

Nina Simone: Putting Soul into the Protest ^[1]

Simone, Nina

Putting Soul into The Protest

By Sarajane Davis, N.C. Government & Heritage Library, 2019

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February 21, 1933-April 21, 2003



Nina Simone in concert at Morlaix (Brittany, France) in May 1982. Photo by Roland Godefroy, Wikimedia Commons.

musicians from North Carolina can you name?

^[3]How many famous

Is Nina Simone one of them? The singer was born Eunice Kathleen Waymon in Tryon, North Carolina. She learned to play the piano at only three years old. Although her family had limited financial means, her parents supported her musical talents. Simone dreamt of becoming a classical pianist. She even studied at the prestigious Julliard School in New York City. She taught youth music lessons and performed in clubs around the city until her career took off. This happened after the release of her first album, "Little Girl Blue" in 1959.

Simone's most important musical contributions were to the Civil Rights Movement. Her lyrics highlighted racial injustice. She inspired activists with her songs, "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black" and "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free." She also used her songs to honor Civil Rights leaders. The song, "Why? (The King of Love is Dead)" was a tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. after his assassination in 1968. Simone's music increased attention to racial oppression. Her work also encouraged civil rights activists to keep fighting for freedom.

Are there any songs that inspire you to stand up for equality? Are there any celebrities you admire for their commitment to social justice?

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Additional Resources:

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King, Noel and Walter R. Watson. "Nina Simone's 'Lovely, Precious, Dream' for Black Children." National Public Radio. January 8, 2019. <https://www.npr.org/2019/01/08/683021559/nina-simone-to-be-young-gifted-...> [7]

Pelly, Liz. "Five Songs of Resistance: Nina Simone." Shadow Proof. May 31, 2017. <https://shadowproof.com/2017/05/31/five-songs-resistance-nina-simone/> [8]

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[Biographies](#) [9]

[Black and African American People](#) [10]

[Civil Rights](#) [11]

[Musicians](#) [12]

[Social Justice](#) [13]

[Women](#) [14]

Authors:

[Davis, Sarajane](#) [15]

Origin - location:

[Polk County](#) [16]

[Tryon](#) [17]

From:

[NCpedia K-8 Collection](#) [18]

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