

Start Local, Stay Vocal

Justice Choir Songbook, Volume 1

Made Possible by Westminster Presbyterian Church, Minneapolis

justicechoir.org



Start Local, Stay Vocal

Our mission is to further social and environmental justice movements by engaging communities in singing together.

### Get Involved

### 1. Sing from the Justice Choir Songbook

Sing new and re-purposed protest songs from this digital, downloadable resource. Selected from a national Call for Songs, and distributed through a Creative Commons license, this repertoire is accessible to people everywhere, including families, congregations, classrooms, and other organizations working for change.

Get the Justice Choir Songbook:

www.justicechoir.org

Hear the songs on YouTube: songs.justicechoir.org/Videos

#### 2. Hold a Justice Choir Event

Amplify your voice and build community by organizing a Justice Choir event! You might host a rehearsal of Justice Choir songs, lead group singing in a march or rally, invite your community to a public forum of singing and conversation about your local issues, or dream up another way to use these songs to spark action.

Justice Choir Event Guide: www.justicechoir.org/Guide.pdf

### 3. Join or Launch a Justice Choir Chapter

Communities who plan to hold Justice Choir events often might want to form a chapter. Justice Choir chapters build on the momentum of their events by cultivating a core of singers, and use singing as a springboard to ongoing conversation, community action, and transformation.

More on Justice Choir Chapters:

www.justicechoir.org/#chapters

### Follow Us



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### Foreword

Westminster Presbyterian Church in downtown Minneapolis is pleased to sponsor the Justice Choir Songbook and the country's charter chapter, Justice Choir – Twin Cities. Most of the pieces in the Songbook are new. They were composed and written by people from across this land and curated and co-edited by Abbie Betinis, Ahmed Anzaldúa, and Tesfa Wondemagegnehu. We are grateful for their commitment. They are helping us sing toward the time when all will live in a just, peaceful, and sustainable world.

At Westminster, our Christian faith calls us to seek justice, to advocate for the full inclusion of all God's children, to work for racial and economic equity, and to protect the earth. We sing because in the human voice the sound of a better tomorrow can be heard. The old ways of exclusion and disparity begin to give way and our hearts swell with hope.

The longing for a just and peaceful world is not limited to any one religious tradition or practice. People of faith and goodwill everywhere want to build a new future. Westminster invites you to join the movement for justice wherever you live. There are others who will work with you. Together we can transform the world.

A friend of mine who lives under an oppressive regime in another land once said to me that those who rule them can take away economic opportunity and political and civil rights and freedom of movement, but they can never take away their art. For them, dance and poetry, painting and song have become ways to resist.

That's also why we sing for justice: no matter the circumstances we can always sing, and when we sing we create community and animate courage...and the world begins to change.

We invite you to join us in singing and working for that day of justice – and to share this music with others.

Tim Hart-Andersen Pastor Westminster Presbyterian Church Minneapolis, Minnesota westminstermpls.org

June 2017



### Background, Process, and Vision

On Jan 21, 2017, my husband and I – he in his pink suspenders and I in my hat – were marching with our neighbors to the St. Paul Capitol. We were frightened and angry. We were determined and resilient. Signs all around us read, "Raising our voices for equality!" and "Hear us!" and "A little bit louder now!" Perhaps it was the Minnesota winter, but apart from a few brave souls who started a few chants, and a small group of students trying to lead a few songs which the rest of us didn't know, the march was largely quiet. It wasn't that our emotions weren't high. They were hopeful and rising. The many faces around us showed years of stories. We enthusiastically pumped our homemade signs up and down as we marched, but largely kept to the groups we arrived in. I came home energized, but thinking something was missing. How could we, here in Minnesota, "choral country" no less, have missed an opportunity to channel our hopes and fears into a focused vocal message? Why didn't I try to get something going there in the crowd? As a singer and composer, I've made music my whole life, and I know, for me, that music is the place where emotion meets action. I know from what I've learned about the Civil Rights era (the *previous* Civil Rights era) how lyrics can focus a message in a song like We *Shall Overcome* (I recently heard for the first time a 1964 recording of my grandfather – who helped organize massive Civil Rights rallies in Los Angeles – singing We Shall Overcome alongside Martin Luther King Jr.). I know from growing up in the '80s how the simple slap/slap/clap pattern of We Will Rock You can instantly transform a vicious lunchroom into a whole cafeteria of "cool" (or so it felt). I learned from singing rounds with my family on long car trips how the lattice-work of a canon – where a melody becomes its own harmony – is actually the sound of loved ones quietly saying to each other through song: I'm here for you, I'll hold you up.

When was the last time you sang in a huge crowd of people? At a sporting event? At church? Maybe in a choir? I find that coming together to sing beloved songs, at its best, is rarely just about whatever particular song... the lyrics, the tune... is being sung at the moment. For me, it's about the individual stories that make up a million memories which fly by as I sing... my grandmother squeezing my hand in the pew, the smell of hops in that basement bar, feeling the rain come down while we cried and belted *I Will Always Love You*. Looking around a room where people are singing cherished songs together, it's incredible to think of all the little moments, the other voices, the lifetime of mental associations that might be going through peoples' minds.

So what happens if a country doesn't share a singing repertoire anymore? Through this project I've had the opportunity to ask a lot of questions of folks: what songs do you remember singing at home? with friends? in school? Though not exactly a scientific study, I learned some surprising things. (For example, not one of my college students has ever heard *Home on the Range*!) I learned that the younger people I knew had highly individualized listening habits, and eclectic tastes, usually preferring to listen to different music than even their peers in the same household or dorm room. Older friends had a lot more shared songs and lyrics they could sing together. But the way they sang them seemed to me to be fixed in the grooves of the record they remembered – etched in their world of the 50s, or 70s... 90s even. As I looked in on their memories of singing together, the songs appeared as a tinted reflection of the struggles of a different time.

This is partly why I felt so compelled to explore the new songs being created today. For a whole generation of people in this country, protest songs carry a world of memories. Rather than try to replace what those great, timeless songs mean to people (myself included), I see these new songs of protest and solidarity as an experiment in coming together with vulnerability, with no sacred ties, no important memories to clutch to the chest, and no levels of experience. These songs are new to *all* of us, and that gives us a beautiful chance to open our ears and open our eyes, to look at our neighbor singing next to us, to really see them there, and to try this together.

Pete Seeger said, "Get people to sing together, and they'll act together too." Inspired, I posted my query to social media: "What songs did you sing at the Women's March today?" Answers came pouring in from around the country. Composer Andrea Ramsey said she had started improvising songs right then and there, and people had started to join in with her while they marched. "Will you send them to me?" I asked. Tesfa Wondemagegnehu



### Background, Process, and Vision

sent me an urgent note, wondering if Andrea and I might be thinking about a songbook – yes, I said, we are. By chance, his church had already announced the formation of something called Justice Choir, which he would direct, and they needed songs.

The three of us put out an open Call for Songs – seeking new songs of struggle, solidarity, justice, equality, peace and protest. In just a few weeks, with the help of some incredible well-connected friends who spread the word, we had received nearly 150 entries from around the USA, England, Germany, Scotland, and Mexico. With the help of more generous friends, we organized small social events to sing through the songs together to try them out. I met my friend Ahmed Anzaldúa, a pianist and conductor, at a pub in St Paul and we practiced teaching some of the songs to strangers. Tesfa and I logged long hours scheming about the structure of the Justice Choir venture. What could we do with a new songbook? What were we trying to solve exactly?

"We need to come together," Tesfa said. "Like a truce?" I asked. "No, no," he said, "we need to LISTEN to each other. We need to ask the tough questions. This can't be partisan, this needs to be EVERYBODY. This needs to be about trust, and love, and also about fear... there's real, true, vulnerability in our city right now. We have to have a place where we can 'go there' emotionally. A relatively safe place to venture into vulnerable territory and HAVE THAT CONVERSATION. This won't work if we're literally preaching to the choir."

A few days later, Ahmed, Tesfa, and I were singing through each song submission. I was often surprised by which melodies rang true for one or two of us but not for all, or by which lyrics raised red flags, or carried deep-seated baggage, however well-meaning. As we worked, I was surprised by how easily our singing turned into discussions on race, wealth, gender, citizenship, appropriation, survivorship, identity, immigration, faith, gun violence, privilege, peace-making, and the role of art. These conversations have forever changed me.

After we pared down the submissions to 60, we had an outside jury make the final cut, solidifying the collection you see before you here: 43 songs for the issues of our time. Among them, 24 written specifically for this project.

Tesfa, Ahmed and I – along with the many friends who have helped us on this journey and lent us their valuable time, candid opinions, and huge hearts – and the generous, creative songwriters who are entrusting us with their ideas and talents... all of us hope you'll make this Songbook your own. We hope you'll find ways to connect to these songs through your own stories and experiences, and to make them personal. At the same time, we're guessing that not every word or phrase in every song will resonate with every person. And we think that's okay. In fact, we hope you'll take those songs especially into your community and use them to spark the important conversations that need to be had.

Perhaps we'll come to something of a new shared repertoire as we sing these songs far and wide, or perhaps they are just for this moment. Either way, in these 43 songs, we see a place to come together to start a conversation, to shout and sing about some of the issues on people's minds today. Some are hard to get out; they strike deep and don't let go. Some are fun and energizing and might make you want to dance! (Or march!) For me, this is the crux of music's power: where emotion meets action. Let there be no passive listeners. These songs were created for the engagement of all.

The noted theologian and scholar, Otis Moss III, a recent guest lecturer at Westminster Presbyterian Church, says that "we can build our beloved community by looking to include our most vulnerable." Our hope is that the Justice Choir Songbook allows for all who desire to sing for justice, all who hunger for a beloved community, to have a resource to help begin the conversation. This alone isn't the solution, but it could be the beginning of the dialogue.

Abbie Betinis Executive Director, Justice Choir



# How to Use This Book A Guide for the Songleader or Conductor

The composers of the 43 songs in this book come from many different backgrounds. Some of these songs were transcribed from the composers' recordings while others were notated by the composers themselves. If you are used to compositions and arrangements where everything is written out, many of these songs may seem incomplete; there's a lot that's not on the page. If you work mainly in the oral tradition, you may find that there's *too much* on the page. In both cases, the question in the performers' mind is the same: what am I supposed to do with this?

### 1. Make these songs your own.

You have permission to make changes. In fact, we encourage you to bring your own creativity to this songbook. To quote my co-editor Abbie, these 43 songs are the result of a "chain of generosity." Be the next link in the chain. Is there a barrier in a song that is preventing your group from singing it? Remove that barrier! Is there something new or unique that your group can bring to a song? Do it!

### 2. Make this songbook work for you.

If you're working with kids who love to dance while they sing, you might make a bouncy new piano intro and interludes to "We're Gonna Shine" (#41). If you're in a noisy outdoor protest and have only a few moments to teach everyone the words, you might turn the third voice part of "Resilience" (#24) into a rap. It may mean rearranging "We Are Rising Up" (#34) so each verse is a call-and-response, because you're leading a pub sing and everyone is learning on the spot. You might decide to repeat the refrain of "Rise" (#25b) three extra times because your collegiate women's chorus loves closing their concert with their soloists improvising showy riffs. You may have your church choir hum "Courage to Be Who We Are" (#8) while an appropriate text is read aloud during a service. One performance of "This Is What Democracy Looks Like" (#30) might be accompanied with ukulele, the next with an electric guitar, and the next may have no accompaniment at all.

We've added chords to almost every song to facilitate the use of accompanying instruments. Several of the songs have performance suggestions, which you can transfer from one song to the other. Many of the songs are marked as "zipper" songs, with interchangeable lyrics; you can apply this concept to almost every song.

### 3. Make the story come alive.

This is the most important thing. Each of these songs started with a composer compelled to tell a story, to address an injustice, to express a point of view, to start a conversation. This story, the central message, is essential. The mechanics of the song, whether it's in unison or harmony, whether it's a canon or a chant, accompanied or unaccompanied, is not as important as communicating what the song is about. To quote my co-editor Tesfa: "The ink is a suggestion, the story is mandatory." The notes on the page should not be a barrier but, rather, a way in to these stories. If the story remains central, then you are doing justice to this music.

It is important for us that this songbook be singable for people of any age, of any voice type, and from every possible background. We want this songbook to be inclusive. For it to be inclusive, it has to be flexible. We want you to feel free to adapt it to different situations. Our hope is that you can take these songs into a classroom, a march, or a church choir... sing them around a campfire, teach them to your kids during a road trip, sing them with a large group, or a small group, or maybe just sing them to yourself.

Ahmed Anzaldúa Co-editor, Justice Choir Songbook



### How to Copy, Share, and Post Legally

It's true! Our songwriters have generously permitted Justice Choir to use a special Creative Commons\* license on their music, so that you may legally copy and distribute these songs for free, as long as you honor the terms below. Please help us keep that chain of trust and generosity going by reading this page carefully, sharing our songwriters' work responsibly, and requesting their permission for other uses as necessary. Their contact info is at the bottom of each song. Thank you so much.

You may copy and distribute any song from the Justice Choir Songbook for any non-commercial use, free of charge, as long as you follow these three rules:

## 1) Include the Songwriter's Name. Always give them credit when you share their music.

Publicity is our songwriters' only ongoing payment, and they really deserve it. Credit them in your programs and on lyric sheets, name them in your videos, tag them in your social media posts.

**Even nicer:** Send the songwriter a little note when you perform their music (their contact info is at the bottom of every page). They will be so happy!

### 2) The Music Must Remain Free.

You may not sell these songs; only give them away.

If you post your audio and/or video performances online, they must be free for anyone to access, and have no paid advertising on them.

**Even nicer:** Instead of forwarding or uploading our song PDFs, send people to our website <u>www.justicechoir.org</u> to download their own copies. This way they may tip our songwriters and support this work if they wish to do so.

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### **Common Questions**

Where can I perform Justice Choir songs? (Anywhere, and in most places for free.)

- · Non-commercial venues are free (ex. school, church, government offices, public spaces, capitol rotunda, city park).
- Commercial venues and for-profit businesses (ex. coffee shop, bar, arena, radio/TV) are licensed by Performing Rights Organizations or PROs. If the songwriter has their PRO listed (it's near the © of the song), please report your performances in commercial venues to that organization (ASCAP, BMI, or SESAC), just like other copyrighted music.

May I sell a recording of a Justice Choir song? (Only if you secure the proper license.)

• Like other copyrighted music, all entities (even nonprofits) must obtain a mechanical license to sell audio (ex. CDs, mp3s, iTunes, Spotify), and a synchronization license to sell video (ex. DVDs, monetized YouTube videos, films).

What rights do the songwriters retain?

- · All commercial and for-profit use. To sell a Justice Choir song, you must get permission from the copyright holder.
- Right to derivatives. All arrangements (even if distributing free) must receive permission from the copyright holder.

Other licensing and permissions questions? Email us at <a href="mailto:justicechoir@gmail.com">justicechoir@gmail.com</a>.

<sup>\*</sup> Creative Commons (CC) is a nonprofit organization devoted to expanding the range of creative works available for others to build upon and to share legally. They provide free, easy-to-use copyright licenses to make a simple and standardized way to give the public permission to share and use creative work on conditions of the creator's choice. More information: creative commons.org



### Song List

- 1. A Bridge Is Stronger Than a Wall\* Emily Feld, 2017
- **2.** Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round\* African-American Spiritual, arr. J. David Moore, 2017
- 3. Ana El Na (Please, God, Heal Us)\*

Trad. Hebrew/Karen Siegel, 2017

**4. Another World is Possible** FLOBOTS, 2016

5. Be the Change

Colin Britt and Marc Kaplan, 2010

6. Bend the Arc\*
Wendi Buck, 2017

7. Chorus from "One"

Neal Hagberg and Leandra Peak, 2012

8. Courage to Be Who We Are

Ruth Huber, 2004

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9. Hold On (Eyes on the Prize)\*

African-American Spiritual, transc. Justice Choir, 2017

10. I Lift My Voice\*
Andrea Ramsey, 2017

11. If Not Now, When?\*

Arielle and Jerome Korman, 2017

12. If You Want Peace (Work for Justice)

David Avshalomov, 1990

13. Intro & Chorus to "Fight with Tools"

Emma Bechler, 2016 (Chorus: FLOBOTS, 2007)

14. Liberty and Justice for All\*

Brandon Williams, 2017

15. Lift Every Voice and Sing

John Rosamond Johnson (lyrics: James W. Johnson), 1900

16. Lift up Your Voice

Robinson McClellan, 2017

17. Listen to the People\*

Trad. American (lyrics: John Betinis, 2017)

18. Love Is Love Is Love\*

Abbie Betinis, 2017

19. ¡No nos moverán! (We Shall Not Be Moved)

African-American Spiritual, transc. Justice Choir, 2017

20. Oh, Be Swift to Love

Nancy Grundahl, 2016

21. Oh, I Woke Up This Morning\*

Trad. American, arr. Darrell Goodwin, 2017

22. One Foot/Lead with Love

Melanie DeMore, 2016

23. Please Don't Take My Freedom from Me\*

D. Jasper Sussman, 2017

24. Resilience\*

Abbie Betinis, 2017

25. Rise\* (25a: unison | 25b: harmony)

Arianne Abela, 2017

26. Sawubona (I See You)

Jane Ramseyer Miller (lyrics: trad Zulu), 2012

27. Sing for Justice\*

Trad. Welsh (lyrics: Brennan Blue, 2017)

28. Take a Stand\*

William W. Brueggemann, 2017

29. The Place Called Planet Earth\*

Trad. English (lyrics: Sheena Phillips, 2015)

30. This is What Democracy Looks Like\*

Elizabeth Alexander, 2017

31. To Testify

Becky Gaunt (lyrics: Brian Laidlaw), 2017

32. Walking by Me

Kristin Lems, 1980s

33. Water Song (Nibi Nagamowin)

Waubanewquay Dorene Day, 2011

34. We Are Rising Up\*

Reginald Unterseher, 2017

35. We Choose Love\*

Andrea Ramsey, 2017

36. We Shall Overcome\*

African-American Spiritual, arr. Tesfa Wondemagegnehu, 2017

37. We Sing for Justice\*

Trad. English, arr. Darrell Goodwin, 2017

38. We Walk in Love\*

Deanna Witkowski, 2017

39. We Will Sing

Penny Stone, 2017

40. We're Free\*

Kevin Caparotta, 2017

41. We're Gonna Shine

Stuart Stotts and Tom Pease, 2007

42. We've Got the Right

Barb Tilsen, 2010

43. When We Are Singing\*

Mexican hymn (arr./lyrics: Kevin Padworski, 2017)

<sup>\*</sup> Written for the Justice Choir Songbook



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