

Proudly presents...

A SELECTION OF SONGS FROM THE  
INTERNATIONAL WORKING CLASS

NOVEMBER 7th, 2024

Doors: **6:30pm** Concert: **7pm**

3131 N Pennsylvania Ave, Oklahoma City, OK 73112

Contact us at:

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# Setlist

## Set 1

Bella Ciao.....Traditional Italian Work Song  
There Are Mean Things Happening in This Land .....J. L. Handcox  
Down by The Riverside.....Traditional/Arr. by B. Dewagtere

## Set 2

The Workers Song .....E. Pickford/The Longest Johns  
Bend The Arc.....W. Buck  
Come, Comrades, Come! .....Traditional/ R. Vaughn Williams/ W. Morris

## Set 3

If I Had a Hammer.....P. Seeger/L. Hayes  
Bread and Roses.....J. Oppenheim/ M. Fariña  
Las Luchadores de la Revolución.....Movimiento Femenino Popular de Peru

## Set 4

In This Heart.....Shuhada' Sadaqat (Sinead O'Connor)  
Leve Palestina .....Kofia  
We Shall Overcome.....Traditional African-American Freedom Song/  
Arr. T. Y. Wondemagenhehu

# About Us

The Oklahoma Action Chorus  
is an all-ages community space that centers visions  
of a better world by celebrating anthems of working  
peoples' movements. We are based here in  
Oklahoma City and welcome anyone with any level  
of experience to join us in song.

# Bella Ciao

Traditional Italian Workers Song

## Mondine Italian Lyrics

**1** Alla mattina appena alzata  
o bella ciao bella ciao bella ciao, ciao, ciao  
alla mattina appena alzata  
in risaia mi tocca andar.

**2** E fra gli insetti e le zanzare  
o bella ciao bella ciao bella ciao ciao ciao  
e fra gli insetti e le zanzare  
un dur lavoro mi tocca far.

**3** O mamma mia o che tormento  
o bella ciao bella ciao bella ciao ciao ciao  
o mamma mia o che tormento  
io t'invoco ogni doman.

**4** Ma verrà un giorno che tutte quante  
o bella ciao bella ciao bella ciao ciao ciao  
ma verrà un giorno che tutte quante  
lavoreremo in libertà.

## Mondine English Lyrics

**1** In the morning as soon as I get up  
oh goodbye beautiful, goodbye beautiful,  
goodbye beautiful, bye, bye, bye  
In the morning as soon as I get up  
I have to go to the paddy fields.

**2** And between insects and mosquitoes  
oh goodbye beautiful, goodbye beautiful,  
goodbye beautiful, bye, bye, bye  
and between insects and mosquitoes  
I have to work hard.

**3** Oh my goodness, what torment  
oh goodbye beautiful, goodbye beautiful,  
goodbye beautiful, bye, bye, bye  
oh my goodness, what torment  
Every day I beseech you.

**4** But the day will come when all of us  
oh goodbye beautiful, goodbye beautiful,  
goodbye beautiful, bye, bye, bye  
but the day will come when all of us  
will work in freedom.

"Bella Ciao" is an Italian folk song that originated with the "Mondina Women," agricultural laborers who sang it in the late 19th century to protest their poor working conditions in North Italy's rice paddy fields. The song underwent significant transformation during World War II when it was embraced by the Italian partisans as an anthem of their anti-fascist resistance. Between 1943 and 1945, during both the Italian Resistance against Nazi occupation and the civil war against the fascist Italian Social Republic and its allies, "Bella Ciao" symbolized defiance and hope. Over the years, it has been translated into numerous languages and adapted to serve as a universal symbol of freedom and resistance against oppression worldwide.

The Action Chorus will be performing the original Mondina text, in celebration of the working women of the world.



# Mean Things Happening In This Land

John L Handcox

## Refrain:

There are mean things happening in this land  
There are mean things happening in this land  
But the Union's going on, and the Union's growing strong  
There are mean things happening in this land

**1** Churches feed the richest men from the tables of the poor,  
Paying all the government hands To keep trans kids in a war.

**2** They're writing bills to keep us down and passing them into law,  
But we are stronger than they know and we know who we are.

**3** We would be much better off If we learned from the past.  
They choose to burn and ban our books and hide all of the facts

**4** It's kind of hard to live a life looking over your back,  
We will be much stronger if we work as a pack.

**5** They decide if we get the supplies to speak and eat and move.  
Help requested, help denied - it's care but it ain't love.

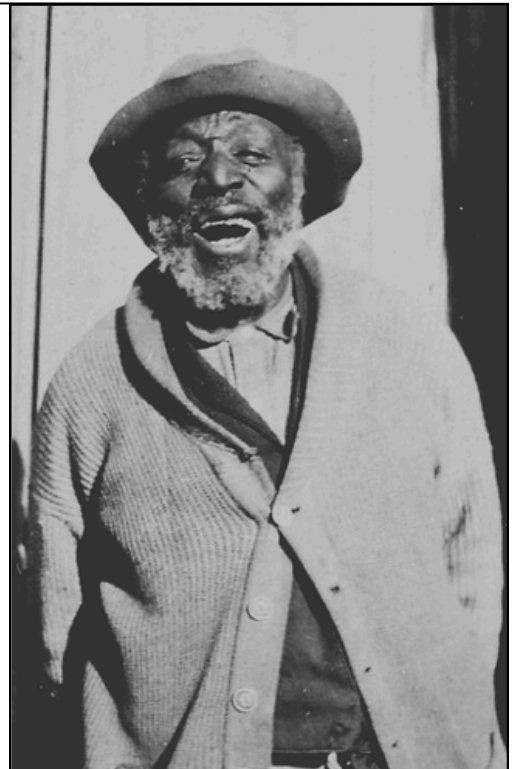
**6** They regulate our medicine, our lives they legislate -  
Together our songs will ring out much louder than the hate

---

John L. Handcox, born in 1904 in Arkansas, emerged from humble beginnings to become a prominent voice in the early 20th-century labor movement. After taking over his family's tenant farming at 19, he faced the harsh realities of the 1920s agricultural downturn, which led his family into poverty. This hardship drove him to join the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union (STFU), where he used music and poetry to champion tenant farmers' rights.

Despite threats from the KKK, Handcox helped grow the STFU, rallying nearly 30,000 members across the South. Though later forced into obscurity, his legacy was revived in the late 20th century and celebrated until his death in 1992.

"Mean Things Happening in This Land" reflects today's pervading injustices with, in accordance to tradition, chorus members contributing verses based on their own lived experiences of oppression under capitalism.



# Down By The Riverside

Traditional/ arr. Bernard Dewagtere

1 I'm gonna lay down my burden down by the riverside,  
down by the riverside,  
down by the riverside.

I'm gonna lay down my burden down by the riverside,  
down by the riverside.

2 I'm gonna lay down my sword and shield down by the riverside,  
down by the riverside,  
down by the riverside.

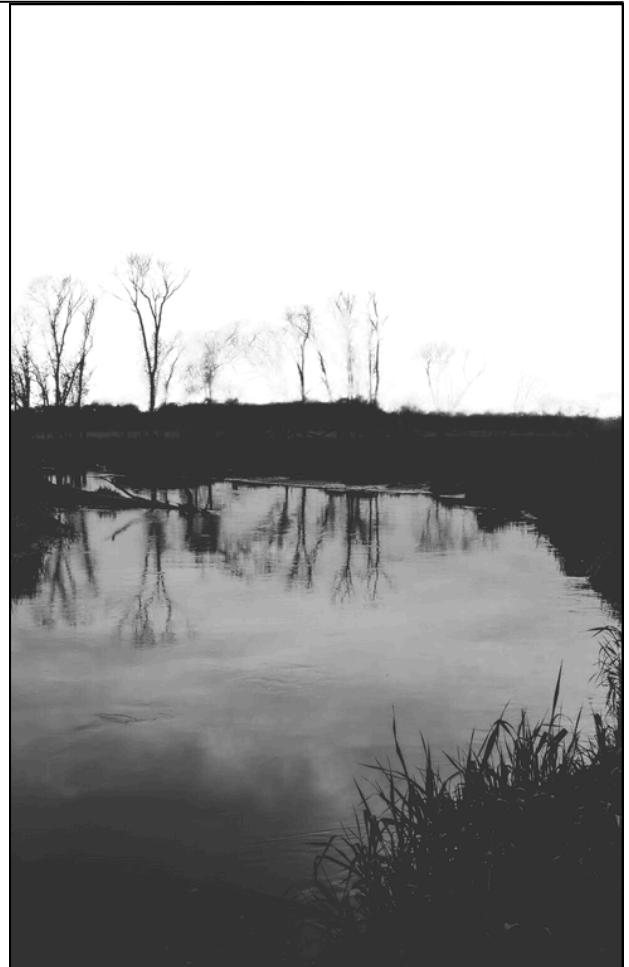
I'm gonna lay down my sword and shield down by the riverside,  
down by the riverside.

O, well I ain't gonna study war no more,  
ain't gonna study war no more,  
studying war no more.

In the face of the unimaginable cruelty of American chattel slavery came some of the world's most inspiring songs of resilience. "Down by the Riverside" is just one of many examples of these African American freedom songs.

"Down By the Riverside" draws its themes from the bible. It sings of a yearning for peace and goodness and for a final rest from conflict. The song speaks of a resignation from war, of "laying down my sword and shield" for a final rest. It's message implies a resolute commitment towards peace after a life of warfare. This arrangement by Bernard Dewagtere evokes a sense of blues with an expressive style that feels as though we ourselves are on a riverboat moving down the Mississippi.

As American imperialism continues to ravage the lives of innocent people at home and abroad, the words of this old song rings true as ever. In our fighting for a better world it is important to visualize the future in which all of us may lay down our arms and love one another as equals.



# The Workers Song

E. Pickford/arr. The Longest Johns

**1** Oh, come on all you workers, who toil night and day  
By hand and by brain, to earn your pay  
Who for centuries all past for no more than your bread  
Have bled for your countries and counted your dead

**Chorus:** We're the first ones to starve, we're the first ones to die  
The first ones in line for that pie in the sky  
And we're always the last when the cream is shared out  
For the worker is working when the fat cat's about

**2** In the fact'ries and mills, shipyards and mines  
We've often been told to keep up with the times  
For our skills are not needed, they've streamlined the job  
With sliderule and stopwatch, our pride they have robbed

## **Chorus**

**3** And when the sky darkens, and the prospect is war  
Who's given a gun and then pushed to the fore?  
And expected to die, for the land of our birth  
Though we've never a one lousy handful of earth

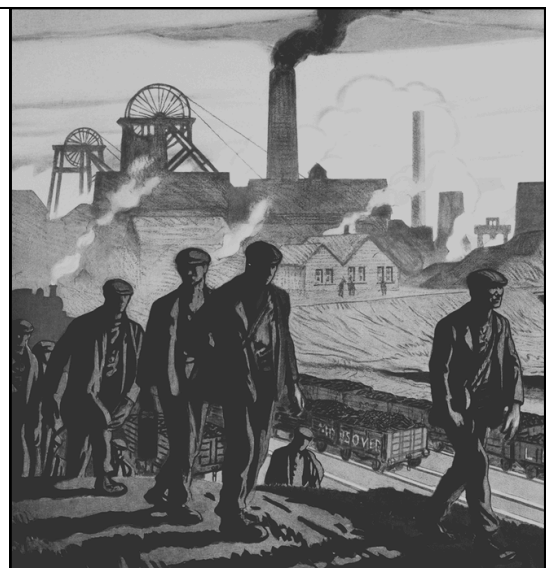
## **Chorus**

**4** And all of these things, the worker has done  
From tillin' the fields, to carryin' the gun  
We've been yoked to the plow, since time first began  
And always expected to carry the can

## **Chorus**

Pickford's "The Workers Song" exposes the truth of our global capitalist system as the fate of us workers is laid clear: The first up and last to bed. The first ones to go hungry, the first ones to be replaced and left helpless. We are left alienated and unskilled, deprived of art and trade. We are the first ones to carry the gun at the behest of the capitalists, in the name of their "nation..." Though we workers know better than to fight the fat cat imperialists' wars for them. As the great leader V.I. Lenin said: *Turn the imperialist war into civil war.*

In this age of the death of capitalism, it is time for the workers to end oppression for all and create a truly equal, classless society, or else we will succumb to human greed alongside our planet Earth.



# Bend the Arc

Wendi Buck/Oklahoma Action Chorus

- 1 Bend the arc and break the ceiling / Human rights for human beings.
- 2 Hold out your hand and help another / We were meant to help each other.
- 3 Turn around and greet your neighbor / We were meant to share the labor.\*
- 4 Free the people, free the planet / No more prisons, we won't stand it!\*
- 5 People sing and people dancing / Revolution is commencing!\*

\*Denotes verses written by the Oklahoma Action Chorus

Bend the Arc, by Wendi Buck, comes from the Justice Choir songbook. Here Wendi describes her inspiration for writing this tune:

*"It was hard to decide what to put on our signs for the Women's March on Washington; there were so many issues and so much that could be said. I decided that my issues could be boiled down to basic human rights for everyone. I love the quote attributed to Martin Luther King, Jr. about the arc of the moral universe bending toward justice, so I borrowed that for my sign. As we marched, the words on my sign became a tune in my head, which became this song."*

We sing Bend the Arc in honor of the people of Oklahoma in our struggle against our own state government. In the last few years, we have seen unprecedented attacks on trans people. Bend the Arc is a reminder of our strength as a community and the resilient spirit we are the heirs of.



# Come, Comrades, Come!

Traditional / arr. Ralph Vaughn Williams  
Alternative lyrics by William Morris

**1** Come comrades come, your glasses clink,  
up with your hands a health to drink;  
The health of all that workers be,  
In every land on every sea.

## **Chorus:**

*And he who will this health deny,  
Down among the dead men let him lie!*

**2** Well done! now drink another toast,  
And pledge the gath'ring of the host,  
The people armed in brain and hand,  
To claim their rights in every land.

## **Chorus**

**3** There's liquor left; come, let's be kind,  
And drink the rich a better mind,  
That when we knock upon the door,  
They may be off and say no more.

## **Chorus**

**4** Now, comrades, let the glass blush red,  
Drink we the unforgotten dead  
That did their deeds and went away,  
Before the bright sun brought the day.

## **Chorus**



Morris

Vaughn Williams

Marx

**5** The Day? Ah, friends, late grows the night;  
Drink to the glimmering spark of light,  
The herald of the joy to be,  
The battle-torch of thee and me!

## **Chorus**

**6** Take yet another cup in hand  
And drink in hope our little band;  
Drink strife in hope while lasteth breath,  
And brotherhood in life and death;

## **Chorus**

“Come Comrades Come,” is a poem by William Morris (1894-1896), set here to the tune of Ralph Vaughn Williams’ (1872 - 1958) “Down Among the Dead Men.”

“Down Among the Dead Men” is a traditional English drinking song, and both Englishmen took to it in their different generations. Morris, an early advocate of English socialism, was a member of the Socialist League between the years 1884 and 1890. It is likely he wrote these words then. Although English socialism didn’t find much success, Morris’ words have lasted.

Ralph Vaugh Williams’ arrangement of “Down Among the Dead Men” is marked by tight harmonies and a fugue-like rhythmic refrain. The voices join as one on “And he who will this health deny,” a moment of poised unison before leaping into the refrain. Morris compliments Williams tune well with his simple yet charming verses on solidarity amongst working people.

English people still love drinking. Today there are groups who organize “Karl Marx pub crawls,” where they explore the different pubs that Karl Marx crawled himself during his days in London.



# If I Had A Hammer

Pete Seeger/Lee Hayes

**1** If I had a hammer I'd hammer in the morning  
I'd hammer in the evening all over this land  
I'd hammer out danger, I'd hammer out a warning  
I'd hammer out love between my brothers and my sisters  
All over this land

**2** If I had a bell I'd ring it in the morning  
I'd ring it in the evening all over this land  
I'd ring out danger, I'd ring out warning  
I'd ring out love between my brothers and my sisters  
All over this land

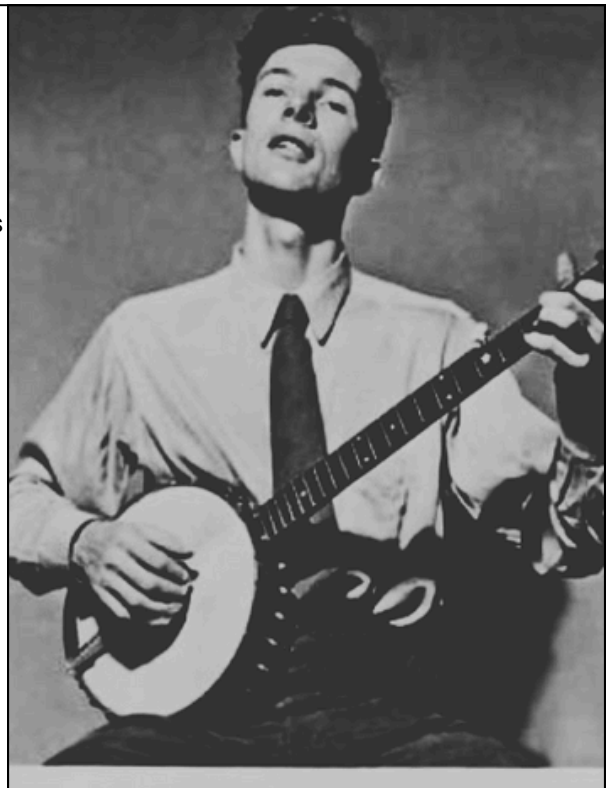
**3** If I had a song I'd sing it in the morning  
I'd sing it in the evening all over this land  
I'd sing out danger, I'd sing out warning  
I'd sing out love between my sisters and my brothers  
All over this land

**4** Well I've got a hammer, and I've got a bell  
And I've got a song to sing all over this land  
It's a hammer of justice, it's a bell of freedom  
It's a song about love between my brothers and my sisters  
All over this land



Pete Seeger grew up surrounded by music. While he started with classical influences, a folk festival at sixteen sparked his love for folk music and the banjo. Leaving Harvard, he traveled around the U.S. and met Woody Guthrie, kicking off a life of using music to support social causes. He formed the Almanac Singers to bring music to the labor movement and later helped create The Weavers, a group that gained wide popularity until they were blacklisted for Seeger's Communist connections.

In 1949, Seeger first performed "If I Had a Hammer" at a rally supporting Communist Party members facing government charges. The song became a call to speak out against injustice and promote love and unity. Despite facing backlash and a government subpoena, Seeger stayed committed to his beliefs, using music to champion social justice. His work has since inspired people worldwide.



# Bread and Roses

James Oppenheim, Mimi Fariña

**1** As we go marching, marching, in the beauty of the day,  
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill lofts gray,  
Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses,  
For the people hear us singing: "Bread and roses! Bread and roses!"

**2** As we go marching, marching, we battle too for men,  
For they are women's children, and we mother them again.  
Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes;  
Hearts starve as well as bodies; give us bread, but give us roses.

**3** As we go marching, marching, unnumbered women dead  
Go crying through our singing their ancient call for bread.  
Small art and love and beauty their drudging spirits knew.  
Yes, it is bread we fight for, but we fight for roses too.

**4** As we go marching, marching, we bring the greater days,  
The rising of the women means the rising of the race.  
No more the drudge and idler, ten that toil where one reposes,  
But a sharing of life's glories: Bread and roses, bread and roses.

Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes;  
Hearts starve as well as bodies; bread and roses, bread and roses.

"Bread and Roses" is a rallying cry for justice and dignity. It is a song that has become emblematic of labor movements and women's rights. Originally a poem written by James Oppenheim in 1911, it was inspired by the struggle for fair wages, humane working conditions, and respect, particularly among women workers.

Set to music by Mimi Fariña in 1974, "Bread and Roses" has since found new life in protests, marches, and social justice gatherings, where it resonates with those fighting for equality and the right to live with dignity.

The song's haunting melody and powerful lyrics call listeners to remember the sacrifices of those who came before and to continue advocating for a fairer world.

Today, it is critical to uphold an intersectional, internationalist approach to feminist activism, as much of the world's women are oppressed under the boot of United States Imperialism, with respect, autonomy, safety, and opportunity only being offered to a slim few white and wealthy women.



## Las Luchadores de la Revolución

Movimiento Femenino Popular de Peru

**1** Mujeres obreras campesinas  
luchadores de la revolución.  
Frente altiva del pueblo combatiente  
luchadores de la revolución.

**1** Working and peasant women,  
fighters of the revolution.  
Proud front of the battling people,  
fighters of the revolution.

**2** Nuestra vía es la lucha armada  
contra el hambre y la explotación.  
Venceremos al vil imperialismo  
la victoria es del pueblo y su fusil.

**2** Our path is armed struggle  
against hunger and exploitation.  
We will defeat vile imperialism;  
victory belongs to the people and their rifle.

### **Refrain:**

Movimiento movimiento femenino femenino  
movimiento femenino popular  
Movimiento movimiento femenino femenino  
movimiento femenino popular

### **Refrain:**

Movement, movement, feminine, feminine,  
popular feminine movement.  
Movement, movement, feminine, feminine,  
popular feminine movement.

**3** Campesinos de la tierra del ande  
propietarios de las tierras del sol  
El arado será tu herramienta  
luminoso sendero transitamos

**3** Peasants from the land of the Andes,  
owners of the lands of the sun.  
The plow will be your tool;  
we walk a shining path.

**4** En los campos de lucha por la paz  
proletario de las filas obreras  
militantes del frente del Lenin  
con tus manos se mueve el engranaje.

**4** In the fields of struggle for peace,  
proletarians from the working ranks,  
militants of Lenin's front,  
with your hands, the gears turn.

### **Refrain**

**5.** Presidente Gonzalo es la guía  
con que pueblos del mundo triunfarán  
luminoso sendero transitamos  
lucharemos sin tregua hasta el final.

### **Refrain**

**5** President Gonzalo is the guide  
with whom the peoples of the world will  
triumph.  
We walk a shining path,  
we will fight tirelessly until the end.

This spirited march comes from the popular feminine movement of Peru. The popular feminine movement (PFM) was part of the greater movement of the ongoing Peruvian peoples war, waged first under the leadership of Gonzalo and the Peruvian Communist Party. The PFM was a period of high concentration of women involved in the war effort, with as much as 50% of the army consisting of women soldiers. In the line of José Carlos Mariátegui, the PFM was committed to an internationalist proletarian feminist position. This line is best summed by the great Chairman Mao Tse-Tung: "true equality between men and women can only be achieved in the process of the socialist transformation of the whole society."



# In This Heart

Shuhada' Sadaqat (Sinead O'Connor)

**1** In this heart lies for you  
A lark born only for you  
Who sings only to you  
My love  
My love  
My love

**2** I am waiting for you  
For only to adore you  
My heart is for you  
My love  
My love  
My love

**3** This is my grief for you  
For only the loss of you  
The hurting of you  
My love  
My love  
My love

**4** There are rays on the weather  
Soon these tears will have cried  
All loneliness has died  
My love  
My love  
My love

**5** I will have you with me  
In my arms only  
For you are only  
My love  
My love  
My love

Sinead O'Connor was born in Ireland in 1966. Her music spans various genres, and she has a long history of speaking out for truth and justice. She was famously known for tearing a photo of Pope John Paul II live on television as a protest of the Catholic churches rampant child abuse. Sinead was outspoken against US imperialism as an advocate for Palestine. Though she was raised Catholic, Sinead reverted to Islam in 2018 and adopted the name Shuhada' Sadaqat.

"In This Heart" is a treasure of a song that describes the longing felt when absent from your true love. The steady addition of voice parts through the song develops the piece, adding layers and tension. The bass line completes the harmony in the 4th verse building up to an oceanic climax in verse 5. The piece ends with the refrain, a lullaby: "My love, my love, my love."



# Leve Palestina

Kofia

Leve Palestina och krossa sionismen  
Leve Palestina och krossa sionismen  
Leve, leve, leve Palestina  
Leve, leve, leve Palestina  
Leve Palestina och krossa sionismen  
Leve Palestina och krossa sionismen

**1** Och vi har odlat jorden  
Och vi har skördat vetet  
Vi har plockat citronerna  
Och pressad oliverna  
Och hela världen känner till vår jord  
Och hela världen känner till vår jord

Leve, leve, leve Palestina  
Leve, leve, leve Palestina  
Leve Palestina och krossa sionismen  
Leve Palestina och krossa sionismen

**2** Och vi har kastat stenar på  
soldater och poliser  
Och vi har skjutit raketer  
mot våra fiender  
Och hela världen känner till vår kamp  
Och hela världen känner till vår kamp

Leve, leve, leve Palestina  
Leve, leve, leve Palestina  
Leve Palestina och krossa sionismen  
Leve Palestina och krossa sionismen

**3** Och vi ska befria vårt land  
från imperialismen  
Och vi ska bygga up vårt land  
till socialismen  
Och hella världen kommer att bevittna  
Och hella världen kommer att bevittna

Leve, leve, leve Palestina  
Leve, leve, leve Palestina  
Leve Palestina och krossa sionismen  
Leve Palestina och krossa sionismen

Leve Palestina och krossa sionismen  
Leve Palestina och krossa sionismen  
Leve Palestina och krossa sionismen

Long live Palestine and crush Zionism  
Long live Palestine and crush Zionism  
Long, long, long live Palestine  
Long, long, long live Palestine  
Long live Palestine and crush Zionism  
Long live Palestine and crush Zionism

**1** And we have cultivated the earth  
And we have harvested the wheat  
We have picked the lemons  
And pressed the olives  
And the whole world knows our soil  
And the whole world knows our soil

Long, long, long live Palestine  
Long, long, long live Palestine  
Long live Palestine and crush Zionism  
Long live Palestine and crush Zionism

**2** And we have thrown stones at  
Soldiers and police  
And we have fired missiles  
At our enemies  
And the whole world knows our struggle  
And the whole world knows our struggle

Long, long, long live Palestine  
Long, long, long live Palestine  
Long live Palestine and crush Zionism  
Long live Palestine and crush Zionism

**3** And we will liberate our land  
From imperialism  
And we will build our land  
To socialism  
And the whole world will witness  
And the whole world will witness

Long, long, long live Palestine  
Long, long, long live Palestine  
Long live Palestine and crush Zionism  
Long live Palestine and crush Zionism

Long live Palestine and crush Zionism  
Long live Palestine and crush Zionism  
Long live Palestine and crush Zionism

# **We Shall Overcome**

Traditional African-American Freedom Song/  
Arr. T. Y. Wondemagenhehu

We shall overcome, we shall overcome, we shall overcome someday  
Oh, deep in my heart I do believe,  
We shall overcome someday

---

We are going to win our freedom because both the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of the almighty God are embodied in our echoing demands. And so I can sing anew, “We shall overcome” and we shall overcome because Carlyle is right, “No lie can live forever.” We shall overcome because William Cullen Bryant is right, “Truth crushed to earth will rise again.” We shall overcome because James Russell Lowell is right, “Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne. Yet that scaffold sways the future and behind them unknown stands God within the shadows keeping watch above his own.”

With His faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain the slab of stone of hope. With His faith, we will be able to transform the jangling discourse of our nation into a beautiful, sensitive brotherhood. With His faith, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God’s children all over this nation, black men and white men, Protestants and Catholics, Jews and gentiles, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual  
“Free at last. Free at last. Thank God Almighty we are free at last.”  
Thank you.

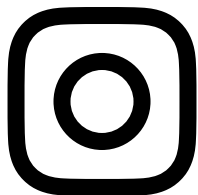
-Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at Southern Methodist University on March 17, 1966.



DARE TO STRUGGLE.  
DARE TO WIN.



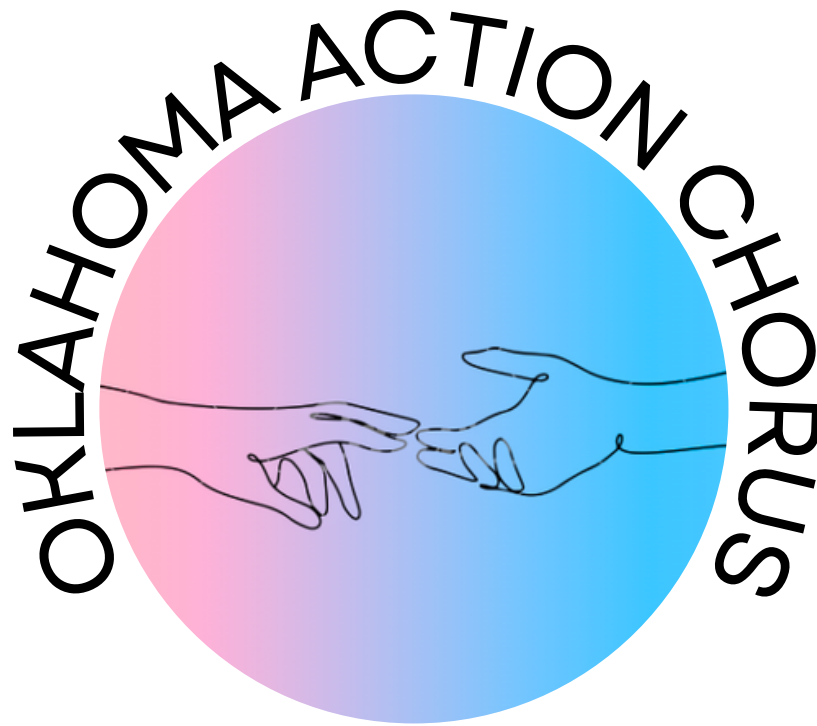
STUDY GROUPS HOSTED TWICE A MONTH.



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