Dear Teachers,

Thank you for choosing this Freedom Sings™ documentary and teaching guide as an educational experience for your students. We at Middle Tennessee State University are proud to present this project of the Newseum Institute.

*Freedom Sings™* hones in on the power of free musical expression in America and uses engaging music to underscore our important First Amendment freedoms. It also shows how those freedoms helped build our nation and how they have been challenged by censorship. Narrator Ken Paulson, dean of our College of Media and Entertainment at MTSU, weaves everything together through his contextual narration.

We are offering our documentary on the 15th anniversary of *Freedom Sings™*, as well as this guidebook created for high school classrooms, so you can engage your students about the First Amendment’s protection of freedom of expression. We hope the activities outlined in the guidebook will encourage reflection and discussion.

I am particularly proud of Dean Paulson’s work in the creation and continuation of *Freedom Sings™*, as well as the involvement by our Media and Entertainment students in the filming of this documentary. We value our partnership with the Newseum Institute’s First Amendment Center and support its continued work to support these important freedoms.

*Sincerely,*

*Dr. Sidney A. McPhee*

*President*

*Middle Tennessee State University*

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**Constitution Day**

The Freedom Sings film is a perfect program for Constitution Day. It explains First Amendment freedoms in an engaging and entertaining way, all set to an inspiring and thought-provoking soundtrack.
The Songs

Freedom Sings is designed to be shared with your students in a single class period or you can chose to play individual songs for the documentary, followed by class discussion. The songs are bundled thematically: Civil rights, women's rights, the environment, and satire and protest. Please note that some of the songs have mature themes. American Skin is about the shooting of an unarmed man; The Pill addresses contraception in a humorous manner and the performance of Society’s Child includes Janis Ian’s recollections about racial epithets thrown at her after recording the song.

Song List:
Blowin’ in the Wind – performed by Dave Coleman – This 1962 Bob Dylan songs asks, “How many roads must a man walk down before you call him a man?” This song has become a staple of social and protest movements worldwide.

What’s Going’ On – performed by Sara Beck - 1971 recording by Marvin Gaye about the then-troubled state of the nation.

Choice of Colors – performed by Danny Flowers – 1969 hit by the Impressions asks us to reflect upon our relationship with people of other races.

I Am Woman – performed by Lari White – This 1972 recording by Helen Reddy – who co-write the song – became an anthem for the women’s rights movement. The Pill – performed by Erin Enderlin – This 1975 Loretta Lynn recording about reproductive freedom was a top 10 country single.


Big Yellow Taxi – performed by Amy Speace and Fred Knobloch – This cautionary tale about the environment was written by Joni Mitchell in 1970, the year of the first Earth Day. It has been recorded by Bob Dylan, Amy Grant and Counting Crows.

Mercy, Mercy Me (The Ecology) – performed by Joseph Wooten – This 1971 Marvin Gaye composition raised awareness about the need to protect the environment.

Short People - Performed by Seth Timbs - This Randy Newman composition and recording mocks racism with a satirical attack on the small of stature. A Maryland legislature overlooked the satire and introduced failed legislation to bar the playing of this song on the state’s radio stations.

American Skin (41 Shots) – performed by Eric Brace – This protest song by Bruce Springsteen was first performed in 2000, shortly after the fatal shooting of Amadou Diallo by New York City Police officers.

The Biggest Thing That Man Has Ever done – performed by Brian Wright – Legendary songwriter Woody Guthrie (“This Land is Your Land”) wrote this song during his travels through Washington and Oregon in 1941. It recognizes mankind’s achievements and chronicles how commitment, hard work and vision have changed the world.

Society’s Child – performed by Janis Ian – Janis Ian was just 13 years old when she wrote this powerful song about a young white girl and black boy, and the girl’s parents reaction to the relationship. Despite its controversial topic, the song was a hit in 1966. Ian faced racist messages and threats, but continued to perform this song.

Student appreciation and understanding of Freedom Sings™ will be greatly enhanced with activities that develop personal connections to the issues and themes addressed in this film. This guidebook contains suggestions for classroom-based activities, which are adaptable for independent projects and multi-week units. Use your own ideas to suit your time and your students.

The following questions are suggested to start class discussions or independent journaling before and after attending the performance.

Discussion Questions — Before the screening:
- Where do we see music censorship in our culture? Is it necessary? Why or why not?
- Are there current musical artists whose music you find too morally offensive?
- Would you defend the rights of those artists to receive radio play or have their music sold online or in stores? Why or why not?
- At what age should a person be able to listen to whatever music he or she prefers?
- Do you think music today has as much power to influence attitudes and the direction of America as it has held historically? Why or why not?

Discussion Questions — After the screening:
- What are the most serious threats to freedom of speech in music today?
- If music has the power to shape a nation in a positive way, does it also have the power to encourage hatred or violent behavior? Why or why not?
- What music inspires you personally? What music do you consider influential to your community?
A Conversation with Ken Paulson, Creator of Freedom Sings™

Ken Paulson is the creator of Freedom Sings™, as well as president of the First Amendment Center, Dean of the College of Media and Entertainment at Middle Tennessee State University, and the former editor of USA Today.

He took a few moments to talk to us about the program.

Q: Can you explain why you were driven to create this production?

A: One of the challenges of conveying the value of the First Amendment is that it is 225 years old. As the centuries pass, it’s really easy to take these core freedoms for granted. What I was looking for was a way to share with a new generation of citizens the vibrancy and potency of free speech, and music is a perfect fit.

Q: Why is music a particularly intriguing filter through which to look at First Amendment issues?

A: Freedom of speech through music has some particularly appealing attributes. Rock ‘n’ roll and hip-hop are the music of the young and a very contemporary way to communicate ideas. Young people of every generation feel like an older generation isn’t always listening. It turns out, when you turn up amplifiers, they have no choice.

Q: You’ve drawn accomplished professional musicians with full schedules for the cast. Can you explain the musicians’ process of preparing for this performance?

A: Let me give you a little broader background. Freedom Sings™ was born in 1999 as a single performance at the Bluebird Café. We invited some of the most talented artists in Nashville to join us to perform songs that were once controversial or had a meaningful impact on a social movement. It was intended as a single concert that would be captured on video and distributed as both a video and CD. It was such an extraordinary success and so rich in ideas that we decided we needed to do two things: Freedom Sings™ would become an annual concert at the Bluebird, and I decided to write a stage performance piece that could tour America’s campuses.

Back to your question about artists: At each of those annual concerts we discover new talent, and we also figure out pretty quickly which musicians have the most passion for freedom of speech. Those are the folks we recruit. So the core band consists of people who have been with us for more than a decade. Professional musicians have hectic lives but they also tend to have flexible ones and so they’re able to join us. One of the most exciting things about the process is that I rewrite Freedom Sings™ literally six or seven times a year. Freedom Sings™ is intended to be very topical and timely, and that means reinvigorating it with new music and new materials regularly. So in the past year, we’ve added a wide
range of music, from Little Big Town to LMFAO and Kacey Musgraves. That means I walk into a rehearsal and tell the cast, “I have a new song for you to learn on the spot.” It’s sort of like Glee in real life.

Q: So they don’t get a lot of rehearsal time together?
A: They don’t, but they’re astonishing. They can turn it around very quickly.

Q: This show has been touring for more than 10 years. What changes did you make in adapting it for a high school audience?

A: We always try and remember that when Freedom Sings™ was launched in 1999, virtually our entire audience was still in grade school. That means, when you reach out to a new audience, like high school students, you really have to be cognizant of what they know and what their life experiences have been. There was a time in the show when 9/11 was in everyone’s real-life experience, and that’s not really the case anymore. So as we take it to a high school audience today, we need to be conscious of the new and historic events in their lives. The election of the nation’s first African-American president is part of their reference, but Kent State isn’t. That doesn’t mean we don’t talk about Kent State, but we always need to be conscious of what the audience knows and what background we need to provide.

Q: Were there instances when you found you were making artistic choices — essentially censoring yourself — by not including material that was relevant but just too potentially offensive to high school audiences or their teachers?

A: Hip-hop presents our greatest challenge. It is the music of our time. It is also often profane and misogynistic, so we don’t censor ourselves but we want to be respectful of the school environment, and in a very careful way use excerpts from rap and hip-hop songs that don’t include expletives. It turns out even the most profane hip-hop songs usually have one clean verse, and that is what we look for.

Q: But even that is censorship in a sense, isn’t it?

A: To be clear, censorship is when an outside power tells us that we can’t perform a certain song. The function I have with Freedom Sings™ is the same exact function I had as editor of USA Today: I decide what goes in and what doesn’t.

Q: How has music’s role in affecting social and political issues changed since the Civil Rights Movement?

A: I wouldn’t peg any change to the Civil Rights Movement except to note that far more people became conscious of what role music plays in shaping history. But you go back to the very origins of this country and you see songs that resonated with hundreds of thousands on political and social issues. For example, “Yankee Doodle Dandy” was initially sung to make fun of Americans, and we turned that around and embraced it as our own. As long as there has been music, there have been political and social consequences for music. With the advent of mass communications — radio and most recently digital distribution — songs can reach a lot more people in a much shorter time. But we make a mistake if we think of music as strictly an entertainment medium. Music matters, and it always has.
What is the First Amendment, and where does it come from?

The First Amendment consists of 45 words added to the Constitution of the United States by the Founding Fathers:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

It was primarily crafted by James Madison as one of 10 amendments known as the Bill of Rights. This document set the tone for the relationship between the U.S. government and the American people, a relationship in which the people’s civil rights would be as paramount as the rights of the governing body. By adding the Bill of Rights to the Constitution, the Founders basically restrained the government’s ability to interfere in the lives of citizens.

What do the words of the First Amendment mean?

The First Amendment’s establishment clause prevents government from establishing an official religion. You have the freedom to worship — or not worship — as you choose.

The free-exercise clause guarantees you the freedom of conscience to believe or not believe as you wish. The free-exercise clause protects all forms of speech, including artistic, literary, musical, political, religious and commercial speech.

The free-press clause enables you to obtain information from many independent sources — newspapers, books, TV, radio, the Internet — without governmental intervention or control.

The right-to-assemble clause allows you to protest in the streets and to join any group you please, whether for political, religious, social or recreational purposes. By organizing groups, you can spread ideas more effectively.

Your right to petition the government for “redress of grievances” means you have the right to ask the government to fix problems or correct errors. Lobbying is included in the right to petition.

What does the First Amendment effectively do?

Basically, the First Amendment allows us to judge the difference between good ideas and bad ones by providing a protected, public space in which competing ideas can prove their worth — and within which equally valuable ideas can coexist.

The First Amendment gives us the right to hear all sides of every issue and to make our own judgments without governmental interference or control.

The First Amendment creates a climate that allows us as individuals to speak and write our minds, worship as we choose, gather for peaceful purposes and ask the government to right the wrongs we see in society.

The First Amendment gives us a chance to debate, to disagree, to learn and to grow. While those who created the First Amendment could never have envisioned the appeal of Eminem, 50 Cent or
Marilyn Manson, they clearly envisioned what freedom means. They recognized that if you create a society in which all are free to challenge authority, to ask questions, to say — or sing — what they want, you provide an escape valve for the kinds of pressures that have damaged, even destroyed, other nations.

**Are there limits to these freedoms?**

At times, we must balance rights and responsibilities. No one has the right to give away military secrets to an enemy, scream in the library or shout over a bullhorn in the middle of the night. You cannot lie under oath or traffic in obscenity or child pornography. You cannot print untruths that damage someone’s reputation. You cannot protest in a manner that violates another’s freedom or life. To reduce the possible negative consequences related to the exercise of First Amendment rights, courts have placed some time, place and manner restrictions on these freedoms.
Still Blowin’ in the Wind: Creating a Poetic Anthem for Our Age

60 minutes

Content Areas Addressed: Literature, Creative Writing

Materials:
- Lyrics for “Blowin’ in the Wind” for all students
- Recording of the song, if available
- Pencil and paper

Introduction: 10 minutes
Have students read the lyrics and/or listen to “Blowin’ in the Wind.”

Discuss:
How did Dylan use metaphor in this lyric?
What might Dylan have been referring to by the lines “How many deaths will it take till he knows/That too many people have died?” How is this line both relevant to the time frame in which it was written but also timeless?

Reflection: 10 minutes
Individually, students take a moment to consider some of the big problems with our world today. Have students jot them down, then share as a group.

Instruct students to take Dylan’s lead and try to phrase some of the issues into questions. For example: How many years will we continue to pollute the earth? How many wars will we fight in the name of religion? How many teenagers will kill themselves before we put an end to bullying? Remind students they don’t have to have answers, only questions. Each student should independently write down their questions.

Activity: 20 minutes
Divide students into groups of about five per group. Students share the questions they wrote. The group chooses approximately three questions to collectively craft into song lyrics in the format of “Blowin’ in the Wind.” Instruct students to consider how symbolism and metaphor could be used to make the language poetic. They can utilize the lyric “The answer my friend, is blowin’ in the wind/The answer is blowin’ in the wind” or write a new concluding line if they wish. Each group should come up with one full verse, which would be three questions expressed in six lines plus the final two lines if strictly following Dylan’s format.

Sharing/Performing: 10 minutes
Each group reads aloud their verse. Students listen carefully and consider which one might make a good opening verse for the full song and which one might be a good closing verse. After all verses have been heard, ask for suggestions for an opening and closing verse, then an order in which the other verses should go. Groups could be arranged to stand according to the order of their group’s verse, then read or, if they are willing, sing the verses one after another, creating a full poem or song.

Optional Reflection: 10 minutes
The contemporary musical artist Makana wrote a modern-day folk anthem for the Occupy Movement in the fall of 2011, titled “We Are the Many.” Though it does not follow the same format as “Blowin’ in the Wind,” it has a similar lyrical meter and musical style. This video can be found on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNm3sXcITQs.

Play this song for students, and have them compare and contrast with “Blowin’ in the Wind.” How does hearing the lyrics set to music impact the words?
Blowin’ in the Wind
WRITTEN BY: BOB DYLAN

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 cannonballs fly
Before they’re forever banned?
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

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

© 1962 by Warner Bros. Inc.; renewed 1990 by Special Rider Music
Here is a simple debate format:

- Opening statement by “against” group. 1-2 minutes
- Opening statement by “for” group. 1-2 minutes
- Rebuttal “against” group. 1 minute
- Rebuttal “for” group. 1 minute
- (repeat the rebuttal process if time allows)
- Closing statement “against” group. 1 minute
- Closing statement “for” group.

Activity: 20-25 minutes
You will have two debates — one for song “A” and one for song “B.” Students who are not taking part in the debate may be allowed to observe and vote on which side “wins.”

Repeat with song “B,” reversing the order in which the “against” and “for” groups begin.

Closing Reflection Questions: 10 minutes
For those who had to argue an opinion with which you didn’t agree, how did that feel? Did the environment in which the song is to be performed affect your position and, if so, how would your position change if the song were being performed to a general audience outside of school?

In public, where should we draw the line between freedom of speech in music and music that has the potential to incite violence or deeply offend?
Songs that Impact a Generation: Creating a Multimedia Performance Time Capsule

Freedom Sings™ spans more than 50 years of music, including music that was censored as well as music that helped shape a nation. Contextual information in the performance, presented through narration, still images and video, is important in helping high school students understand the social and historical backdrop in which featured songs were created.

Content Areas Addressed: Speech, Journalism

Materials and Resources:
- Laptops
- PowerPoint or other presentation software
- A projector and screen
- Information from web or other resources

Reflection and Discussion: 20 minutes
Create groups of approximately four students per group, ideally based on similar music preferences. Within their groups, ask students to consider current songs that have made a positive impact on their generation and create a list of these. They may or may not be personal favorites, but they should be songs that helped bring awareness to a relevant issue or helped change society’s opinion about something.

Groups choose one song from the list to include in a performance of influential music that will take place 50 years from now. Give students this scenario: Imagine you are describing the impact of this song to a young audience in 50 years and you need them to understand what was happening around the time the song was created. Also imagine what changes will have taken place in the next 50 years that would make background information necessary for future students to understand why your chosen song had an impact.

Group discussion questions:
- What was the social and/or political backdrop at the time the song was popular? What social issues were relevant? What was the political climate?
- How did this song bring awareness to an issue or help to change it? What events are important to know about to understand why this song was influential?
- For example, if one chose Lady Gaga’s “Born this Way,” inclusion of an article or statistics about gay teenagers committing suicide after being bullied could provide important information for audience members 50 years from now, when hopefully bullying due to sexual orientation no longer exists.

Research and Activity:
Individually as homework or as group work during class, students gather examples of news headlines, statistics, or video footage that provides background information relevant to understanding their chosen song’s impact. As a group they are to create a five-minute Power Point or other multimedia presentation that includes the following:

- A student who is a live narrator whose script will “set up” the audio and visuals and give background information as needed.
- An excerpt of the song they chose (video or audio excerpt, or, if students are able, a live version).
- At least three of the following: headlines, statistics, quotes from the artist, images or video footage that provides background information to help future audience members understand the time in which the song was popular.

Sharing: 25-40 minutes
Students make their group presentations to the class.
CONTROVERSIES OVER MUSIC THROUGH THE DECADES
From the early banning of jukeboxes to the blacklisting of controversial songs to the voluntary labeling of lyrics, the actions against music have taken many forms.
(Excerpted from FREE SPEECH AND MUSIC: A TEACHER’S GUIDE, courtesy of Newseum Institute’s First Amendment Center.)

1950s
In 1953, six counties in South Carolina passed legislation outlawing any jukebox within hearing distance of a church.

In 1954, “Good Rockin’ Tonight,” recorded by Elvis Presley, quickly appeared on a list of objectionable records compiled by the Juvenile Delinquency and Crime Commission in Houston, which urged that it be banned on radio and in record stores.

In 1955, CBS canceled Alan Freed’s Rock ‘n’ Roll Dance Party after a camera showed black singer Frankie Lymon dancing with a white girl.

In 1956, the parks department in San Antonio removed all the rock ‘n’ roll records from jukeboxes by swimming pools.

In 1957, TV showman Ed Sullivan instructed his camera crew to record Elvis Presley only from the waist up so the singer wouldn’t offend American sensibilities when he swiveled his hips. Presley also was considered controversial because his lyrics seemed much too suggestive to an older generation.

In 1958, the Mutual Broadcasting System dropped all rock ‘n’ roll from its radio network music programs.

In 1959, an El Paso, Texas, station refused to play any Bob Dylan songs because station executives couldn’t understand the lyrics.

In 1969, half the radio stations that played Top 40 hits refused to play “The Ballad of John and Yoko” by Lennon and Yoko Ono, because they considered the lyrics blasphemous.

1960s
In 1962, a New York bishop forbade Catholic school students from listening to Chubby Checker’s “The Twist,” which he considered lewd.

In 1965, The Rolling Stones’ “I Can’t Get No Satisfaction” was banned from radio because the lyrics were considered too suggestive.

In 1967, The Rolling Stones had to change the lyrics of the song titled “Let’s Spend the Night Together” to “let’s spend some time together” in order to appear on the Ed Sullivan Show.

In 1971, the FCC sent threatening letters to all radio stations for playing rock music that glorified drugs.

In 1972, John Denver’s “Rocky Mountain High” was banned on radio because stations feared the “high” referred to drugs.

In 1975, Loretta Lynn’s “The Pill” broke with traditional country music by making blatant reference to birth control.

In 1977, the Rev. Jesse Jackson decried disco music, saying much of the music promoted promiscuity and drug use.

In 1979, Frank Zappa’s “Jewish Princess” sparked vocal protests from the B’nai B’rith Anti-Defamation League.

1970s
In 1980, a Des Moines, Iowa, group of church teenagers, organized by a youth minister, conducted a record burning, torching albums by The Beatles, Ravi Shankar and Peter Frampton, as well as the “Grease” soundtrack.

In 1981, a municipal judge in Newark, Ohio, banned rock concerts at a local park because they posed a public nuisance.

In 1984, U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop spoke out against rock music, insisting that it glorified pornography and violence.
In 1988, a faculty adviser at a Newark, New Jersey, student radio station banned all heavy metal from the playlists, fearing it would cause young listeners to commit suicide.

**1990s**

In 1997, Ozzfest ’97, a gathering of heavy-metal and shock-rock bands at the Meadowlands in New Jersey, was held up when officials refused to sell tickets unless shock rocker Marilyn Manson was taken off the bill. A federal judge ruled that the show, and Manson, could go on.

In 1998, Florida legislators withheld funding from a public radio station because they objected to several songs being played on the station.

In 1998, state legislators in Washington and Georgia narrowly defeated measures that made it a crime to sell to minors recordings labeled with parental warning stickers.

In 1999, police organizations nationwide protested a concert featuring Rage Against The Machine, the Beastie Boys and Bad Religion, a fundraiser for death-row inmate Mumia Abu-Jamal, who was convicted of killing a police officer.

**2000s**
In 2003, the popular Dixie Chicks band created a furor when lead singer Natalie Maines, just 10 days before the U.S. invasion of Iraq, said in London: “Just so you know, we’re on the good side with y’all. We do not want this war, this violence, and we’re ashamed that the President of the United States is from Texas. Some radio stations refused to play Chicks records and the group lost much of its country music fan base. But the Chicks bounced back with new music and a national tour aimed at pop audiences and in 2007 won five Grammy Awards, including Album of the Year, for Taking the Long Way which included the song “Not Ready to Make Nice.”

In 2008, singer and songwriter Jackson Browne filed a lawsuit against GOP presidential candidate John McCain protesting the use of Browne’s recording of “Running on Empty” in a commercial criticizing Democratic nominee Barack Obama’s energy policies. While artists cannot prevent others from singing their songs, Browne objected to his performance being used in the ad — which Brown said implied he “sponsors or endorses” McCain, which the performer said was in direct conflict with his personal social and political values.

**Resources**
First Amendment Center: Resources and teaching tools
NewseumEd – Free learning tools on media literacy and First Amendment freedoms
https://newseumed.org/

The Newseum Institute
http://www.newseuminstitute.org/

1 for All: Teach the First Amendment
https://1forall.us/teach-the-first-amendment/

The Seigenthaler Chair for Excellence in First Amendment Studies at Middle Tennessee State University
http://mtpress.mtsu.edu/firstamendment/
Freedom Sings is on the road.
For information about our touring company, visit our site:
www.mtsu.edu/freedomsings