

Get Up, Stand Up

Every time I hear the offbeat guitars and groovy bass lines in Bob Marley's music, it takes me back to when I was 15. My best friend was a year older, so the two of us spent a lot of time in his truck experiencing our first taste of freedom. That truck is where he introduced me to Bob Marley and the Wailers. We ended up spending the entire summer listening to Bob Marley and spreading his music to our other friends. When I first began listening to Marley's music in that truck, I was lured in by the infectious hooks and the unique sound of reggae, but it wasn't until I began listening to Marley's music on my own that I genuinely understood his message.

Bob Marley and the Wailers strongly believed that the power of change was in the hands of the people, and they used music to communicate that to people all over the world. One of the most clear calls to action in music can be found in The Wailers' 1973 song "Get Up, Stand Up." The Wailers used the repetition of the phrase "get up, stand up" in the chorus in order to cement to the audience that they have power in their hands. In Marley's verses, he asserts that people should not wait for the afterlife in order to find paradise, but they should create it here on Earth. Marley wanted the people to rise up and find peace in the face of the political violence in his home country of Jamaica that left its citizens struggling. This track, along with much of Marley's discography, is relevant today and remains to inspire me as well as every other person on earth to fight for what we believe in.

Marley had immense determination to create change in his homeland, which can be seen best in his performance at the Smile Jamaica Concert in 1976. Bob Marley and the Wailers agreed to perform at the Smile Jamaica Concert, which was organized to promote peace between the two warring political parties in Jamaica. However, two days before the concert, a group of people believed to be in opposition of the concert broke into the building where the band was

rehearsing and shot Marley along with his wife and two others, nearly killing them. Despite his nearly mortal wound, Marley performed a 90 minute set at the Smile Jamaica Concert, claiming, “The people who were trying to make the world worse did not take the day off. Why should I?” Marley’s determination to create a change in Jamaica inspires me to seek change in my own country and reminds me to persevere through any challenges I may face along the way.

While Bob Marley fought hard for political change, he also promoted social change. The entire B side of his most successful album, “Exodus,” addresses themes of peace, unity, love, and simple joys. Marley’s music not only calls people to action, but it shows them what could be waiting for them if they are willing to take such action. When I listen to these songs, it makes me appreciate my life to a greater extent. It pushes me to make peace on a smaller scale by encouraging me to put aside my conflicts with some people and enjoy their company when I would otherwise avoid them.

Bob Marley has been dead for over 40 years, but his music echoes through generations of people. I can see it in my school; his music is contagious, and when people hear it, they will spread it to others. Bob Marley’s themes are timeless, and they continue to inspire the next generations of people all over the world to take action in order to find peace in not only their country but also among each other on an individual level.