I can't keep quiet, no oh oh oh oh oh oh
I can't keep quiet, no oh oh oh oh oh oh
A one woman riot, oh oh oh oh oh oh

I can't keep quiet
For anyone
Anymore

Cuz no one knows me no one ever will
if I don't say something, take that dry blue
pill*
they may see that monster, they may run
away

But I have to do this, do it anyway
I can't keep quiet, no oh oh oh oh oh oh
I can't keep quiet, no oh oh oh oh oh oh
A one woman riot, oh oh oh oh oh oh oh
Oh I can't keep quiet

Let it out Let it out
Let it out now
There'll be someone who understands
Let it out Let it out
Let it out now
Must be someone who'll understand
Let it out Let it out
Let it out now
There'll be someone who understands
Let it out Let it out
Let it out now

I can't keep quiet

MILCK Co. 2017

Where have all the young men gone?
Long time passing
Where have all the young men gone?
Long time ago
Where have all the young men gone?
Gone for soldiers every one
When will they ever learn?
When will they ever learn?
Where have all the soldiers gone?
Long time passing
Where have all the soldiers gone?
Long time ago
Where...
Where have all the soldiers gone?
Long time passing
Where have all the soldiers gone?
Long time ago
Where have all the soldiers gone?
Gone to graveyards every one
When will they ever learn?
When will they ever learn?
Where have all the graveyards gone?
Long time passing
Where have all the graveyards gone?
Long time ago
Where have all the graveyards gone?
Covered with flowers every one
When will we ever learn?
When will we ever learn?

Pete Seeger Co. 1963

13. Where Have all the Flowers Gone

Where have all the flowers gone?
Long time passing
Where have all the flowers gone?
Long time ago
Where have all the flowers gone?
Girls have picked them every one
When will they ever learn?
When will they ever learn?

Where have all the young girls gone?
Long time passing
Where have all the young girls gone?
Long time ago
Where have all the young girls gone?
Taken husbands every one
When will they ever learn?
When will they ever learn?

14. This Land is Your Land

This land is your land This land is my land
From California to the New York island;
From the red wood forest to the Gulf Stream waters
This land was made for you and Me.

As I was walking that ribbon of highway,
I saw above me that endless skyway:
I saw below me that golden valley:
This land was made for you and me.

I've roamed and rambled and I followed my footsteps
To the sparkling sands of her diamond deserts;
And all around me a voice was sounding:
This land was made for you and me.

When the sun came shining, and I was strolling,
And the wheat fields waving and the dust clouds
rolling,
As the fog was lifting a voice was chanting:
This land was made for you and me.

As I went walking I saw a sign there
And on the sign it said "No Trespassing."
But on the other side it didn't say nothing,
That side was made for you and me.

In the shadow of the steeple I saw my people,
By the relief office I seen my people;
As they stood there hungry, I stood there asking
Is this land made for you and me?

Nobody living can ever stop me,
As I go walking that freedom highway;
Nobody living can ever make me turn back
This land was made for you and me.

Woody Guthrie Co. 1956

Resources for Resistance Singing:
https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/your-soundtrack-for-the-resistance-movement_us_58b38c7de4b0e5fdf6197454

<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/lists/13-great-antidonald-trump-protest-songs-w467532/billy-bragg-the-times-they-are-a-changing-back-w467697>

<https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2017/10/the-50-best-protest-songs-of-all-time.html>

15. Redemption Song

Old pirates, yes, they rob I
Sold I to the merchant ships
Minutes after they took I
From the bottomless pit
But my hand was made strong
By the hand of the Almighty
We forward in this generation
Triumphantly
Won't you help to sing
These songs of freedom?
'Cause all I ever have
Redemption songs
Redemption songs

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery
None but ourselves can free our minds
Have no fear for atomic energy
'Cause none of them can stop the time
How long shall they kill our prophets
While we stand aside and look? Ooh
Some say it's just a part of it
We've got to fulfill the Book

Won't you help to sing
These songs of freedom?
'Cause all I ever have
Redemption songs
Redemption songs
Redemption songs

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery
None but ourselves can free our minds
Wo! Have no fear for atomic energy
'Cause none of them-a can-a stop-a the time
How long shall they kill our prophets
While we stand aside and look?
Yes, some say it's just a part of it
We've got to fulfill the book
Won't you have to sing
These songs of freedom?
'Cause all I ever had
Redemption songs
All I ever had
Redemption songs
These songs of freedom
Songs of freedom

Songwriters: Bob Marley, Co 1979
Redemption Song Lyrics © Kobalt Music Publishing Ltd.

16. Rivers of Babylon

By the rivers of Babylon
Where he sat down
And there he wept when he remembered Zion

Oh from wicked, carry us away from captivity
Required from us a song
How can we sing king Alpha's song in a strange
land?

So let the words of our mouth
And the meditations of our hearts
Be acceptable in thy sight
Override

By the rivers of Babylon
Where he sat down
And there he wept when he remembered Zion

Oh from wicked, carry us away from captivity
Required from us a song
How can we sing king Alpha's song in a strange
land?
How can we sing king Alpha's song in a strange
land?

Songwriters: Brent Dowe / Frank Farian / George Reyam / Trevor
McNaughton
Co 1970, The Medallions

17 Border Song

Holy Moses I have been removed
I have seen the spectre he has been here too
Distant cousin from down the line
Brand of people who ain't my kind
Holy Moses I have been removed

Holy Moses I have been deceived
Now the wind has changed direction and I'll have to leave
Won't you please excuse my frankness but it's not my cup
of tea
Holy Moses I have been deceived

I'm going back to the border
Where my affairs, my affairs ain't abused
I can't take any more bad water
Been poisoned from my head down to my shoes

Holy Moses I have been deceived
Holy Moses let us live in peace
Let us strive to find a way to make all hatred cease
There's a man over there
What's his colour I don't care
He's my brother let us live in peace
He's my brother let us live in peace
He's my brother let us live in peace
Songwriters: Bernie Taupin / Elton John
Co 1969

18. Big Yellow Tax

They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot
With a pink hotel, a boutique
And a swinging hot spot
Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
'Till it's gone
They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot

They took all the trees
And put them in a tree museum
And they charged all the people
A dollar and a half to see 'em
Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got

'Till it's gone
They paved paradise
And they put up a parking lot

Hey farmer farmer
Put away that D.D.T. now
Give me spots on my apples
But leave me the birds and the bees
Please
Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
'Till it's gone
They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot

Late last night
I heard the screen door slam
And a big yellow taxi
Took away my old man
Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
'Till it's gone
They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot

Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
'Till it's gone
They paved paradise
Put up a parking lot

They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot

They paved paradise
Put up a parking lot

Songwriters: Joni Mitchell

<https://jonimitchell.com/music/song.cfm?id=13>
Co 1970

19. I Ain't Marching Anymore

Oh I marched to the battle of New Orleans
At the end of the early British war
The young land started growing
The young blood started flowing

But I ain't marchin' anymore
For I've killed my share of Indians
In a thousand different fights
I was there at the Little Big Horn
I heard many men lying

I saw many more dying
But I ain't marchin' anymore

It's always the old to lead us to the war
It's always the young to fall
Now look at all we've won with the saber and the
gun
Tell me is it worth it all
For I stole California from the Mexican land
Fought in the bloody Civil War
Yes I even killed my brother
And so many others

And I ain't marchin' anymore
For I marched to the battles of the German trench
In a war that was bound to end all wars
Oh I must have killed a million men
And now they want me back again
But I ain't marchin' anymore

For I flew the final mission in the Japanese sky
Set off the mighty mushroom roar
When I saw the cities burning
I knew that I was learning
That I ain't marchin' anymore

Now the labor leader's screamin' when they close
the missile plants,
United Fruit screams at the Cuban shore,
Call it "Peace" or call it "Treason, "
Call it "Love" or call it "Reason, "
But I ain't marchin' any more.

Songwriters: Phil Ochs
Co 1964

20. Signs

And the sign says long hair freaky people need not apply
So I put my hair under my hat and I went in to ask him why
He said you look like a fine outstanding young man I think
you'll do
So I took off my hat I said imagine that huh me working for
you

Signs signs
Everywhere there's signs
Fucking up the scenery
Breaking my mind
Do this, don't do that
Can't you read the sign

And the sign says anybody caught trespassing will be shot
on sight
So I jumped the fence and I yelled at the house, hey! what
gives you the right
To put up a fence and keep me out or to keep mother
nature in

If god was here he'd tell it to your face man you're some
kind of sinner

Signs signs
Everywhere there's signs
Fucking up the scenery
Breaking my mind
Do this, don't do that
Can't you read the sign

Oh say now mister can't you read
You got to have a shirt and tie to get a seat
You can't watch no you can't eat you ain't supposed to be
here

And the sign says you got to have a membership card to get
inside, huh

And the sign says everybody welcome come in kneel down
and pray
But then they passed around a plate at the end of it all
And I didn't have a penny to pay
So I got me a pen and paper and I made up my own fucking
sign
I said thank you lord for thinking about me I'm alive and
doing fine

Signs signs
Everywhere there's signs
Fucking up the scenery
Breaking my mind
Do this, don't do that
Can't you read the sign

Signs signs
Everywhere there's signs
Fucking up the scenery
Breaking my mind
Do this, don't do that
Can't you read the sign

Songwriters: Les Emmerson
Co 1970

21. Deportee

The crops are all in and the peaches are rotting
The oranges are piled in their cresote dumps
They're flying you back to the Mexico border
To pay all your money to wade back again

My father's own father, he wanted that river
They took all the money he made in his life
My brothers and sisters come working the fruit
trees
And they rode the truck till they took down and
died

Good-bye to my Juan, good-bye Rosalita
Adios mis amigos, Jesus why Maris
You won't have a name when you ride the big air-
plane
And all they will call you will be deportees.

Some of us are illegals, and others not wanted
Our work contract's out and we have to move on
But it's six hundred miles to that Mexican border
They chase us like outlaws, like rustlers, like
thieves.

We died in your hills, we died in your deserts
We died in your valleys and died on your plains
We died 'neath your trees and we died in your
bushes
Both sides of the river, we died just the same.

Good-bye to my Juan, good-bye Rosalita
Adios mis amigos, Jesus why Maris
You won't have a name when you ride the big air-
plane
And all they will call you will be deportees.

A sky plane caught fire over Los Gatos canyon
Like a fireball of lightning, it shook all our hills
Who are all these friends, all scattered like dry
leaves?
The radio says they are just deportees.

Is this the best way we can grow our big
orchards?
Is this the best way we can grow our good fruit?
To fall like dry leaves to rot on my topsoil
And be called by no name except deportees?

Songwriters: Martin Hoffman / Woody Guthrie
Co 1961

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