

There is no “I” in “Land”:  
Religion, Protest, and Resistance through  
Music at Standing Rock and the TMT Protest

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**Abstract:**

This thesis addresses the religious aspects of protest music through the analysis of several representative case studies. Drawing on Alan Parkhurst Merriam's and Stephen A. Marini's theories on the functions of music in both religious and secular contexts, this thesis argues that music from the Standing Rock and Thirty Meter Telescope protests demonstrates the power of music to not only evoke emotion but also provide a sense of religious community and solidarity in actively resisting the destruction of sacred Indigenous lands. To demonstrate this power, this thesis examines the following case studies: 'Stand up' by Taboo featuring other indigenous artists, 'Blacksnakes' by Prolific The Rapper and A Tribe called Red, and 'Love Letters to God' by Nahko and the Medicine for the People, from the Standing Rock protest in North Dakota, and 'I Mua' by Nahko and Medicine for the People, 'Warrior rising' by Hawane Rios featuring Lakea Trask, and 'Rise Up' by Ryan Kiraoka featuring Keala Kawaauha, from the Thirty Meter Telescope protest in Hawaii. Ultimately, this thesis argues that these songs do not just give us a deeper understanding of these two specific protest movements but can also help us understand Indigenous protests as a whole and give us valuable insight into the present struggles which are deeply connected to religious beliefs. The medium of music, for Indigenous people, is a resource that gives them a platform to voice their ideas and feelings and, in doing so, protest to protect their religious sovereignty.

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This Thesis is dedicated to

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## **Introduction**

The following thesis will explore the use of music and music videos as a form of resistance and protest by Indigenous people facing oppression. Specific attention will be focused on questions pertaining to the religious and ceremonial aspects of the examples considered. These subjects will be explored through the analysis of specific songs which have been created in response to and as part of the protests at two case studies: the Standing Rock protest in North Dakota and the Thirty Meter Telescope protest in Hawaii. For Native Americans, their land is part of their religion and having a pipeline or a telescope built on their sacred land calls forth religious push back. In his book, *The Land Looks After Us: A History of Native American Religion*, Joel W. Martin quotes a Hopi elder saying, “Our land, our religion, and life are one,” meaning that their religion is not separated from the rest of their life and that they connect places with their spirituality (2001, ix). This thesis will argue that this deep connection to the land and the protests about land makes the resulting music involve religious images, ideas, and sentiments. These images and ideas pertain to long-held Indigenous understandings of the land as alive and sacred. This thesis will also argue that both Indigenous communities utilize music to further their agendas and give expression to their causes.

The artists of the chosen songs are in one way or another part of Indigenous groups and similarly are all part of and invested in the specific protest for which they composed music. One of the case studies explored in this thesis is the Standing Rock protest, also known as the Dakota Access Pipeline protest, which started in 2016 in reaction to governmental approval for the construction of a fuel pipeline. Please take a moment to view and listen to a song called ‘Stand up’ by Taboo, which was created in response to the Standing Rock movement and which will be

analyzed in this thesis. I introduce this song here as a means to open up my topic and materials to readers at the outset.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Onyk7guvHK8>

Taboo, an American singer, rapper, songwriter, member of a popular hip-hop group called The Black-Eyed Peas, and also member of the Shoshone Tribe, in solidarity with the protest, produced this song. He used the medium of music to bring together other activists to create a song to help the protest and the fight for Indigenous communities against opposing governmental structures. This song's music, lyrics, and video are all used to spread their message around the world, to build community, to show appreciation and solidarity to the people at the camps.

These songs stand in a long tradition of political protest music that has numerous roots, but in this thesis I will not be able to trace all of these roots. This thesis will analyze lyrics and music videos of the chosen songs to see how they are used religiously, to protest and resist. In the case of 'Stand up' a section of the lyrics that will be examined is "We been fightin' for our freedoms since the Niña and Pinta and the Santa Maria. Like Geronimo, Sittin' Bull, Red Cloud, Crazy Horse, Leonard Peltier." This lyric is very powerful because it relates back to the different religious struggles and oppression that Native Americans have had to endure in the past, like the colonization subsequent to the 'discovery' by Columbus. This is then immediately contrasted by naming Native American heroes who have managed to fight back and resist, like Sitting Bull, a Lakota leader who led his Native American community. By bringing up these heroes, this line also serves to unify the listeners and the protectors on the ground, through reflection on shared past trauma.

For this project I will not only focus on the music itself but also on the music video that come along with the analyzed songs. Nowadays songs almost always are created with a music video and the songs analyzed in this thesis are meant to be seen with their music videos because they manage to highlight the most important aspects in the songs. In the music video ‘Stand up’, which will be further analyzed below for its high concentration of Native American religious images, one important part is when Apsáalooke rapper dancer and singer Supaman dances a religious dance in his traditional regalia, which are still used in religious ritual and ceremonies of many Native Americans today. In addition to this, he does not rap in English but in Apsáalooke, which speaks directly to the members of the protest who speak Apsáalooke, which more importantly demonstrates his language credentials and Indigenous authority.

This thesis will explore several other similar songs by Indigenous artists and activists to show how music can be a key component of religious resistance and protest and should be seen as such. Nowadays songs are not just used for entertainment but to spread messages and create emotions. The songs in this thesis are created to tell a story, further the protest and to resist. By using the method close reading of such texts, it is possible to unpack these dense songs and help outsiders understand why land is so important to the Native American communities involved in the protest, just by listening to a song.

### **Music: the universal language?**

Before turning to my specific topic, here I wish to outline various features and functions of music and musicology that are relevant to my argument. Music has been a big part of human history. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, an American poet, coined the phrase “music is the universal language of mankind.” There are so many different languages in the world, but music is a form of communication that most human languages have in common. Daniel J. Levitin, a

cognitive psychologist and author of *This is your Brain on Music*, argues that “Throughout most of the world and for most of human history, music-making was as natural an activity as breathing and walking, and everyone participated” (Levitin 10). In early societies, almost everyone in the community was involved in creating music. Archeologists all around the world have found, and still uncover, many artifacts that were in some way used to create music in past societies. This is seen with “large numbers of musical artifacts [that] have been discovered throughout the world” (Wallin 10). Musical notes and written forms of music are very hard to preserve over time. Because of this, most archeological evidence are instruments which have managed to survive. In Slovenia in 1995, a fragment of a putative bone flute was found and is thought to be around 44,000 years old (10). This find would suggest that music, specifically musical instruments, have been around as long as anatomically modern humans.

Another thing that these archeological discoveries teach us is that music has come a long way, and as societies have evolved, so has their use of music. Levitin proposes that only in the last 500 years there has been a split in society’s use of music. Whereas music used to be a communal activity, modern society has split it into two groups; one group that produces and another group that consumes (Levitin 10). As music has shifted from communal to producer/consumer, it now fulfills many more functions than just the communal aspect, such as music being a form of entertainment, social commentary, or earning a living. In the society we live in music is everywhere you look. When passing the vegetable aisle in the supermarket you can hear quiet music coming from the speaker. In this case, music is used as a form of advertisement and is meant to help calm people so they will buy more. People cannot even go to the doctor’s office and wait in the waiting room without being exposed to slow and relaxing music, which aims to create a calm and welcoming environment. Nowadays music is even used



in almost every commercial, which tries to create emotion and call on past experiences in the listener to persuade them to buy specific items.

The examples given above touch on some of the different functions of music that exist in our current society. Alan Parkhurst Merriam, a well-known cultural anthropologist and ethnomusicologist in the 1960s published a book called *The Anthropology of Music*. In this book, Merriam differentiates between two very important aspects of music: use and function. To him, the use of music “refers to the situation in which music is employed in human action” and the function of music “concerns the reason for its employment and particularly the broader purpose which it serves” (Merriam 210). This book is a fundamental text in the study of music and it quantifies music’s abilities and the services it gives to humanity. His research is useful for looking at music through a lens of resistance and applying to protest because of his analysis on how music functions. The following thesis will focus on the aspect of the function of music. In Merriam’s eyes, looking deeper into these functions will help with finding answers to questions like “What music does for human society?” and “What music does in human society?” (219). Therefore, looking into the functions of music can tell us more about the society itself and by extension about the use of music as a form of protest and resistance within that society.

Merriam argues that “songs of protest call attention as well to propriety and impropriety” (224). In other words, songs for protests touch on specific standards that are held by a community and how these standards should be followed or broken. This goes hand in hand with the definition of “protest,” which is “an organized public demonstration expressing strong objection to an official policy or course of action” (“Protest”). Music can be used to express the strong objection to the standards of society and in the past, many different under-represented groups have used this specific medium to fight against an opposing authority.

For his book, Merriam came up with ten major and overall functions of music. These are all very important functions when talking about the use of music, but for this thesis only seven of these functions, which are relevant for the discussed topic, will be explored. The function of emotional expression, says that music serves as a way to express emotion, in both the listener and the producer. According to Merriam, music is involved with emotions and specifically song texts “provide a vehicle for the expression of ideas and emotions not revealed in ordinary discourse” (219). This means that music is a way human beings share their emotions, whether they are general or special. Edwin Grant Burrows, argues along those lines and states that every emotion from passion to grief to emotions of religious feelings can be shared musically because the underlying function of songs is to “stimulate, express and share emotion” (219). This emotional expression can be used as a way to unite the listeners because it can call upon the same emotion within all of them. This shared feeling can create a connection between listeners, which is particularly useful for uniting a group against injustice.

Music also has a function of communication. To Merriam, “music is not a universal language, but rather is shaped in terms of the culture of which it is part [of]” (223). Even though Merriam doesn’t believe that music is a language, it can still communicate information. While this is a valid argument, the following thesis will argue that music can be a universal language, but simultaneously still can be solely created for a specific group. Yes, music is still shaped in terms of the specific culture and a large amount of meaning is lost when language acquisition is not present, but that glosses over how sounds and visuals affect the listener. Basic information and aspects of music can still be understood by outsiders. The rather new development of video footage and being able to create a video to go along with songs allows listeners to transcend the barrier that language presents for Merriam (223). Cinema, for example, utilizes the power of

sound to create feelings of despair, love, fear and the full range of human emotion. A picture is worth a thousand words and a video is worth a million; showing protests and conveying tone through a visual medium portrays emotion and meaning. Even an outsider can comprehend cultural music in this way. This is especially useful to protest as it conveys the ideas across traditional barriers such as language and culture-specific traditions, allowing a wider audience to have sympathy with the resisters' plight and hopes.

The next function listed in *The Anthropology of Music* is symbolic representation. Victor Turner, a cultural anthropologist with a research focus on symbols and rituals, argues along a similar line as Merriam. For Turner, symbols are "a blaze or landmark, something that connects the unknown with the known" (Turner 46). He argues that symbols are used for social processes and portray important social values. Merriam sees music as a medium in which people include and portray these values. The basic idea is that music is not just created for the sake of creating, but to also symbolically represent other things, ideas and/or behaviors of a specific community (Merriam 223). Thinking of music in this way causes music to evolve into a representation of human behavior rather than just a constellation of sounds. When we apply a deeper symbolic meaning to what we consume, we deepen our understanding of the world around us and what makes us human. Music can also be used as a manner of sharing with others how an individual or group views the world or a specific event. This characteristic of songs can make the listener feel like they are part of the movement itself, or at least cause them to sympathize with the protests and start to feel a deeper connection to the movement. While not everyone has a view or opinion of a social-political struggle, music can be used to create a medium for sharing one's own interpretation.

Another very important function listed by Merriam is enforcing conformity and social order, which goes hand in hand with two other functions: contribution to the continuity and stability of culture and contribution to the integration of society. All of these functions have one thing in common: cultural and societal importance. According to Merriam, music can be used as a form of social control, “both through direct warning to erring members of the society and through indirect establishment of what is considered to be proper behavior” (224). Therefore, music can be used to educate society on social behaviors and what is expected of them. He goes on to say that music also stabilizes society and its culture. Music, just like any other aspect of culture, is used not only as a way to express social order but also to express cultural values. Merriam calls music “a vehicle of history, myth, and legend” and “through its transmission of education, control of erring members of the society, and stress upon what is right, it contributes to the stability of the culture” (225). Lastly, because it can further social order and cultural values, music also has the power to unite societies. Therefore, music can be “a rallying point” (227) that can bring together members of society. Music’s inherent ability to be this rallying point makes it an ideal starting point for any social commentary. This social cohesion function of music is analogous to Durkheim’s theory of religion and ritual. Durkheim argues that “religion’s true purpose is not intellectual but social” and “It serves as a carrier of social sentiment, providing symbols and rituals that enable people to express the deep emotions that anchor them to their community” (Pals 102). This aspect of music and religion are very helpful in protest situations because it can unify the protectors and convey their message.

The last function listed in the book *The Anthropology of Music* is the function of validation of social institution and religious rituals. Similar to his previous ideas, Merriam thinks that social institutions “are validated through songs which emphasize the proper and improper in

society” (225). Musical songs should be seen by members of the society as instructions on how to behave and how not to behave. Just like social institutions, religious systems are also validated by folklore, myth, and legends in songs. This gives music a unique ability to shape and mold social and religious norms. This function of songs can be very useful for protest because it can validate the society and its reasons for protesting as well as implicating a new social norm that more aligns with protectors’ beliefs.

### **Use of Music in Religion**

All these functions listed above go into the use of music as being a big part of religious life and spirituality. Stephen A. Marini’s book, *Sacred Song in America; Religion, Music and Public Culture*, in which he explores American sacred music and how the aspect of music is very important when talking about religious culture. Marini argues that the United States is a very religious nation and songs and music play a big role in the religious sector of their lives. There are a myriad of religious institutions in the United States and “each of America’s religious communities has its own unique tradition of sacred song” (Marini 1). This contradicts popular opinion and definition of music, as it has greatly evolved to encompass ideas outside of religion to the point it is not considered religious. The author explores this when saying that “the burden of modern opinion tends to deny that music per se can be religious or anything else other than music” (2). The twentieth century sees music just as music and this does not allow for spirituality or religion to be part of music. Even though the average millennial/generation z may not immediately recognize the correlation of religion and music it cannot be denied that it exists. In Marini’s eyes, religious songs can act in many ways like “providing identity, move to action, cause dissent, promote growth, alter belief, deepen faith, galvanize or anesthetize worship” (10). Dr. Rupert Till author of *Pop Cult: Religion and Popular Music* “suggest[s] that popular music is

like, or linked to, religion” (1). Even though it is not specifically religious many young people connect with music to establish identity and challenge the status quo, which in turn provides them with a sense of identity.

Marini’s text is influential for this thesis because it recognizes the central role that music plays in religious life and establishes the correlation between religion and music. In *Sacred Song in America*, Marini attempts to answer the question ‘What kind of music is religious?,’ which has not been answered in the past since it is such a complex question. A theory of music he brings up that could help explain the use of music in religion is that music is a way to express emotion and emotional meaning. Marini quotes British musicologist Deryck Cook, who argues that a rise in pitch can create ‘out-going emotion’, a downward pitch can create a ‘inging emotion,’ that major keys can express joy and minor keys can express sadness and sorrow (Marini 2). By listing this theory of music, Marini implies that a big function of music and song in religion is to express and communicate religious emotions and their meanings. Another theory he lists, opposes the one listed above, is a theory by philosopher Susanne Langer, who argues that the relationship between music and religion is a symbolic one (2). Thus, music does not express emotions themselves but rather the “morphology” of emotions. One last theory that Marini listed in relation to the use of music as religious, is a theory developed by psychologists John A. Sloboda and Anthony Storr, who argue that “music expresses our inward state in much the same way a religious belief system, by providing an ideal order through which to perceive the world and thereby ourselves” (3). These scholars argue that both music and religion are similar to the linguistic structure of the unconscious mind.

All the approaches listed above have one aspect in common: the use of music to express and communicate emotion. Marini states that these theories of music listed above “remain

attractive to Americans when applied to sacred music because of the importance we have traditionally attached to the emotions in interpreting the nature of religion itself” (4). The common link between music and religion is emotion. Music can be used as a vehicle to express and share the emotions of religion. To Marini, Americans think of both religion and music as emotional and thereby “grant the idea that music itself can convey religiousness” (4). Bruce Venable, author of “Church Singing: The Fathers and Beyond,” said that:

Every aspect of life was at one time accompanied by its proper music: weddings and funeral, work of all sorts, planting and harvest, games, social dancing meals, and drinking. Anthropologists declare that all these activities were regarded as in some broader sense religious, as affirmations of the inherent social order, taught to the ancestors by the gods (Venable 77).

This quote exemplifies how music has always been deeply rooted in our social cognition, which in turn encompasses religion and emotion.

Even though the ability of music to express emotions is an important factor for Marini, it is not the only factor that needs to be addressed. He states, “Music that does not move us emotionally is not likely to be effective religiously, but there is more to sacred music than emotionality” (Marini 4). The book argues that if the music and songs are not religious per se, there needs to be another factor that makes it religious, which is the inclusion of religious belief and religious content. He writes, “Religious belief, or mythic content, as historians of religion would say, is the principle element that sacralizes music” (4). Music with no religious component cannot create religious emotion in the listener, but only “by naming the sacred powers, articulating the sacred cosmos, and disclosing how sacrality interacts with humanity, verbalized beliefs specifies sacred content in a way that music alone cannot” (4). Therefore, the

defining feature of sacred music and song is the expression of mythic and religious content. This coincides with Ivan Moddy's opinions expressed in his essay "Music as a Sacred Art," in which he states that "the sacred artist has to attempt to become a channel for the transmission of sacred image" (Moody 24). Concluding, music is not inherently sacred but is made so by artist intent, purpose and the communities' reception of it.

Another very important and essential element of sacred music for Marini is language. One way is the fact that most sacred songs try to portray a small and simple part of the religious belief and not a complex idea. Marini brings in the ideas of a scholar called Mark Booth, who in his book *The Experience of Song*, argues that a sacred song has to portray a simple aspect of specific religious beliefs because songs do not have the same freedom as poets do. Booth argues, "A poet has much greater freedom to test the patience and ingenuity of the reader and to stretch his comprehensions" but a song, which is bound to unity and clarity, on the other hand "must say things that are simplifications, and generally familiar implications" (Marini 5). In order for the reader to comprehend the content of a religious song, it needs to include simple and easily comprehensible but still valuable and religious information that the listener can quickly grasp.

The next important aspect of the use of music in religion is the impact the sacred music has on the religious listener and the producers of the music. For this aspect of sacred text, Marini brought in Victor Zuckerkandl, an Austrian-Jewish musicologist in the early 1900s, who believed that the singer of sacred songs goes through a twofold process of transcendence (5). His theory was that singing "first joins the individual singer to a community of other singers, then the singers together seek identification with those things that are sung about" (5). Zuckerkandl believes that music functions to connect the singer, the audience and the subject, i.e., religious believers with their sacred texts. Through the act of singing, the artist can have direct experience



with the sacred and other believers. Going along with Zuckerkandl's argument, Booth argues "singers participate in mythic experience and expression" (5). In his book *All In Sync*, Robert Wuthnow, an American sociologist of religion, states that music and art can "spark the religious imagination and enrich personal experiences of the sacred," meaning that music can help the creators and consumers of religion participate in the religious realm (Wuthnow xiv).

Another important aspect of sacred music, according to Marini is the sacred performance and ritual part of songs. Marini explains the importance of hymn which is "the most characteristic form of sacred song" and also the "oldest literary form and the earliest musical form known to cultural history" (7). This idea of hymns dates back to Saint Augustine of Hippo who thought highly of hymns and defined them as "a song to praise to God" and argued that hymns do not only consist of biblical texts but also ritual (7). In his book the author adopts this belief and says for a religious song to be sacred, there are two important parts, the part of religious belief and "ritual intention and form" (7). Ritual in this sense is the performance which goes along with the mythical content and for Marini, this is another defining feature of religious songs. The aim of this ritual component of the religious song is to "move participants out of everyday awareness into a state of shared mythic consciousness" (7).

This leads us into the public realm of the use of music in religion. Marini argues that religious songs and music are collective rather than individual activities and this again touches on Durkheim's ideas of religion and ritual. In his eyes "sacred song[s] can be performed in both private and public domains, but it almost always requires a social rather than an individual context" (8) because performing sacred songs is almost never done alone, which is also expressed by Rupert Till who in his book states that "musical activity is a social or group-based activity" (1). Marini highlights that the consumption of sacred music in contemporary America

has shifted immensely from “explicitly sacred space[s] into secular concert halls, theaters, auditoriums, stadiums, museums, and gymnasiums” (8). This shift was fueled by the creation of television and the Internet, which offers easily accessible religious content, inciting consumption by a new audience. His main argument is that sacred songs are no longer just used for religious rituals and performances but they have turned into a product that can be bought and sold.

Marini also acknowledges that the history of the American use of sacred songs “begins with the original people of the continent”, i.e. Native Americans. He argues that the appearance of sacred songs has happened centuries before European settler colonists arrived on the continent and that “Native American tribal societies developed extraordinary rich and diverse traditions of sacred songs” (Marini 17). These sacred songs and associated rituals are crucial and central to the Native community, are passed down orally from generation to generation and address almost every part of Native life and community (17).

Marini’s research on the topic concluded that Native American communities have two different kinds of sacred songs: ceremonials and socials. Ceremonials are “sung in the higher sacred rituals of tribal religion, are employed to make spiritual beings present and to purify participants” (17). Some examples of these ceremonials are rituals connected to hunting, healing, war, and harvest. Socials, on the other hand, might lack this high ceremonial aspect, but “it maintains its potency as a sacred medium” (18). An example of such a social activity is the powwow, which Marini defines as “a public ritual gathering of one or more clans or tribes dedicated to skill competition, feasting and dancing” and is deeply rooted in the traditions of Native American communities (18). For his book, Marini interviewed a member of the Southern Cheyenne tribe named Henrietta Mann Morton who explains that the word powwow comes from the Algonquin word ‘pauau’ or ‘pauwau’, and in her eyes it “is an outgrowth of the religious and

social dances of the Plains tribes, it is a celebration of culture with dancing as its primary focus” (23).

“Our land, our religion, our life, is one” (Martin ix). For many Native American people, nature and the earth are deeply rooted in their religion. Rather than taking the Abrahamic view of a world that is made for people, many tribes live by the belief that we are an integral part of the Earth, not that it was made for us but rather see the Earth as their own mother. Joel Brady, states in his essay “Land is itself a sacred, living being; Native American sacred site protection on federal public lands amidst the shadows of Bear lodge” that “Native American faith is inextricably bound to the use of land. The site-specific nature of Indian religious practice derives from the Native American perception that land is itself a sacred, living being” (Brady 154). In an effort to protect what is sacred, protests at Standing Rock and Mauna Kea have implemented their religious scripts into music as a form of protest and resistance to protect Mother Earth. The long history of music being used as a part of their religion explains why the medium of music was chosen to improve upon their quest. This music is a hybrid of sacred and social songs that tap into both of Marini’s categories. The songs are not only used to make spiritual beings present and to purify participants but are also used to re-establish a connection of the people to the land and protect it.

### **Background information on the history of music as a form of resistance and protest**

There are many different types of music that can be used as a form of protest but this specific thesis will focus on how Native American and Hawaiian rap/ hip hop is used as a form of protest and resistance. The form of music being used as protest goes back to the emergence of the art movement called hip hop, also known as rap, which developed in the late 1970s in the South Bronx, New York. At the time, this was one of the poorest communities in New York and

faced “social isolation, economic fragility, truncated communications media, and shrinking social service organizations” (Martinez 272). This music movement known as hip hop is based in self-determination, resistance, and the long enduring fight for Black freedom and “The exploit of the sounds and images of a wide variety of black militants from America’s past, but particularly those who advocated building a black nation. Their sources most often include community-based activist such as Marcus Garvey, Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr.” (Decker 58). All these people were involved in the deployment, but Afrika Bambaataa was the pioneer of rap music (57). In the late 1970s, Afrika Bambaataa created the Zulu Nation in the South Bronx of New York City, to try to bring peace to an area that was widely known for its violence. Bambaataa used his position as a DJ to raise awareness and promote the Hip hop movement in order to tackle gang violence.

Before Bambaataa, there were four main elements to hip hop: breakdancing, MC-ing, graffiti, and DJ-ing. Each one of these held an import aspect to the hip-hop nation and black culture. Hip hop gave a sense of control over one's neighborhood and, by extension, culture. Breakdancing, MC-ing, graffiti, and DJ-ing respectfully represent a physical, leadership, artistic, and musical outlet for an emerging culture. In the early 1980s Bambaataa created a fifth element, which gave hip hop culture a spiritual side. Bambaataa introduced ‘knowledge of self’, to inspire “an examination of issues within one's surroundings and create positive change in one's community” (Love 415). For Bambaatta hip hop was about peace, unity, and love. In 1983 an artist by the name of Brother D produced a record titled “How we gonna make the black nation rise”. This track is credited with being the first political rap record. The hip hop music movement had officially transformed into an explicit nationalist movement (Decker 57).

This genre of music originated as an outlet for people to “mock those in power, express rage, and produce fantasies of subversion” (Martinez, 268). This possibility of voicing themselves, served and still serves as a “cultural glue that fosters communal resistance” (268). In the late 1980s and the early 1990s rap, in specific gangsta and political rap, was a form of resistance and an expression of oppositional culture. Rap is more than a genre, it is music with a purpose that empowers those in an otherwise powerless situation and “This voice is a form of resistance to and survival within the dominant social order” (272). The rap movement tries to destroy the existing racist images of black youth but also tries simultaneously to create a new “humanity and society that is more egalitarian and just than the one in which they live and function” (273).

The use of music by the black community in the '80s and '90s as a form of political resistance and communal empowerment has been adopted by Indigenous people today. This can be seen at the Standing Rock protest in North Dakota and the Mauna Kea protest in Hawaii. Both of these protests produced songs in support of their political beliefs. Valerie Alia, journalist, author, academic and photographer, in her book *The New Media Nation*, says “Locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, Indigenous people are using radio, television, print, and a range of media to amplify their voices, extend the range of reception, and expand their collective power” (7). According to Alia, there has been an explosion of the use of media by Indigenous people and by a creative use of this media, “Indigenous people are developing their own news outlets and networks, simultaneously maintaining or restoring particular languages and cultures and promoting common interest” (8).

Music as a form of resistance in Indigenous communities has a long history. A good example of this is a First Nation born singer-songwriter, musician and activist named Buffy

Sainte-Marie. Most of her music focuses on issues of Indigenous people. Sainte-Marie is the only Indigenous person to ever win an Oscar and has recorded with many other famous artists (“Biography”). On her personal website the artist states that she has created songs that deal with “environment, alternative conflict resolution, Indigenous realities, greed, and racketeering” (“Biography”). In her eyes “Protest songs are good, they’re important, and they talk about a problem” and such songs can “enlighten and liberate, inform, motivate or otherwise encourage solutions” (“Biography”). Sainte-Marie is known to not sugarcoat things but to tell the truth and to create songs that make the listener feel strong and to resist.

Resistance in the form of protest has been utilized by Indigenous people for a long time and is becoming more and more popular nowadays: such protest included the Occupation of Alcatraz<sup>1</sup> in 1960s and the “Idle no more” movement. For nineteen months, from November 20<sup>th</sup> 1969 to June 11<sup>th</sup> 1971, a group of Native Americans took over Alcatraz Island and claimed it as Indian Land citing the Treaty of Fort Laramie. This group of Native Americans called themselves “Indians of All Tribes” and used media as a form of protest. A very well-known and also one of the first protest that used the internet and media as an aid was the “Idle No More” Movement. An Indigenous led social movement which began

“when four women in Saskatchewan [Canada] – Nina Wilson, Sylvi McAdam, Jessica Gordon and Sheelah McLean – organized a workshop focused on the impacts of Bill C-45, a 457-page omnibus bill containing changes to 64 different acts and regulations, including the Indian Act, the Navigable Waters Protection Act, the Environmental Assessment Act, and the Fisheries Act” (Graveline 293).

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<sup>1</sup> For more information: Johnson, Troy. *The Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Indian self-determination and the Rise of Indian Activism*. University of Illinois Press, 1996.

According to Fyre Jean Graveline this movement spread very quickly due to the high use of social media networks and turned into the “largest transformative movement for Indigenous rights in Canada since Oka in 2002” (293). This movement was a model for others to use different sorts of media to spread their messages across Indigenous boundaries and music is such a medium.

Such similarities in the use of music as a form of protest and resistance have sparked this thesis project. This thesis will dive into six specific songs for both the Standing rock protest and the Thirty Meter Telescope protest in Hawaii. The songs used in this thesis are: ‘Stand up’ by Taboo featuring other Indigenous artists, ‘Blacksnakes’ by Prolific The Rapper and A Tribe called Red, ‘Love Letters to God’ by Nahko and the Medicine for the People, from the Standing Rock protest, ‘I Mua’ by Nahko and Medicine for the People, ‘Warrior rising’ by Hawane Rios featuring Lakea Trask, and ‘Rise Up’ by Ryan Kiraoka featuring Keala Kawaauha, from the Thirty Meter Telescope protest in Hawaii. Some of the songs listed above were chosen due to their popularity and others were chosen due to personal interest. But all of these songs are greatly connected to the protests and the struggles they represent.

### **Methods: Phenomenology and Close Reading**

The first method that is being utilized in this thesis is phenomenology. The word phenomenology was coined by a German Philosopher, Edmund Gustav Albrecht Husserl. Phenomenology is derived from the ancient Greek word *phainomenon*; to appear and *logos*; reason and this is attached with high significance for phenomenologists (Pivcevic 11). Robert Desjarlais and C. Jason Throop defined phenomenology in their essay “Phenomenological Approaches in Anthropology” as “the study of phenomena as they appear to the consciousness of an individual or a group of people, the study of things as they appear in our lived experience”

(88). In more simple words, it is the study of things that appear in consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. Edo Pivcevic, furthers this explanation by adding that experience is the crucial domain of phenomenology (88).

Phenomenology has been used in many different academic fields like Philosophy, Psychology, Anthropology, Religious studies and many more. In the field of Anthropology, phenomenology is often compared and connected to ethnography. Cultural Anthropologist, ethnographer and author Brian A. Hoey defines ethnography as a research method “where the intent is to provide a detailed, in-depth description of everyday life and practice” (“What is Ethnography?”). Well-known anthropologist Clifford Geertz adds on to this definition by saying that the ethnographer's aim is to observe, analyze and record a culture. Geertz labels this a ‘thick description’, which is a detailed record that results from an in-depth scientific observation of human behavior.

In the text “Embodied Research and Writing: A Case for Phenomenologically Oriented Religious Studies Ethnographies,” scholar Kristy Nabhan-Warren argues that the ethnographer is very closely connected to their own body, their own thoughts, and observations but also closely entwined with the body, thoughts, and observations of their informants. She continues to say “when we draw on our experiences and observations then we are truly writing empirically based scholarship” (378). In other words, Nabhan-Warren says that when using ethnography, it is also very important to combine it with phenomenology, because the combination of both the result is empirical scholarship. Similarly, in the text “Religious Experience and Phenomenology” scholars Kim E. Knibble and Els Van Houtert argue that since the 1980s “several prominent anthropologists have drawn on phenomenology to create fresh approaches to and representations of subjects that are of interest to the anthropology of religion” (1). All in all, phenomenology has



served to improve the method of ethnography by allowing scholars to include their own experiences and observations in their scholarship.

The second method used in this thesis is close reading. Barry Brummett, author of *Techniques of Close Reading* defines it as the “mindful, disciplined reading of an object with a view to deeper understanding of its meaning” (28). In Brummett’s eyes, the only way to fully understand and see the message of texts is to apply close reading to them. This method can be very useful when analyzing different kinds of art forms that include language. Word choices can have a big effect on how specific art is being perceived and understood by the consumer and can call upon various responses to it (28). By really diving into the language it is possible to explore the real meaning and ideas behind them.

### **Personal statement**

In general, academic and scholarly texts are written in third person point of view because it can be more objective and convincing. For this thesis project, I have decided to approach the topic in a more personal manner and have decided to take the first-person viewpoint on this issue. When working on this paper and listening to the specific songs for my case studies, I realized that using a phenomenological approach to my thesis might be most beneficial for the topic in question.

My reasoning for writing my senior honors thesis in the first person and with a phenomenological approach is similar to Kim E. Knibble’s and Els Van Houtert’s argument. I made this conscious decision because I think my specific research and argument will benefit from including my personal observation. When dealing with a subject like music and songs, the interpretation will vary immensely from person to person and with this thesis project, I am

sharing the analysis and interpretation of a twenty-three year old Religious Studies and Anthropology major, who has had a lot of exposure as well as personal investment to both case studies in question.

In addition to the phenomenological approach, I have decided to use close reading as a method of analysis. In my viewpoint, music is inherently subjective and this is why close reading is a necessary tool to extract its meaning. Words, especially on the surface, can mean one thing but when analyzed in a contextual frame they can mean something different. This is why I have made the decision to approach my case studies by close reading.

I have to admit that my chosen methods have limitations on my performed research. Both phenomenology and close reading are open to personal bias and fallacy, as they both rely on the user's background, learned knowledge, and personal opinions. However, in my opinion, this does not devalue the approaches as personal experience is necessary for subjective matters like music analysis. I believe my background in Anthropology, Indigenous studies, Religious studies, and Native protests bring value to my thesis that is worth sharing.

I also want to be upfront about the fact that I do not come from an Indigenous background. My analysis and interpretation of my subject of study have limitations coming from an etic perspective. However, I hope my research and academic background in Native American and Indigenous studies does the topic justice without presenting my own cultural biases. I am aware of the inherent issues present with an outsider looking in, which is why I chose to present my research in the first person to highlight the fact that this research is not necessarily reflective of opinions and views within the Native communities at hand.

Another aspect I want to touch on before I dive into my case studies is the decision I made to call the activists protectors rather than protestors. I made this decision because it reflects the activist's own choice of identification. They see themselves as protectors of Mother Earth rather than protestors, and refer to themselves as such.

### **Standing Rock**

The world we live in nowadays heavily relies on gas and other fossil fuels. This high demand results in the constructions of more and more pipelines. Such pipelines are thought to be very safe and secure but accidents happen, and they can have tremendous impacts on the people in the area, for example, impacting drinking water sources negatively. According to the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHSMA) there have been 4,269 pipeline incidents between 2010 and 2016, and 64 of those involved fatal injuries ("Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration"). These statistics prove that risks are present and that protectors of these pipelines have data which back their worries up. However, the demand for such fuels is rising in our society and this means that more and more pipelines need to be built to satisfy the demand of the community. Such new proposals for the constructions of pipelines are often met with protests by Indigenous people, environmentalist, and other opposing groups.

A specific pipeline that has been met with multiple protests is the Keystone Pipeline System<sup>2</sup>, a very large oil pipeline structure in Canada and the United States, which encompasses multiple pipelines. In December of 2014 a natural gas transportation company called 'Energy Transfer Partners' proposed an additional pipeline adding on to this system, to the federal government. This 1,200-mile-long pipeline would transport oil from North Dakota to Illinois and

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<sup>2</sup> For more information: <https://www.transcanada.com/en/operations/oil-and-liquids/keystone-pipeline-system/>

is known as the 'Dakota Access Pipeline' (DAPL). The pipeline was planned to start in North Dakota, go through South Dakota, Iowa and end in Illinois. The cost of the construction was estimated to be \$3.8 billion and the pipeline is "expected to carry 570,000 barrels of crude oil daily" (McQueen). In 2016 the pipeline was approved and the constructions started in April of the same year.

In response to this approval, the Dakota Access Pipeline protest started (also known as #NoDAPL movement) in North Dakota, at the edge of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Reservation. This construction of the pipeline comes along with historical injustice since the land that the pipeline was built on was "territory taken from the tribe in violation of the Treaties of Fort Laramie of 1851 and 1868" and Indigenous people came together, determined to "to protect its sovereignty, self-determination and indigenous ways of life" (Carasik 3). This protest was met with "heavily armed and militarized intelligence and security forces, including state and local police, the FBI, Homeland Security, US Marshalls, Highway Patrol and the Bureau of Indian Affairs coordinating with private security organizations, such as Black Swan" (McQueen). These police forces are known to have been violent against the unarmed protectors using "water cannons, rubber bullets and chemical agents, injuring many of them" (Carasik, 3) and many other were arrested and charged with felonies. This movement started small with members of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe but the camp and the movement grew very fast and reached many more people, including other Indigenous communities of the United States and other countries, environmentalists and activists: "As many as 10,000 people joined the camps at their highpoint, with many more tracking the protest online" (Johnson and Kraft 3) and now it is known as the largest North American Indigenous protest of the decade. According to Johnson and Kraft, "Standing Rock has already attained paradigmatic status, serving as a stated model for other

protest movements taking place in its wake” (3). The protest at Standing Rock is often referred to and used as a model for protests that are dealing with similar issues, like the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline and also the construction of Highway 26 in Oregon.

For Native communities at the camp, this protest is inherently religious due to the fact that the specific land in question is sacred to them and “the DAPL route would pass through tribal lands of great cultural, religious and spiritual significance to tribes” (Ratcliff 125). Greg Johnson and Siv Ellen Kraft wrote an article titled “Standing Rock Religion(s): Ceremonies, Social Media, and Music Videos.” This text argues that religion was a big part of the protest in North Dakota and these two scholars argue that the “the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Council claimed that it was not adequately consulted during the permitting process, and that consequently, state and federal approval of the project was invalid” (3). Activists at the camps referred to the pipeline as “the Black Snake” and this “Snake” was presenting a threat to the drinking water, damages to sacred lands like burial sites, and other negative effects on the environment. This protest got media attention very fast: “claims about indigenous sovereignty [and self-determination] were foregrounded” and its media attention helped to stall the construction of the pipeline, with small successes on the way (4). But as of June of 2017, the pipeline started to pump oil and continues as of now. Even though this protest was not successful, it was a powerful showcase of the existence and resistance of Indigenous people.

Johnson and Kraft very clearly state that the protest itself, and the resulting music of the protest, are connected to Native American religious beliefs, “ceremonies, social media, and music videos are disparate performative domains, but at Standing Rock they all shared in the mediation of religion(s)” (8). By drawing on imagery and rituals of Native American religions, the Standing Rock protectors made clear that their message is not only taking a stance against an

injustice but also taking that stance with a religious backing. Kraft and Johnson state, “The formal qualities of religion seem crucial to the fostering of these dynamics, particularly in ritual contexts that perform solidarity-making, and in mediatized genres that announce religious sentiments outside of normative religious frames” (6). In other words, the religious sentiment inherently found in dances, collective prayers, chants, rituals, and ceremonies are often present outside cultural expectations. Much like a cross may be found in a home or a prayer said before a test, religious belief reinforces our daily lives, activities, and beliefs. The ideas in such a protest and in the resulting songs demonstrate the transcendences of religious beliefs outside of traditional genres and spaces. This is clear in many of the songs that relate to the protest and this thesis will analyze some of them.

**Song one: ‘Stand up’** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Onyk7guvHK8>

Please take a moment to view and listen to the song ‘Stand up’ by Taboo.

In December 2016, a group of both native and non-native artists, who had been active in the Standing Rock Protest since its beginning, created a rap song called ‘Stand Up’. The two most popular and well-known artists involved with the song, are Taboo, a hip-hop artist who is part of the band ‘The Black Eyed Peas,’ and the actress Shailene Woodley, known for her starring role in ‘*Divergent*.’ The song video was directed by Johnny Lee and features other artists such as: Tony Ducan, Supamen, MC Drezus, Kahara Hodges, Emcee One, Spencer Battiest Emcee One, and many more.

The song is mostly credited to Taboo whose given name is Jamie Luis Gomez. In an interview with Uforia Lounge he states: “*Hola mi gente mi nombre es Jaime luis Gomez naci en el este de los angeles en boyle heights California. Yo soy mexicano y indio-americano; Shoshone*” (Uforia Live). In English this means, “Hello, my people, my name is Jaime Luis

Gomez. I was born in east Los Angeles, California in Boyle Heights. I am Mexican and Native American; Shoshone.” Taboo was born and raised in the United States but considers himself Native American and a member of the Shoshone tribe. In the interview, he explains that he was brought up by his mother and grand-mother, who according to his biography “Fallin’ Up: My story”, was connected very deeply to her Native American roots and was the biggest influence in his life. In the interview he continues, “But I stay *orgulloso de ser mexicano, de ser indio-americano. Me dio el poder, el animo, las ganas*” (Uforia Live), which translates to “But I stay proud of being Mexican, [and] of being Native American. It gave me the power, the courage, and the desire.” This last section of the interview was hard to translate but it implies that he is proud of his Native American heritage which gives him the power to move forward and fight against the struggles that come up because of his identity. In this interview the artist does not directly talk about the song “Stand up” but I personally think that his statements are interesting to consider when analyzing this song. I took his last comment to state that he is very proud of his people’s history, being part of two marginalized people and that he uses it to resist and persist. The Standing Rock protest is a perfect example for that, and the following song, in my eyes, portrays Taboo’s willingness to resist and persist perfectly.

The protest to Taboo is deeply rooted in his Native identity. At a public protest rally for Standing Rock at which Taboo performed the song ‘Stand up’ he states:

It is an honor, as a Shoshone representing the Shoshone Nation, to be standing here in solidarity with all my brothers and sisters whether you are native, indigenous or not, the fact that you are here, it means that we have a lot of people in this moment and the power of the people can be a lot stronger than people in power. I said the power of the people can be a lot stronger than people in power. And the beautiful thing about it is that it all

started with the youth. I want to salute the youth from Standing Rock, the water protestors, everyone here who is standing in solidarity to Standing Rock, I would like everyone to put their fist up like this [straightens his arm out and forms his hand into a fist]. We are about to embark on a journey as one. (Center of Native American Youth)

His Native American heritage is very important to him, just like this protest. The artist is very proud of being part of the Shoshone Nation to him the protest is deeply connected to his Indigenous identity. At this rally he uses the song and his speech to unify the protectors by stating that to him it does not matter who you are but the only thing that matters is to stand in solidarity to the protest and the people on the front lines. The hand motion completed by Taboo is known as the 'raised fist' or 'clenched fist', which has a long history and first was used during the Spanish civil war but in our current society it is mostly attributed to the Black Power movement. This hand signal is a nowadays a universal symbol of solidarity, support, unity and resistance, and now has also been used by Indigenous protectors at Standing Rock and Mauna Kea. After this quote he jumps into performing the song. Stand Up gets the people at the rally going, inspires, and unifies them. They are all fighting the same fight and this shows how powerful songs can be in relation to protest and how the following song can be seen as a form of protest itself.

'Stand up' has a runtime of just over 5 minutes, and as of now, has over 1.5 million views on YouTube. Taboo uploaded the song to YouTube on December 4<sup>th</sup> of 2016 and wrote in his description: "This song and video were created in support of the Standing Rock Reservation and the Sioux Tribe, as they lead a peaceful, powerful, and diverse movement to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL)." With this description he makes it very clear to the reader why this song was created, which in my eyes is very powerful when thinking about who Taboo is. The



Black Eyed Peas are a well-known music group that has established a wide range of followers and fans from all around the world. These fans might not all know of the protest but this video and this description for it definitely helps to spread the word. He then calls out to all the Standing Rock protectors and thanks them for their work and even describes them as ‘real life heroes.’ In my eyes, this description adds a lot of power to the song itself, because it shows the personal investment the Shoshone artist has in his song and in turn demonstrates his investment in Indigenous struggles and this protest.

Lyrics:

The first aspect of this song I want to highlight is the beginning because it summarizes the main message of the protest. The forty second intro is a spoken word segment that is being read by Shailene Woodley. It reads:

They call it a pipeline

But those on the front line know, that black snake was sent for us to grow

To shed the skin, our ancestors pray, of wounds old and calloused, so that we may stay

So that we may unite, unity our tool

No weapons are found in this court of rule

Men become Kia’i, steadfast in their guard

Protecting women's hearts as their songs become roots

Roots to cast out healing for all sentient beings

To honor sacred mother, heart forward we heal

The salmon will run, the Mauna will grieve, the rivers will flow

The rainbow is here and prophecy tells us all generation will hear

In my opinion this start is very powerful and summarizes the main message of the song and the protest. It is a call to action, to stand up and work together against this project that could hurt the sacred earth that we live on. “May unite, unity our tool,” suggests that just like how this song was created, Natives and non-Natives need to work together and ‘stand up’ for the environment and Mother Earth. The word ‘Kia’i’ is Hawaiian for guardian or protector and by using this word it is clear that the followers of this protest view themselves as Indigenous protectors of Mother Earth. With this passage right at the beginning of the song, it establishes the connection to Native American religious traditions by naming the sacredness of Mother Earth, prophecy and the act of praying. She states that this protest includes religion and it will need prayers and faith to overcome this ‘black snake’ that could hurt the sacred land we live on. Like Marini argues, songs that are religious need to also communicate religious content and this is done in this song’s introduction by naming prayer, Mother Earth, sacred Mother and prophecy.

After the spoken word introduction, Taboo sings his first verse, which furthers the songs connection to Indigenous sovereignty. This passage takes the listener back in time, into the history of Indigenous peoples in America. Taboo informs and teaches the listener that the Native people are the ones that have ‘been living here for thousands of years’ and that these people have gone through a lot, including genocide, discrimination, and relocation acts. During this horrendous time, Native American communities had to endure a lot, and their people and the religions were threatened by the colonizers. Taboo tells the history by listing the some of the important people in Native history: “We been fightin’ for our freedoms since the Niña and Pinta and the Santa Maria. Like Geronimo, Sittin’ Bull, Red Cloud, Crazy Horse, Leonard Peltier.” By

listing Niña and Pinta and the Santa Maria, he is referencing the three ships that brought Columbus to the Americas and started the harsh colonization of Indigenous people. This history was shared by all the different tribes in the United States and almost every Indigenous community on the planet has had to fight against oppression and colonialization. This shared history and burden unifies all the different Indigenous communities listening to the song and reminds them that they are all fighting for the same thing: religious sovereignty. By this I mean the for Indigenous people to have power and full right to practice their religious practices. This section, in combination with Shailene Woodley's spoken introduction, makes it very clear that religious sovereignty is a big aspect of the song and the Standing Rock protest as a whole. The singer then goes on to list Native American heroes that stood up to the oppression mentioned in the first section of the quote. Geronimo<sup>3</sup> was a Native American leader and medicine man who resisted the US and Mexican military present on Apache land. Sitting Bull<sup>4</sup>, a Lakota leader who was killed during the Ghost Dance movement on Standing Rock Reservation, has been revered as a symbol of Native American rights and resistance. Crazy Horse<sup>5</sup> and Red Bull<sup>6</sup> were both Sioux leaders who fought against military forces on the Northwest plains. And Leonard Peltier<sup>7</sup>, a Native American activist and member of the American Indian Movement, who got arrested and still remains incarcerated for the alleged 'murder' of two FBI agents. In my eyes, this has a powerful message for the people that know about this history, and encourages those that don't to look into it. The song highlights the continuing injustices brought upon the American Indigenous

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<sup>3</sup> For more information see: Debo, Angie. *Geronimo: The Man, His Time, His Place*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1976.

<sup>4</sup> For more information see: Vestal, Stanley. *Sitting Bull: Champion of the Sioux: a Biography*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1932.

<sup>5</sup> For more information: McMurtry, Larry. *Crazy Horse*. Penguin Group, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> For more information: Paul, Eli. *Autobiography of Red Cloud: War Leader of the Oglalas*. Montana Historical Society Press, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> For more information see: Messerschmidt, James. *The Trail of Leonard Peltier*. South End Press, 1983.

people. The call back to these cultural icons incites emotion and remembrance in the listener.

Ultimately, by comparing past struggles with the present one, the artists gains following for the protest.

This call for Indigenous sovereignty connects back to one of the functions of music listed by Merriam, the function of emotional expression. This section of past history can bring up emotions and memories in the listener and the producer, especially in Native American communities. By hearing these names sung, stories passed down through generations resurface and create emotion in both the listener and producer. This emotional expression aspect of songs is also one of the characteristics of religious music listed by Marini. This song expresses past religious struggles within the community and connects it to the current Standing Rock protest. In a similar manner to Woodley's spoken introduction, this section includes religious content indirectly as settlers, like Columbus, actively worked to destroy Native American communities, culture and religion. Colonizers banned many religious ceremonies and the listed Native American heroes fought against that, evoking a connection to previous religious persecutions and injustices.

In addition to emotional expression the lyrics of the song go on to explain one of the reasons why people are fighting against the construction of this pipeline. They sing 'Now they poisonin' the waters for our sons and our daughters'. The most commonly heard reason why people are against the pipeline is the danger that the pipeline in question could make the water unclean. There is a high potential of oil leaking and this not only hurts the environment and Mother Earth but also the people that have to drink that unclean water. This section goes hand in hand with Merriam's function of music to express cultural values of a community. The

communities supporting the Standing Rock protest have similar values, one of which is clean drinking water, and this cultural value is expressed in this song.

The last lines of the verse are an attempt to show the people that are part of the protest to unify and stand together against this pipeline. It says:

We on the frontier (we one) one nation, one cause, one people, one tribe

Now it's us against the pipeline

Get on your feet for Standing Rock and we'll show you how strong we can be when we  
unify

A specific word choice I found very in was 'frontier'. By this a word the artist manages to show that Native Americans do not consider themselves as American citizens but rather as citizens of their own Nations and tribes. This verse directly speaks to the people listening to the song and calls them to help and stand up with the Standing Rock protectors. In my eyes, this is not only directed to Indigenous people but to anyone that wants to stand up and fight for the land and stand up against the pipeline. This section of the song relates back to some of Merriam's functions of music listed in the first section of the paper as they deal with enforcing conformity and social order. Merriam states that music can control "erring members of the society, and stress upon what is right, it contributes to the stability of the culture" (225). I would suggest that in this section the artist shows the listener what to do, how to achieve it and how this is very important to the survival of the culture and communities involved.

In terms of this survival, even though there are sections that are directed to both Native and non-Native people there are also sections of the song that are directed solely to the listeners

and protectors who identify as Native. The following lines serve to draw a boundary between insiders and outsider, which in my eyes is used to show that even though this is a fight for our Earth, which impacts all of us, the focus is still the sacredness of Mother Earth to Native people. In the chorus that PJ Vegas sings he reaches out and gives strength to the Native people listening to the song. He sings:

To all my native people

Recognize yourself, keep your head up

To all my tribal people

Recognize yourself, keep your head up

To all my native people, to all the original people, to all my Indigenous people

Recognize yourself, keep your head up

To me this is one of the most powerful lines in the song because it shows solidarity and appreciation to the other Indigenous people in the protest and is created to lift them up and give them strength, even when times get hard. Something I heard a while back that keeps coming up when listening to this song is a quote from a former classmate of mine which went along the lines of: “It seems like for Indigenous people victory is always temporary but defeat is always permanent.” This is a very sad and depressing statement but it reminded me of the Standing Rock Protest. Yes, there have been small victories but, in the end, the pipeline was built and the will of Indigenous people was ignored. To me, this passage tries to give Indigenous people faith and tells them to ‘keep their heads up’ even when it might sometimes seem like that is not possible. In this section of the song the symbolic aspect that Merriam discusses is very

prominent. In the book *The Anthropology of Music* he argues that music is not just created for the sake of music but that it has a symbolic meaning to it as well. This song's representation of unity and strength within the Indigenous community has the symbolic power to unify and encourage the protectors to keep fighting even though the fight might sometimes seem impossible to win. These symbols are used for social process and portray important social values, just like Merriam states. Unity and the protest themselves are portrayed as social values. Protecting Mother Earth and fighting for what is right is a very important social value in Native communities. This part also goes hand in hand with another characteristic of music in religion listed by Marini, which is the aspect of music as a collective activity rather than an individual one. The song itself has been created by multiple artists and the music video that come along with it includes multiple Indigenous people, which shows that creating this song was a community effort. This statement for unity and solidarity within the Indigenous culture is a call for community.

This call for unity is also a 'rallying point' reinforced in the chorus of the song. The chorus is pretty simple since it repeats the phrase 'stand up' several times:

Stand up

Stand up, stand up, stand up

Stand up, stand up, stand up

Stand up, stand up, stand up

For Standing Rock, for Standing Rock

"Stand up" is a recurring theme in the song. Through repetition the artists encourage the listeners to literally stand up and take action. This section tells people that they need to fight for Standing

Rock in order to stand up for their indigeneity, their sovereignty, their ancestors, their history, the water, Mother Earth, and the younger generation. It instructs the listeners to be part of this protest and this fight. This section functions as a “rallying point”, just like Merriam suggests in one of his functions of music. In his eyes, music brings people together and has an inherent ability to rally people and unite them for a social cause like the Standing Rock protest.

The choice of language adds to the call for unity, for example my favorite passage of the song is when Supaman, an Apsáalooke rapper dancer and singer, raps in his Native language, Apsaalooke. In many different protests including Indigenous communities and their religious claims, a counter argument by the opposing group is that Indigenous people no longer exist and are people of the past. But the inclusion of a Native language in the songs proves and symbolizes that Indigenous people and their cultures are alive. They are not people from the past, like some history books and museums might suggest. The inclusion of Native language adds another layer onto the protest because it makes it undeniable that the population is still Indigenous and that these communities are entitled to their treaty rights.

More than just language, Native American religion is still undeniably present as evidenced by the continued existence of rituals and practices. In an interview, Supaman said that the uplifting beat of the song created some issues for his rapping but that he really wanted to express his enthusiasm of what the movement stands for (Jackson). He also explains that he is fascinated by how different tribes, who are not known to work well together, decided to stand in unity for this movement. He states, “My tribe is Crow, and our traditional enemies are the Lakhotas, and they shared a [peace] pipe together at [Standing Rock], They haven't done that in a long time” (Jackson). This is an important aspect of protest, different people coming and fighting for a common goal, which in this case is fighting against the pipeline together. Smoking peace



pipes is a long standing religious and cultural practice of Indigenous communities and the fact that this was done at Standing Rock connects the protest to its religious roots.

Ultimately, this section emphasizes one of the characteristics named by Marini. The aspect of sacred performance and the ritualistic aspect of religious music. The use of traditional language, traditional regalia, and traditional dance in this section of the song makes it religious for the Crow community. This sacred performance aspect of Taboo can also create religious and spiritual emotion in the listener and the viewer. By hearing the language and the dancing, which they connect with other religious ceremonies of their community, the listener can experience an emotional connection to the song.

Video:

The last aspect I want to dive into for this song is the music video which continues the call for community and unity. In my opinion, the song is meant to be seen with the video, because it makes the song more emotional and personal to the listener. There are two aspects to the video: one being the portrayal of the camp itself, and the second being the portrayal of the artist creating the song. Most contemporary Indigenous protest songs, and all of the ones analyzed in my thesis, are tied intimately to physical locations, which is very obviously different from mainstream music that is created nowadays. As explained above, places and nature play a big role in the religious communal life of Native Americans and the video focuses on this aspect of Native American religion.

To me, the portrayal of the camp is a key feature of the video because one of the main points of the song is to create awareness of the protest, and by depicting the camp, this message is communicated perfectly. For people who have visited the protest site, the video will awake

memories and emotions of their visit and for the listeners that have not been to the camp, the video gives them a sense of what the camp looks like. The video includes sections which portray Native people singing, dancing, praying, wearing their traditional regalia. This goes back to Merriam's first function of music, the emotional expression function, and also into a characteristic of music in religion according to Marini. Both the lyrics and the music video are meant to create emotion in the listeners and it is a vehicle to share the emotion between all the different protectors. The footage of protectors singing, dancing, praying and wearing traditional regalia can create religious feelings in the listener.

Religion remains important in the second aspect of the video, which depicts artists involved in the creation process. Taboo for example, is shown wearing some of his traditional Native American jewelry. Supaman is shown in his traditional regalia and he also dances in a traditional way during his solo. This is the part in which the religious aspect of the song comes through the most. By showing the artists in their traditional regalia, which are used in religious ceremonies, this protest is shown to be in one way or another religious. By wearing the traditional dress, they managed to make the song and specifically the video seem like a religious ceremony in and of itself.

Another one of Merriam's functions that the video fulfills is the symbolic and communicative function of music. Merriam argues that music is no universal language, but by creating a video to go along with the song, the artists created a symbolic representation of the protest that can be understood and perceived even if there is a language barrier that might make it impossible to understand the language. These communicated symbols help us to deepen our understanding of the protest itself and expand our knowledge. This can create a feeling belonging to the movement even while being hundreds of miles away.

On August 28<sup>th</sup> 2017, the song ‘Stand Up’ won an MTV award for the ‘Best Fight Against the System.’ In an interview Taboo says:

It’s more than just an award. It’s an acknowledgement of Native artists having a seat at the round table to change the narrative and break down the walls of what hip-hop is all about. It has nothing to do with my group or with me as an artist, it has to do with a movement that is about our people and celebrating indigenous culture (Schilling).

Right from the beginning, the song was about creating awareness and spreading the movement on a global scale and this was definitely achieved. Such an attitude is what makes music a form of resistance. It is not about the artists, the amount of hits and the amount of sales but about what the song was created for, about the people the song was created for and how this song manages to help those people in their fight.

In conclusion, this song is a good example of how music can be used by Indigenous communities as a way to protest and resist against the opposing party. ‘Stand Up’ accomplishes this by unifying the listeners, by creating emotion in the viewers, by including traditional language, dress, dances and chants. It has a standing call for action that aims to unify the listeners in their fight for their religious rights and for Mother Earth. With this song, Taboo and the other Native artist decided to use the medium of music to show solidarity to the movement and the protectors at the camp.

**Song two: ‘Black Snakes’** - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nh\\_HCqp3sd0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nh_HCqp3sd0)

Please take a moment to view and listen to the song ‘Black Snakes’ by A Tribe Called Red and Prolific The Rapper.

This second song from Standing Rock I want to analyze is a song called 'Black Snakes'. This song was released in September of 2016, but the music for the song comes from a separate song called 'Stadium Pow WoW,' which was released in June of 2016 by a band named 'A Tribe Called Red.' Prolific the Rapper then added lyrics and re-published it as a song for the Standing Rock movement. There are different versions of this song. The music and the lyrics are the same in all of them but each song has a different introduction. For this paper, I will look into the version that is labeled 'A Tribe Called Red X Prolific The Rapper - Black Snakes (Remix)' on YouTube, because it is my favorite version of the song and the beginning of this version is very powerful.

This song manages to highlight deep cultural values of the group. 'A Tribe called Red' is a Canadian music group and it consist of Tim "2oolman" Hill, a Mohawk Native, and Ehren "Bear Witness" Thomas, a Cayuga Native. This electric music group is known for their combination of hip hop, dub-step, reggae and Indigenous music like vocals and drums. The name for the band was inspired by another hip-hop group called 'A Tribe Called Quest,' which also deals with social issues. On their personal website, they define their music as Electric Pow WoW music, which is a variation of Marini's definition of Powwow. Marini argues that powwow is part of one of the two sacred song types of Native Americans. He defines it as "a public ritual gathering of one or more clans or tribes dedicated to skill competition, feasting and dancing" (Marini 18) and A Tribe Called Red altered this sacred tradition to fit the current and urban Native American society. In an interview with 'Rebel Music: Native America' the group states that Indigenous culture constantly grows and they are trying to show the wider public that Natives are not representatives of preconceived stereotypes. Another aspect that the group touches on in the interview is the fact that some Native People are worried about the fact that

their sacred music is played in a club where alcohol is served, and that this form of sharing is disrespectful. Sacred music is supposed to be played in a sacred atmosphere but clubs are not considered to be sacred to most people. Their response was “that is where we gather now as [...] young indigenous people in an urban setting” (Rebel Music). On their personal website the band states that Indigenous communities who have been forcefully colonized are used to being “underrepresented and misrepresented if not blatantly and systematically devalued and attacked” (“Press Kit”) and that music is a way to fight against that. The artists argue that their music has “a cultural and social impact in Canada” and that their songs promote “inclusivity, empathy and acceptance amongst all races and genders in the name of social justice” (Rebel Music). Music in their eyes is a way for Indigenous people to take control over their representation and define their identity on their own terms.

Another artist involved in the song whose cultural values are highlighted in the song and who utilizes music as a form of resistance is Prolific the Rapper, an Indigenous Hip Hop and film artist. For creating the music video for ‘Black Snakes’ he was arrested and almost served a 7-year long prison sentence, but was able to get his charges dropped in court. On his personal website he said:

With Trump in office and humanity at a crossroads, we need to choose between coming together or self-destruction. They label me an activist but really, I'm just a human being who gives a fuck as all people should in these times. I'm Indigenous.... Mexican, Lakota, European and am a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. I'm a human being with an important purpose, and so are you. Music is one of my purposes but it extends beyond that. (“Bio”)

This short personal description about himself shows clearly that he cares about the Standing Rock movement and says that it is in his human nature to fight for Mother Earth. He describes that his personal power lies in utilizing music for resistance and using that to reach his goal and save the sacred Mother.

Prolific the Rapper posted the song on YouTube in 2016 with a personal note, which connects the song back to the protest and its goal: “I tried my best to portray what I felt at the camp, I felt LOVE.” He goes on to show how important unity across cultures is for him, “I felt what this world needs at this time, Unity beyond race, concern for one another, and togetherness.” It is very obvious that to him, the Standing Rock pipeline affects all people on this earth and that we need to unify for this fight. To him, the camp and the united people portrayed love and affection. He goes on to state that there are also negative emotions spread at the camp by saying “Then when the police came, I felt the opposite, I felt lies, setups, and oppression.” This statement is what makes this song a form of protest for me because it directly states the political oppression that Indigenous people are facing at the camp. Lastly, he calls out to all the people involved in this protest and shows them gratitude and appreciation, “Much love to everyone on the front lines!” Ultimately it is clear that Prolific’s music is used as a form of resistance and protest to help and further the Standing Rock movement.

Lyrics:

The written caption at the beginning of the song, serves to unify the listeners and the protectors at the camp:

Turtle Island is waking up.

Oceti Sakowin,

Indigenous Nations,

People of all colors

have united in prayer

with Standing Rock.

It began with the youth.

It shows very well that the Standing Rock protest is not purely an Indigenous fight but that ‘People of all colors’ are part of this social movement. Just like he highlights in his description of the song shown above, unity of all people is important no matter Native or non-Native. The lyric “have united in prayer” connects back to Marini’s argument of how music is used in religious communities. By naming the religious act of praying, the artist communicates religious content, which in Marini’s eyes makes the song religious. When the text disappears, it goes into a short interview with an Indigenous elder who says, “Find your warrior spirit and get here,” which sends another strong message to listeners, to take action and go to the camp in person and be physically part of the protest.

The first verse is something that did not come up in the song ‘Stand Up’, which is the financial aspect of the Pipeline and how this aspect seems to be seen as more important than sacred land. The lyrics go:

How much money do these companies need to make?

They could drive their product

But they want to save a buck

Already extracted billions

When is enough, enough?

With these lyrics, Prolific the Rapper questions if the driving force of the pipeline is the financial profit and if there will ever be a point that the well-being of the planet will out-weigh the financial gain of a company. This section relates the Standing Rock protest back to other Indigenous fights and protests which are almost always connected to sacred land and the Westerners' use of that land for profit. Most of these protests in the past have started because of Westerners needing sacred Native land to extract Earth's valuable minerals, and by doing so, destroy hallowed areas of Indigenous communities. This indirectly shows that this section is connected to the religious aspect of the protest. One of their most sacred elements of their religion, the land, is being disrespected and killed and he is questioning when their religions will finally be respected, honored and given more authority and importance than fossil fuels.

Then he dives into a personal aspect of the oil business which functions to highlight the conflict between religion, Earth's resources and capitalism. It says:

I used to be in the oil fields, getting paid

But I quit, 'cause oil-water I can't drink

Looked down and seen Kimimila die in the mud

I looked up and told myself that enough's enough

Money does not own my soul, living comfortable

Is not in my plans, my hands in the sand

He shows very well that to him the money does not play a role anymore, since he realized that the oil that is being transported through the pipeline is poisoning the people, i.e., poisoning the



drinking water. With this passage, he is trying to reach the people that believe that the pipeline has positive economic aspects. To him the well-being of the Earth and clean drinking water is worth more than a boost in the economic sector, which is exemplified in the last lines of his first verse:

Some things worth more than gold

Some things they can't be sold

Some things can't be replaced

She is your mother, the fresh water is her veins

All throughout his song, Prolific the Rapper highlights the fact that humans need clean water to survive and that it seems crazy that we would allow our drinking water to be poisoned by oil via the pipeline. This section goes back to Merriam's symbolic functions of music. The lyrics symbolically express the values of the society, which here again, are the importance of Mother Earth and clean drinking water. In this song Prolific the Rapper, just like Taboo, refers to Earth as the sacred Mother, which brings up the sacred values Indigenous people put into the Earth and how valuable it is to them. This connection provides an explanation to how religion and Native American religious beliefs are main agents in the protest and in this specific song. Mother Earth in songs like these represents symbolic content and the religious belief that are portrayed with the help of the medium of song. Marini would argue that this inclusion of religious content and belief makes the song religious and sacred and it is clear from the analysis thus far that this is true.

In my eyes, the second verse is the most powerful because it hints toward the history and background of Indigenous people, thus continuing the theme of religion. Similar to the song

‘Stand up’ it touches on the history of colonialism that Natives had to and still overcome by saying: “Love is the strongest. This path is the hardest.” Ever since Indigenous communities have been colonized, they have had to face battle after battle to survive and overcome the challenges that were thrown in their way by settlers. This section hints at this past history and all the fights connected to their religious sovereignty and suggests that the Standing Rock protest is another burden they have to fight against and overcome. Marini and Merriam, both would suggest that this past history and its connection to the present struggle functions to invoke and communicate emotion in the listener and the producer.

Next, he jumps into how important the movement is in terms of expressing Indigenous wisdom and to save sacred aspects of Native American culture and religion:

This movement's very needed

Indigenous wisdom unheeded

And sacred things depleted

In this section Prolific the Rapper directly connects this song with the Standing Rock protest by naming movements like these are very important but are also perfect examples of how Indigenous knowledge, often related to religion, is not taken under consideration. Their sacred grounds are being used and destroyed, and this protest tries to fight back. This section reminded me of a few characteristics of religious music listed by Marini. Marini argues that religious music needs to deal with a simple and easily understood aspect of the religion in order for everyone in the community to understand. This song, specifically this section of the lyrics, fulfills this characteristic. The artists do not explore, in depth, how and what knowledge and aspects of the culture are not heard and disregarded. However, it is common knowledge that

Indigenous groups' traditional knowledge is not taken into account when embarking on projects such as the pipeline. The listener of this song does not need to know or understand the specific reasons and details of the movement to understand what the movement is about and what it fights for: sacred land.

Highlighting the importance of this fight, he shows that it is not only an Indigenous struggle but a fight that impacts all humans, since we all live on this one earth and we all depend on clean water. This next section serves to unify the listeners in their protest and it also manages to connect the listener with Prolific the Rapper himself to exemplify that he, just like any other protectors at the camp, is present and involved in this cause.

I'm Mexicano, ma Lakota, and I'm white, too

I'm mixed with everyone

So, part of me is just like you

Every group of human beings shares the same stars

And if the Earth is not your mother

Are you from Mars?

By stating that he is not only Indigenous, but also Mexican and White too, he tries to show that he is just like anyone other protector who is listening to his song. In my eyes, this section also serves to unify the protectors of the Standing Rock and show even though this protest is about sacred Native American land, it impacts all human beings not matter what group they might belong to. This lyrical section reinforces functions of music that are listed by Merriam, which include enforcing social order, values and unity. It is obvious that, to Prolific the Rapper, the

most important social value of the protesting community is the perseverance of Mother Earth and clean drinking water. This song is used to express and promote this social order and these cultural values. Like Merriam suggests, this song is used for the “transmission of education, control of erring members of the society, and stress upon what is right, it contributes to the stability of the culture” (225). But this function goes along with the function of music as a “rallying point.” These lines particularly manage to rally together all the different people of the protest and unify them in their movement against the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Rallying people together in the protest involves peacefulness. At the end of the song he draws upon the fact that this is a peaceful movement and that what is sometimes portrayed in the media is not always true. Of what I have seen, the media often just shows the stand offs of the police and the Indigenous people and such media coverage portrays a rather violent camp and movement. Prolific the Rapper closes his song with the statement that the water protectors are peaceful and kind and religious people:

We're peaceful people

Who walk with prayer

Turtle Island, have no fear

Despite what they show in the media

We're kind people, hold your ground.

This is one of my personal favorite sections of the song, because in just one short stanza, the artist manages to include so many different characteristics of music and music in religion. The first part of this song functions to express emotion. The people at the camps and at the front lines

of the protest have endured vicious physical police attacks. Such lines most definitely express and evoke emotions in the listener and some of those emotions are religious in one way or another. For Native people listening to the song and hearing the artist talk about prayers can bring up memories of religious rituals and prayers at the camp, which goes along with Marini's characteristic of music in religion.

I also want to touch on the instrumental music created by A Tribe Called Red; It consists of traditional instrumental music which is an important part of the religious ceremonies in Native American communities. Revisiting what was explained above, the instrumental part comes from a song named 'Stadium Pow Wow.' This song combines many aspects of Native American culture and ceremonies, e.g., clapping, chanting and drumming. In the personal description that comes along with their YouTube video they say, "The energetic anthem continues to showcase Tribe's unique style of music to the world" (A Tribe called Red). In other words, the group was inherently trying to incorporate many aspects of the Native American music style, which is suggested by the title of the song as well.

There are also some vocal noises imbedded in the musical part. This connects the listener to the vocals that are commonly done in religious ceremonies and rituals, incorporating a Native American religious aspect. Hearing such music that is associated with religious ceremony, will call upon religious feelings and emotions, which is a very important function of music listed by Merriam and is evident in this protest song.

Video:

Not only do the lyrics convey protest and religion; the video is also a very powerful call to action. In my opinion, the music video to this song is more powerful than the music video of

‘Stand up’. First of all, the emphasis is put on the camp rather than the artist that created the song, which in my opinion, when dealing with such a project is a powerful move. It draws attention to the important aspect of the song which is the protest and not the artists. It is created for promoting awareness about the protest and resist the opposing structure. The video consists of footage of the camp and the protest both in bird’s-eye view and down on the ground, which, just like ‘Stand Up,’ serves to show the viewer what the protest is about and how it looks. It also creates and expresses a connection between the camp and the listener, which again fulfills the function of music listed by both Marini and Merriam, in terms of communication and emotional expression. It communicates information about the camp and can also create emotion in the viewer.

Emotion also becomes important as this music video does not sugarcoat what is happening at the camp. The video from ‘Stand Up’ only shows the camp in a peaceful manner and in a positive light, but the video for ‘Black Snakes’ in contrast shows the bare images of the camp and the protest. Rather than just showing people coming together to sing, this video begins by showing an Indigenous elder willingly being chained to the construction machines to stall the construction. By showing such actions of resistance, it gives the song and the video another layer of being a form of protest and resistance itself. Additionally, the juxtaposition between the construction sites and the images from beautiful snapshots of the Black Hills (the treaty land impacted by the pipeline) shows how big the contrast is between the two. This image comparison shows the viewer directly how the pipeline negatively impacts Mother Earth. Further on, it dives into showing many standoffs with the police force present at the camp. It shows police officers spraying the protectors with cold water, tear gas and mace. Images of injured protectors are very emotionally powerful.

Also powerful is something that was previously mentioned for ‘Stand up,’ which is the portrayal of religious ceremonies by Indigenous people at the camp. It shows individuals in their traditional regalia performing religious prayers, dances ceremonies and rituals. This touches on two of the characteristics of music in religion listed by Marini: emotion and religious content. Seeing individuals at the camp dance and dress in Indigenous regalia can prompt other Indigenous viewers to experience religious feelings and emotions. This also communicates religious content, which serves to make this song religious in its protest.

All in all, this song fulfills many different aspects of Merriam’s functions of music and also Marini’s characteristics of music in religion: religious emotional expression, communication and presence of religious content, sacred performance and ceremony. It also fulfills many different points of protest like unity, peaceful protection and social values. Just like ‘Stand Up,’ this song also serves as a perfect example of a contemporary song created as protest and resistance of present Indigenous people fighting for their sacred land and religious sovereignty.

**Song three: “Love Letters to God”** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-QGkYNc0Ls>

Please take a moment to view and listen to the song ‘Love Letters to God’ by Nahko and Medicine for the People.

The last song I want to touch on is a song called “Love Letters to God” by Nahko and Medicine for the People, a band that consists of six members with Nahko Bear being the lead singer. Nahko Bear was born in Oregon but he identifies with a multitude of ethnic backgrounds. Technically, his origins are a mix of Apache, Puerto Rican and Filipino cultures, but Nahko himself considers himself “a citizen in service to the planet” (“About”). He has been moving around all his life, he was adopted by a White American family and was raised conservative Christian, but he always had lingering questions about his identity. In order to find answers,

Nahko started traveling all around the world, like Alaska and Hawaii. In an interview with Sugarshack Sitdown, hosted by James W. Yingling, Nahko shared his appreciation for Jack Kerouac, an American novelist and poet, and his mentality of being on the road (Sugarshack). The artist describes his music as “a mix of hip-hop and folk rock with a world message” and highlights that his music is more than just words but has meanings to it (“About”).

Members of Medicine for the People include: Chase Makai, lead guitarist who joined the band 2011, Justin Chittams, drummer of the band, Patricio Zuniga Labarca aka PATO, Indigenous Mapuche bass guitarist, Max Ribner, trumpet player for the band, and Tim Snider, the band's violinist (“About”). On their official website the band describes themselves as activists that “aim to inspire others to take a deeper role in protecting and preserving our planet, people, and the spirit in all of creation” (“Cause”), which I would argue can also be seen as a perfect description of the Standing Rock protest itself.

“Love Letters to God” was not specifically composed for Standing Rock, as it was written before the protest started in 2015. When the protest at Standing Rock started however, Nahko realized that the message in this song specifically relates to the cause and the meaning of the movement. Nahko and Medicine for the People created a new music video for their song in support of the protest which was mostly filmed at the camps. In January of 2017, a video tribute to Standing Rock was published on YouTube at the time of “the midst of harsh winter conditions at the camps and in the ominous context of Trump’s inauguration” (Johnson and Kraft 20).

Before diving into the song and the video itself I would like to point out some thoughts about protest and community that were shared by the band on their official website. They start out by saying, “Standing Rock is a dream. The epicenter for our morality and dignity. A place



where dark and light communicate, communicate and they work it out” (“News”). This description of the song shows how the artists feel about the Standing Rock protest and the pipeline and how the song is meant to be a part of the protest. They point out that there are two different side to the protest, the group for the pipeline and the group against the pipeline, and how these two sides are trying to find a solution to the problem. It continues:

Standing Rock is a vision. The wildest manifestation of our ancestors. The heart of humanity and the blood of the Earth. Water. An elder said a true warrior always guards the heart of the women and for so long now we’ve forgotten about our mother. Earth is us, we are it. The ones that can heal a relationship that is wounded. The ones that pray over and over. Protect (“News”).

They go on to describe Standing Rock as something that is connected to as well as incorporates ancestors and past history. They highlight the importance of the Earth to Native American religious communities and describe it as Mother Earth and the water being her blood. They point out the fact that this protest is about clean water and that people of all ages are involved.

Ancestors play a big role in Native American communities, since they are seen as sacred as well as the ones that the young learn from. The band calls the protectors warriors that are guarding Mother Earth, similarly to the way Taboo refers to the protectors as Kia’i. This comment also draws a connection between people and the land to show that humans depend on Earth. This is a call for unity of all people to fight for human life and pure drinking water.

Notable here is their call for people to pray and protect but not to protest. The singers use prayer and protection rather than protest to exemplify their wish for a nonviolent and peaceful resolution to the conflict. While protests are not inherently violent, high tension situations have

potential to be volatile if a level head is not kept. Call for prayer also highlights the importance of religion at the protest and in the song itself.

Our oral history is vital for our survival and when we blend it with visual art it creates a bond, a prayer. This video is a sacred offering to those that are hurting. Because we must remember that love is the root of all good. Because by giving we open up to receiving. Healing.

We offer this timepiece on a day that ushers in a new era for all protectors and people alike. An era that will need music to act as the thread between front lines and front doors. Stay in the prayer.

We stand with you.

For all our relations (“News”).

The end of this statement touches on and highlights the importance of the video of the song. It explains that the video and the song are a kind of storytelling stemming from oral tradition, which in Native communities is very important and vital for their survival. They go as far as defining their song as prayer, which is very powerful and shows how religion is a big part of the protest and this song itself. In their eyes, music plays a big role in the protest and creates a common thread between the people that are active and passive protectors.

Lyrics:

An important aspect of this song is that it advocates for peacefulness. The first powerful aspect of the song I want to highlight is the way it starts. It begins with a powerful quote by John Trudell (1946-2015), a Native American artist, poet, author, activist and advocate of Native American rights: “No matter what they ever do to us, we must always act for the love of our people and the Earth. We must not react out of hatred against those who have no sense.” By

starting the video with this quote, the artist immediately shows that the song is about the fight for Mother Earth and the people on it. Also, it touches on the aspect that the protest is meant to be peaceful rather than violent. I think choosing a quote by John Trudell was a good move, because in the Native American community he is well known for being the spokesman at Alcatraz and for being involved in Native American activism and protest. This sets up the song to be a form of resistance and gives it credit and a strong reference point.

The lyrics of 'Love Letter to God' have many different things that need to be unpacked, one of them being to unite. The song's lyrics start out with a call for putting everything you are able to give into the protection of Mother Earth:

Give

Always give what you can

Even if your allies draw lines in the sand

And dig, always dig a little deeper

Sometimes it's hard to be my brother's keeper

Nahko says that even though sometimes the fight might seem impossible to win, which the Standing Rock protest did at times, protectors of Mother Earth are not allowed to back down but need to persist and continue to resist. In my eyes, these first few lines of the song serve to unite the protectors in their fight. The last line, the reference to 'my brother's keeper', the Bible story of Cain and Abel, is very powerful and fascinating. I read it as Nahko explaining that being the protectors of the earth might not always be simple but that the earth deserves protection because it is part of our family and our genealogy. Nahko was raised in a conservative Christian household and connected the story of Cain and Abel to protecting the land. Like family, the Earth is something that humans need to look out for and protect. Nahko references the story of

Cain and Abel to highlight the sacred mission to protect Earth. This reference also fulfills one of the characteristics of music in religion by Marini which is to include religious content.

This unity comes along with a call for religious collectiveness, which is evident in the following lyrics:

And it's crazy

How we wear our ceremony

Always be open to your path and your journey

Connected to the idea I talked about above, how religion is imbedded in the song 'Love Letters to God', this section also brings this point in by stating 'wear ceremony.' I find this very powerful because it connects well with the video, which often highlights the ceremony that is happening in the camps. While people are marching down the streets, they are wearing ceremony because they chant and pray together. Many different prayers were performed in the camp and all these different ceremonies and rituals were a big part of the protest. These lines in connection with the video suggest that religion is inherently imbedded in the people and the protest, and suggest that the whole protest is a large ceremony itself. This fulfills two of Marini's characteristics: the sacred performance and ritual aspect and it being a collective rather than an individual activity. By using the word, we, Nahko manages to simply state that the protest is a collective movement.

The next lyric connects very well to the protest and how it is seen as an issue that impacts all humans. It goes: "Universal test, feel the weight of my love put your hand on my chest." It is about protecting Mother Earth and the water. All living beings depend on water and this is the unifying point of the protest. It has turned into an international movement that does not only include Indigenous but all kinds of people fighting for clean water and Mother Earth. In the song,

Nahko calls Standing Rock a ‘universal test’, and the result of this protest is a pivotal moment in human history. Clean water is a necessity. Unclean water does not only impact Indigenous people but all living beings on earth. Calling this a universal test marks the crossroads that we as people of this earth have to take: water or fuel?

The following line is very powerful and the artist is connecting the experience of Standing Rock back to Native American history and the past issues that Indigenous people had to face, just like the two previous songs: “The battle that we face is a place where our scars come from.” Forced removal from their lands, forced assimilation, genocide of their people are all points of scars on Native Americans. He is saying that this battle for their land and water is not something new. They are experiencing what their ancestors have experienced and they need to continue to fight in order for their way of life to persist. This section definitely can create emotion in the listener like Merriam and Marini suggest. Their ancestors have endured a lot and this remembrance can bring up all kind of emotion in the Indigenous people.

The next lines add to the ones listed above by teaching the listener that the past lies in the past and we now have to focus on the present and fight.

My love we are destined to teach these ones to be brave

And never run away

Courage is birthed from the womb on the first light of day

Yeah, the day you were born you came out perfect never meant to be torn

These lines need to be analyzed with the video because they go hand in hand. At this point in the video shows Indigenous children being part of the protest and fighting for their future. The lyrics suggest that this protest can be used to teach the young in the society what it means to fight for their land peacefully, and with bravery and courage. The song continues: “We are animals. And

we cannot be caged.” Indigenous people have persisted and survived so many different obstacles; they have proven that they resist and persist, and fight for their rights and beliefs. Standing Rock in my eyes, is a very good example of that because it shows how much Indigenous people care for the environment and Mother Earth and that even with all the political backfire and police violence, they prove that they are a present people and fight for their beliefs and ‘cannot be caged’.

This last section of the first verse touches on the collective enemy that the protest fights against and express social values of the community.

Are you here to protect or arrest me?

I can't tolerate the hate, and I'm losing sleep

Can't breathe because they're choking out a war in me

The direct question “Are you here to protect or arrest me?” is very powerful because listening to the song and looking at the video, at this specific moment, they show police brutality against the protectors. It is very obvious to whom this question is directed: police force and/or the government itself. It points out the irony of how the duty of the police is to make sure the local people are safe but at Standing Rock it seems that the opposite is happening. Peaceful protectors are being sprayed at with cold water, tear gas and are being arrested. These lyrics touch on a function of music by Merriam which is teaching and spreading social values. In this case they are more putting some social values into question: What is the purpose of police? To protect the people or protect corporate interest?

The chorus of the song is open to multiple different interpretations but expresses religious emotion and includes sacred rituals.

Love letters to God

I wonder if she reads them or if they get lost  
 In the stars, the stars, in the stars  
 So many parts to a heavy heart  
 If there's no beginning, then where would you start?  
 Start, start, where would you start?

The first thing I would like to highlight is the use of a female pronoun for God, which is something that is not widely used in the Western world. Nahko does not only refer to God in a female way in this song but also does this on stage. Since he refers to himself as a “citizen in service to the planet” I would suggest that by the female God he is referring to Mother Earth. The way I interpret this chorus is that by “heavy heart” he points at all the difficult issues that Indigenous people and Mother Earth are facing, and these troubles cause people to search for a connection to God. Connecting to God sometimes might turn out to be harder than intended and sometimes might feel like prayers go unheard. I find this section very powerful because for the protectors at Standing Rock it might have felt like their prayers to God are not being heard because the pipeline was still constructed and their requests, their people, their culture and their religious beliefs were ignored again. By letters, Nahko could mean prayers that are directed to God and this interpretation qualifies as some of the characteristics mentioned by Marini. Religious context is mentioned and named, and it portrays a simple aspect of religion: praying, is compared to a sacred ritual, and this can also invoke religious emotion. Listeners could take this section to encourage them to pray because it will take a lot of prayers in order to be heard.

The second verse also encourages listeners by starting out with a call for a peaceful protest, for unity and prayer:

Don't believe all you're told

And open, open up your fist

A misconception, you can fight like this

In praise, with the power of prayer

If God's on our side we can take the stairs to the heavens

Nahko here is trying to argue that a fight with violence is less useful than a fight with prayer. He calls for the protectors to fight back with the power of God and prayer rather than with physical action, which is shown very well in the music video of the song. In his eyes, if you stay true to who you are and to God, then your requests will be heard. This section again fulfills many aspects of Marini's characteristics but there is one I would like to highlight: the aspect of transcendence. The song does not actually help the listener and the performer transcend but it touches on how this could be achieved by the listener: by staying true to their peaceful values, by using prayer instead of violence and by asking for God to help us out.

The protests developed due to two very different mentalities and value system: one valuing economic growth the other valuing Mother Earth and nature. In my opinion, the following lines are one of the most powerful lines in the song and touch on these different mentalities: "No court in this country for men. Who steal from their mother on paper with pen." The aspect that is most powerful about the line is that Nahko, the way I understood it, manages to show a fundamental difference between Western and Indigenous cultures. The Standing Rock protest is about protecting the Earth, the water and the people; these are all important values for Indigenous cultures and religions. They have respect for the Earth and see it as their own Mother, the Mother of all living beings, and they try to protect it from destruction. The Earth, in and of itself, has more value than economic growth or money could ever have. Western society on the other hand, "steal[s] from their mother on paper and pen". In Nahko's eyes, people driven by



capitalism sign away the health of their mother, the Earth, for a bigger profit and more money. Connection to the land is not ancestral, but a commodity that can be signed away. This is very powerful and shows how the mentality between the protectors and the followers of the pipeline are drastically different and this also serves to unify the protectors.

The last section of the lyrics I want to highlight is very powerful and telling because it connects back to a big part of Indigenous culture and religion: knowledge passed down by elders of the community:

Grandma's here, and she says persevere

Take a walk in her moccasins sees a trail of tears

And our fears, are the same as they ever were

Beers numb the pain of our holocaust years

Nahko points out that the knowledge of the elders is useful and can help protect the sacred land, because they fought for similar things. By bringing up the Trail of Tears and the Holocaust, he also manages to highlight the significance of the protest and how much Mother Earth and water means to him and the protectors. To many Westerners, genocide isn't comparable to unclean water. However, Nahko and the protectors see it as such. The lack of clean drinking water would bring about the suffering and unnecessary deaths of future generations. This threat to humanity, in Nahko's eyes, has the same impact as previous injustices. Bringing up horrible memories like these serves as an additional unifier of the protectors. It also unifies different groups, as the analogy can reach cultures that don't place the same importance on clean water. Emotionally, the impact of the Holocaust and the Trail of Tears affects a wider audience than the Standing Rock Protest could do alone, thus adding to its movement and cause.

Video:

Similar to the music video from 'Black Snakes' the video of 'Love Letters to God' starts with the caption listed above and then goes into a short time lapse of the Standing Rock campsite in North Dakota, showing the camp during the harsh winter months. I find this start of the video very impactful because it shows how large scale this protest actually is and how there are many people unified in the camp for the same cause.

Shortly after that, it jumps into a short clip of a confrontation between the protectors and the police force at the nearby Missouri River. This is followed by a clip showing wounded protectors and the police force with guns on a boat. These sections show the confrontations of peaceful protectors while also highlighting the violent police force that they are met with. It shows how armed police forces use "water cannons on unarmed protesters, some of them with their hands in the air, and some of them wounded" (Johnson and Kraft 20). In my eyes, putting these sections at the beginning tries to show that Standing Rock is a peaceful form of resistance that is met with violence by the police, and this definitely aims to create emotion in the viewer and listener. You can read about the protest in the newspaper, but the only way to understand and grasp the situation is by seeing it with your own eyes. This video makes this understanding possible for people that could not go to the camp for themselves.

The video does not only show the violent encounters with the police but also footage of peaceful police confrontations with the peaceful protectors. For example, at 0:44 minutes you can see an officer dance with the protectors and shortly after they show protectors shake police officers' hands. But then the film crew jumps back into the showing police officers with automated weapons, military style tanks, water cannons, and police attacking peaceful and non-resistant protectors with tear gas. In the video, this dichotomy of both sides is very powerful and telling. The choice to include both violent and non-violent confrontations with the police

exemplifies the protest to be neither solely peaceful nor solely violent, understanding or ignorant. Showing only violence can have a negative effect on un-educated viewers on the topic, who could interpret these violent scenes as the standard, which isn't true. However, the reality is police violence does take place at Standing Rock, and is still an important aspect of the protest, but not its only part. Showing the dichotomy is necessary to express the truth of the camp and protest realities.

Whether present in the camps or being a passive protestor, unity remains important to this protest, song and video. Shortly after the camera is focused back on Nahko standing in front of a line of different Indigenous and native flags which teaches the viewer that this protest incorporates much more than just the Standing Rock Sioux tribe but many other tribal nations and Indigenous communities. Johnson and Kraft say that the flags “from the start [of the protest] have marked the camps as a global, indigenous site” (Johnson and Kraft 20). To me this picture of Nahko singing in front of these flags portrays unity. All of the flags are on the same height, suggesting that every kind of support is welcome and appreciated by the protectors.

Another aspect of the video that is interesting were the scenes that connected the song and video back to religion. Sections of the video show the high number of ceremonies and rituals that occurred at the camp. The video shows Native men playing traditional drums, performing traditional dances, Indigenous people wearing traditional regalia, individual's conducting traditional prayers, the use of traditional language and chants, and the traditional use of tents. The way I see it, this aspect of the video makes the song religious and it also touches on another characteristic of music in religion: the aspect of collective rather than individual activity. This unity is very obvious when it shows multiple people marching down road holding hands, chanting and dancing together, fighting together for the cause.

Part of the protest's cause is leaving a legacy and clean nature for further generations. The last aspect of the video I want to talk about is the ending. There is a closing caption saying 'Mni Wiconi'. This phrase means 'Water is Life' in Lakota and has become one of the key phrases of the Standing Rock Protest. In an interview Virgil TakenAlive, an elder of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, explains that it was once prophesied that eventually there will not be any drinkable water left and that clean water will only be able to be bought. In his eyes, the society we are living in today is coming close to fulfilling this prophecy. Virgil TakenAlive says that when Christopher Columbus discovered the Americas, every pond, every stream and every body of water was pure and safe to drink, but this is drastically changing and he points out the question: What are we leaving behind for our children? (EVALATION).

Ultimately, 'Love Letters to God' just like the two songs listed above is a compelling example of how music can be utilized by Native and Indigenous communities to fight for their religious sovereignty and their sacred land. Religious content is both included in the lyrics and the video, social values are expressed and communicated, and collectiveness and unity are a main aspect of this song. This song also manages to remind people what they are fighting for and that they need to continue to stay true to their social and religious values.

### **Thirty Meter Telescope, Hawaii**

In modern day society, science is often given more credit and importance than religion. This attitude toward religion is noticeable in many sectors of human life, but Native American religions are given even less credit than Abrahamic religions in such disputes. Astronomy is one of these sciences. Telescopes have taught our current society a lot of useful information like that Earth is not the center of the universe and information on other planets, stars, and galaxies.

Mauna Kea, a mountain in Hawaii, is a piece of land that is perfect for the construction of telescopes due to its high elevation and large open space. Currently, this mountain has a collection of 12 different telescopes on its summit. The larger the telescope, the better the images, and the better the science, so that is what needs to be built. The construction of all of them was met with opposition by many Hawaiian resident who had concerns of the visual appearance and also by Native Hawaiians for whom the mountain is sacred and for whom the mountain plays an important religious role.

In 2008 the telescope company TMT International Observatory LLC<sup>8</sup> in cooperation with the University of Hawaii at Hilo explored “the possibility of locating an observatory at the Astronomy Precinct” (“Department of Land and Natural Resources Mauna Kea”). This would have been the 13<sup>th</sup> telescope of the collection, named the Thirty Meter Telescope (aka TMT), and its proposal included “a 30-meter telescope, instruments, dome, attached building, and parking; an access way with underground utilities; upgrades to electrical transformers at a substation located near Hale Pohaku; and a facility in Hilo that will manage activities at and support operation of the TMT observatory” (“Department of Land and Natural Resources Mauna Kea”). This resulted in a protest movement by Natives to protect their sacred mountain and their sovereignty. Native Hawaiians’ have a constitutionally protected right of consultation about such projects, which the state has failed to acknowledge. In March of 2011 a group of Mauna Kea protectors then filed a petition for a contested case on the construction of the telescope. The supreme court then ruled, that for due process, a contested case hearing requires for both sides to have the opportunity to be heard. After these hearings, the decision was that the telescope will be built. Later, in 2014 another round of protests began which resulted in a new contested case to

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<sup>8</sup> For more information: <https://www.tmt.org/>.

open. The supreme court ruled in December of 2015 that State's permit process was flawed and required a re-submission. It was approved and contested once more in 2016 and 2017. In October 2018 it was affirmed once again ("Timeline"). Protectors have not ended their fight however and are looking for ways to challenge this ruling. Like the case study at Standing Rock, the Thirty Meter Telescope movement utilizes music as a medium to help and spread their protest.

Mauna Kea, also known as Mauna a Wākea, a volcano and the highest point in Hawaii, is considered a sacred mountain by many Native Hawaiians. This mountain is sacred to the Hawaiian community because it has a long mythological background and is still used for religious ceremonies. According to Marie Alohalani Brown a lot of ceremonies are being held on the mountain one being the "largest annual Makahiki ceremonies that honor the deity Lono" (Brown). According to resulting court documents of the protest "Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners believe that Mauna Kea, as a sacred manifestation of their ancestry, should be honored in its natural state and is desecrated by the development of astronomy facilities near its summit" (Contested case Hearing). The mountain has a high significance to Native Hawaiians and it is an enormous part of their religious beliefs and practices. Another telescope would destroy their sacred mountain even further. These Native Hawaiians are fighting for the recognition of their religion by the state government and ask that their beliefs and practices are respected. In the court document listed above, it also states that "the summit of Mauna a Wākea is a sacred site of special significance in the traditional Hawaiian faith" (*Contested Case Hearing*), which highlights that this faith and the rituals connected to it are still being practiced and are not part of the past. One statement often used against the Native Hawaiian's argument is that this Native Hawaiian religion is a thing of the past and is not really being practiced anymore. Rather than being viewed as an enduring faith on par with Christianity, critics claim it is only

referenced for this protest. In her essay “Protectors of the Future, not Protectors of the Past: Indigenous Pacific Activism and Mauna a Wakea,” Noelani Goodyear-Ka’opua argues that this movement encourages Indigenous futurities and opens “space to transform present settler colonial conditions” (185). For her, the movement shows that such struggles faced by Indigenous people are present struggles and are aimed to “unmake relations of settler colonialism and imperialism, protecting Indigenous relationships between human and nonhumans through direct action and compassionate engagement with settler-state law enforcement” (185).

This protest in Hawaii started small and local but reached global attention fast, and their fight is still not over. Native Hawaiians will continue to fight for their sacred mountain. Just like the Standing Rock protest, the land, specifically this mountain, is a big part of Native Hawaiian religion and the telescope construction would negatively impact their religious practices. In response to this protest, several songs have been created to spread the protest’s idea and message. These are very similar to those listed above for the Standing Rock movement. The lyrics and the videos also include religious imagery, language, and ritual, which help prove the point that the movement is deeply rooted in religious belief and sovereignty. This thesis will now dive into three different songs and will analyze them, similarly to the songs explored above.

**Song one: ‘I Mau’** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6H4UstMrzvE>

Please take a moment to view and listen to the song ‘I Mau’ by Nahko and the Medicine for the People.

The first song for the TMT protest I want to focus on is another song by Nahko and Medicine for the People. In one of his personal videos that Nahko recorded and uploaded to Facebook, he calls Hawaii his ‘second home.’ He explains that he moved to the Island when he

was 19 years old and then moved away at the age of 28, spending a little over a decade in Hawaii. He specifically says that it is nice to go back once in a while to ‘check in with the land, and feel the land and the ocean” (Nahko and Medicine for the People). The Hawaiian nature and land are very important to him and this is why he has created multiple songs about Mauna Kea itself.

The song I want to look into is called ‘I Mua,’ which is Hawaiian for ‘to move forward’ and ‘to move ahead,’ but it also stands for loyalty to Kamehameha, the King family of Hawaii. ‘I Mau’ was released in an album named “Dark as Night” in May of 2013. Just like the song ‘Love Letters to God’ listed above, this song was not written in response to the TMT protest but rather created before the protest started. In my opinion, it still has high relevance to the protest and the fight for Mauna Kea.

I decided to analyze this song even though it was not created for or in response to the protest because I think that a song and a video like this can still have the power to unify the viewers and protectors of the mountain because it deals solely with what is being protected. One of the main arguments of the people who are for the telescope is that Hawaiian culture and religion are not really practiced by the youth in Hawaii anymore, but this song and its music video prove that to be very different.

Lyrics:

Since this song was not directly written for the protest my analysis will focus more on the music video than the lyrics but there are still a few aspects of the song lyrics I would like to talk about. The song starts out with a call for people to go to the volcano, referring to Mauna Kea.

Go to the volcano

I will go to the volcano



Melt my heart in Mauna Kea snow

This intro to the song manages to explain to the listener that Nahko is singing about the sacred mountain of Mauna Kea in Hawaii and also indirectly states that this mountain is important to the artist, since he dedicated a whole song to it. Later in the song he sings “Spirit guides yea spirit moves.” With these lines Nahko and Medicine for the People bring in the religious and spiritual aspect of the mountain by naming the spirits of the mountain and saying that these spirits are the ones that guide and move Nahko. This suggests that the mountain to him, just like for Native Hawaiians, has a religious importance. Reasonably, Nahko would also protect Mauna Kea from the construction of the telescope.

The mountain does not only have religious importance but also cultural significance, in terms of Hawaiian genealogy. One section of the song that touches on this genealogy, of Hawaii which goes back all the way to the creation of the world. The song states:

Like when the mother

Met the father

Kissed the horizon

and gave birth to stars

These lyrics take the listener back in time and serve to remind them where they are coming from and their origin story, from the spirits that created the land, the water, the ocean, the stars. Every piece of land and environment is part of this genealogy, meaning that Maun Kea is also a valid and important part. The land is what all the genealogies of all the Native people have in common, and it is what connects them deeply. The past and ancestry is taught to the Hawaiian children and they are told to respect it, honor it and protect it, thus passing on social values. The song goes on to say:

And I hold my shield up must protect

Well suffered heart suffered neglect

Makes us work and feel each part

This goes on with what is explained in the passage above. Both of these sections of the song are things listed by Merriam as functions of music. These lines transmit social values that are held by Native Hawaiians.

The last aspect of the lyrics I want to dive into is a section in which Nahko brings in religious context and uses it to unify the listeners. It goes: “Initiate my mother God. Let her live forever strong.” The way I took this section is similar to what he incorporated in his song ‘Love Letters to God.’ By ‘mother God’ I think he is again referring to Mother Earth. This is teaching the listener to protect the land and let it live free of destruction. By naming God, he fulfills one of Marini’s characteristics of music in religion which is inclusion of religious context, and this also functions to unify the listeners in their mission to protect the land and the sacred mountain.

Video:

The music video is what is most telling about this song and what connects it to the protest. The official video to the song was released on YouTube on February of 2014. It is very different to the music videos I have listed above because since the song and the video were created before the protest started, it does not show footage of the protest itself. Rather, the artist decided to simultaneously represent two different perspectives. On the one hand, it focuses on Nahko himself being on a journey through Hawaii with friends and on the other hand, it shows Hawane Rios on the sacred mountain performing a religious ceremony.

The parts of the video that focus on Nahko on his journey are very interesting to analyze because they portray very well how he enjoys the nature in Hawaii and respects the land. The

video highlights the land of Hawaii, and its multiple environments, which are a big portion of Hawaiian religion and are also included in their genealogies. The environment and its sacred standing are the driving force of the of the TMT protest; the land is sacred to Native Hawaiians and for them it should be respected just like any other living being.

The parts that show how Hawane Rios, in my eyes, are more important to look into for this thesis project because they highlight the use of the mountain as a present sacred and ceremonial site. On her personal website, Hawane Rios describes herself as kanaka, a Native Hawaiian and as ‘oiwi, a person with a genealogical relationship to Hawaii. She is a singer and songwriter who “was raised from an early age in the traditional art forms of chant and dance which inspired her passion for music and songwriting” (“Hāwane”). Something that I find very powerful in her personal statement on her website was when she shared her beliefs on music. To her, music is a ‘powerful catalyst for change.’ Her passion is to write songs “with a healing and unifying message,” which “reflects her deep love and commitment to Mauna Kea” (“Hāwane”). She continues to call herself a ‘Kū Kia’i Mauna’ meaning a guardian of the mountain, which is a concept that also came up in the songs from Standing Rock.

The first scene Hawane Rios is featured in shows her looking up onto the mountain and starting to smile, which immediately evokes the collective religious significance of the place. To me this picture of her admiring Hawaiian nature and Mauna Kea in specific, says more than a thousand words. Just by looking at her eyes, you can see the respect she has for what she is looking at. The viewer can tell how much this mountain is worth to her and how much respect she has for Mauna Kea. This section shows how religiously important the mountain is to her. By seeing her and the mountain in peace and quiet instills emotional value to the viewers that are currently trying to protect the mountain from further destruction. Showing such clips of the

mountain can reinforce the drive and motivation in the protectors because they can see what they are protecting and why it is so important to continue fighting. This is an aspect that is mentioned in both Marini's and Merriam's functions of music and characteristics of music in religion, the purpose of expressing emotion in the viewer.

This emotion is further evident in shots of the religious ceremony in the video. It goes into showing Hawane Rios wandering the mountain in a traditional yellow Hawaiian dress. Later the video shows her creating a 'ho'o kupu', which when translated word for word means 'make offering'. It's an offering to honor whatever it is created for. In an interview with a Native Hawaiian, 'ho'o kupu' is explained as an offering to show giving the best of yourself and "you can also give ho'o kupu to the aina (land), so it is recognizing that the aini is your kupuna (ancestor) is your ohana (family)" (Kamehamehapublishing). The Native interviewee continues to state that you give this offering to a place that has special significance to you and this ho'o kupu can be anything, like your voice or something that you have created with leaves. In the video, Hawane Rios creates one out of leaves she finds on her journey onto the mountain and braids them together into an object. Her journey then takes her to Pu`uhuluhulu, a place on the base of the mountain that is traditionally used for such offering ceremonies. This place has an 'ahu', a pile of stones which serves the function of a memorial, and the video shows her placing her braided leaf offering on top of the 'ahu' to activate it and to open conversation between her and the spirits. After this process, she is shown performing a traditional dance and chant at the site to complete the ceremony. By seeing her body language, it becomes very obvious that this ceremony means a lot to her.

This section of the video is my favorite out of all the songs I analyze in this portion of my thesis because it includes so many different aspects of Hawaiian religion and shows perfectly

what the land and this sacred mountain means to Native Hawaiians. It fulfills many of Marini's characteristics of music in religion. It creates religious emotion in the Native Hawaiian viewers, it includes religious belief and content, it portrays a simple aspect of the religion, it shows Hawane Rios going through a transcendence process, and it also shows sacred performance and ritual. When viewing this video, it is undeniable that this sacred mountain has a high religious importance to the Indigenous people of the Island.

In conclusion, there are many similarities between 'I mua' and the songs from Standing Rock like religion, including sacred religious ceremonies and religious content. But it also includes things that have not come up in the other songs, including Hawaiian genealogy, land specific ceremonies and specific gods and spirits. Even though the song was not directly created for the protest it still accomplishes to help the protest and Indigenous people to fight for their sacred mountain, religious sovereignty and the survival of their way of life.

**Song two: 'Warrior Rising'** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwHVxrVXQ4>

Please take a moment to view and listen to the song 'Warrior Rising' by Hawane Rios and Lakea Trask.

The second piece of music I want to focus on is a song that was recorded at a Mauna Kea concert called 'Mele ma ka Mauna,' an original series celebrating the sacred mountain and calling attention to TMT protest movement. The song is called 'Warrior Rising' and was created by Hawane Rios, featuring Lakea Trask. The music is played by Brandon Nakano and Emma Coloma. Hawane Rios is a Hawaiian singer and songwriter and was also featured in 'I Mua.' Lakea Trask is a Hawaiian Native activist, protector and musician. Trask states in an interview, "we are trying to push forward the 'Aloha Aina' [...] resisting forced assimilation and indoctrination and colonization basically. So, my involvement has been in really just trying to

organize our communities behind a platform that includes everyone” (Aha Aloha Aina). In his interview, Trask explains his involvement with the protest and the movement and says that for him the main goal is to protect the land and follow the idea of ‘Aloha Aina,’ literally meaning ‘love of land’ (Aha Aloha Aina). The concert at which this song was recorded was held on Mauna Kea and was created to bring artists and musicians together to build unity and show appreciation to Mauna Kea. This song and associated video were filmed live by the Hawaiian TV channel OiwiTV and also includes footage from the protest.

The performance starts with a spoken word section by Hawane Rios, which involves religious, peaceful and collective elements of the protest. She starts out by showing her amazement about this movement, that began so small on an Island in Hawaii, but still has reached an international audience. She continues, “The word, the name Mauna Kea is being uttered around the world. I never thought that this would really happen. So, it is just the answer to so many of our collective prayers”. By bringing in the topic of prayer she indirectly states that this protest is religious for her and other protectors. This phrase touches on two of the characteristics mentioned by Marini: religious content and collectiveness. Hawane Rios then calls the protectors of the mountain the ‘Warriors of Peace’ and she says that they “are rising, [they] are going on this journey in a different way”. The way I understood this quote is that this ‘different way’ is referring to protecting the mountain and the land in a peaceful manner, rather than in a traditional protest. The Hawaiian community is very proud of their ability to fight for their sovereignty peacefully and this is something that everyone in the movement is told to follow.

Further on in the spoken word intro, just like in ‘Stand Up’ and ‘Black Snakes,’ she calls for unity and says that all the people that are collectively trying to protect the mountain are in

this together no matter who they are. She explains, “We are all in this evolution together. Let’s not forget that. Let’s not forget that it takes every single person, every single cell, every single face, every single word, every single song, every single chant, everything is important.” She tries to show that every little effort has value, is welcome and can help the movement in protecting this sacred mountain. By doing so, she tries to spread the word and asks more and more people to follow this important movement to save ‘Aloha Aina.’ Lastly, she shouts out to all the people that have collected themselves on the mountain for this concert and thanks them for fighting this fight with her. With tears in her eyes she states, “I feel so moved to see so many people here, so many people supporting from so far, what a beautiful life.” One aspect that makes this section so powerful is the fact that parts of it were filmed live, making it possible to include the emotions that the singer went through while performing and speaking in front of all these fellow protectors. By hearing her voice and seeing her body language it makes it possible for the listener to really grasp how important this movement and this mountain is for her and how much it means to her to perform this song on Mauna Kea.

This is also continued in the lyrics ‘Spreading my message to every nation, lighting the fire in this generation,’ which occurs half way through the song. The reason why I find this so powerful is because it continues the discussion of unity and also touches on the aspect of this movement being bigger than Hawaii itself. It encompasses many other Native nations and environmentalists all around the world. By adding phrases like this into her song, Hawane Rios shows appreciation and acknowledgement to all the protectors that have joined her in this movement to protest this telescope construction and unifies them by doing so.

The song itself is both sung in English and in Native Hawaiian, just like with sections in ‘Stand Up,’ which proves that the Native culture, language, and religion have not died out, like

some people might want to suggest. It also proves that Native people are here to resist and fight for their land and sovereignty. The first phrase is “Carry my mountain in my soul.” With my mountain, she refers to Mauna Kea and implies that this mountain is very sacred to her, which is part of her history and Hawaiian history itself. She then proceeds to sing about Gods and Spirits that are present on the mountain, which reinforces the argument of the protest that the mountain is a sacred site deserving of respect. Having naturally occurring sacred sites does not devalue their divine virtue. Western views connect religious importance to man-built religious sites, i.e., churches, Synagogues, or Mosques as opposed to naturally occurring landscapes. The lyrics try to explain to the listener why this mountain is so sacred to Native Hawaiians and that it is used to connect with Gods and Spirits. Such Gods and Spirits, for example, include Wakea, the Sky Father, who is believed to have given birth to all the island children, and Lilinoe, the goddess of the fine mist.

One line that is re-occurring in this song is ‘Who do you stand for? ... I stand for Hawaii.’ This line again functions as a unifier of the protectors, both Native and non-Native, and shows them that this is something they all have in common. They all are there to stand with the Native Hawaiians in their fight to protect their sacred land. It does not matter what race, what ethnicity, or what color you are: if you stand for Hawaii and stand for Mauna Kea you are part of this group. This is an aspect that has come up in every song I have analyzed so far; every help and solidarity is appreciated by the Native people on the grounds and this is a collective issue rather than an issue that is just hurting Native people in the area. This phrase also reinforces the protest and resistance because it goes against the mainstream and against the people standing behind the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope. By saying it over and over again it shows that this group feels strongly about the topic and it needs and deserves to be listened to.



Watching the video makes this specific line even more powerful, because every time it appears the people in the audience sing along, and you can see and feel how this small section really has the power to unify the listener. Ultimately, this reaction by the audience proves that this is creating emotion in the listener, just like Marini and Merriam suggested.

An aspect that reminded me of ‘Stand Up’ and ‘Black Snakes’ is the point that Hawane Rios highlights through her singing: that this is a peaceful protest and is based on prayer and ceremony. By singing “Peace, love and harmony,” she suggests that the movement is based on these qualities, and by singing “Ceremony, keep your ceremony,” she reminds people that they have to stay true to who they are, by following the ceremony and prayer and by keeping this protest peaceful. Just like in some songs from Standing Rock, the artist suggests that this protest is more like ceremony than an actual protest. These ceremonies, for Hawane Rios, are the most important aspect of the movement. This specific aspect of the song goes along with some of Marini’s characteristics of religious music. The song includes religious content, religious ceremonies and this section also can communicate emotions.

Similar to Rios, Lakea Trask comes in with a rap section that is both in English and in Hawaiian, which acknowledges the presence of Gods and Spirits on the sacred mountain. He starts out by greeting Lilinoe, the goddess of the fine mist, due to the weather at the time of the performance. By doing so, he included and introduced a part of history and a part of Hawaiian religious belief in his performance. By him acknowledging the presence of the spirit, he shows the listener that the mountain has sacred value to him and to most Native Hawaiians and gives an example why he and other protectors are fighting against the telescope. This naming, welcoming and respecting of this goddess fulfills one of the characteristics of Marini, the inclusion of religious belief and context.

The passage rapped by him at the end brings the song into context by exemplifying the point of the protest:

It is the real revolution, independent movement, we are so regenerating getting rid of this pollution, collusion, intrusion and all of this illusion. No “I” in Aina that all just an illusion. With just enough fight and just enough love. Ain’t no lover or no fighter because we are all of the above. Box my way out of these cages that they put us in.

The movement to him is a revolution, which is aiming to get rid of the pollution with a peaceful protest against this telescope. He states that there is no ‘I’ in ‘Aina,’ which I take to mean that there is no ‘I’ in ‘land’. The potential scientific discovery from this new telescope does not outweigh the spiritual needs of these ancestral people.

A lot of sections sung by Lakea Trask are sung in Hawaiian, which are aimed to unify and touch the Hawaiian people who are part of the protest, but one section stands out above the others. He adds “I know you might be thinking you don’t understand but basically we are trying to get back our land.” Here he simplifies what he just rapped about in Hawaiian and translates it for the listeners who do not understand. With this sentence he makes two distinct points. First, by rapping in Hawaiian it is a reminder of the persistence of the Hawaiian culture despite colonialist efforts. Second, that this fight goes beyond religious importance but also political, as the sacred mountain was lost when the United States imposed their government on a sovereign people.

The song ends by both him and Hawane Rios repeating the phrase ‘Aloha Aina’, meaning ‘Love of land’ and ‘care for the land.’ This phrase also appears a lot in the movement itself; especially on signs made by the public. It expresses what the movement is all about in just two

words and in fact, to insiders, it is the name of the movement itself. It also serves as a unifier of the protectors of the mountain, because it is the common thread between all these different people that are protesting.

#### Video:

Just like all the videos listed above, the video for this song is also very telling of the protest by portraying the connection to the land, the peaceful nature of the protest, and the religious significance. The fact that parts of it were filmed live and created on Mauna Kea itself, makes it powerful because at different points in the song you can see how the performers are directing their lines and words to the land and the mountain itself. This tells the viewer how much respect they have for the mountain, since they are dedicating the song to it.

What the video of the song shows very well is that the protest in Hawaii is very peaceful and religious. In contrast to the video of Standing Rock, this video does not include any footage of violence at the protest or on the mountain. Another aspect that is different from the videos in Standing Rock is that the protest is not constrained to the construction grounds on the mountain but that it happens anywhere the people are. At the side of the roads, in buildings, on university grounds, at the beach, on the mountain, or in the city: it is all over the island. Parts of the video show protectors standing on the University of Hawaii Manoa campus holding hands, singing and praying peacefully and quietly. It also shows how everyone in the community helped to build a sacred ahu at the campus. The act of building an ahu, a stone platform used by Native Hawaiians as a memorial and worship site, is very sacred and religious to the Native community. These 'ahus' were later depicted in ceremony, again connecting the protest to the Hawaiian religion.

Another aspect of the movement that is portrayed well in this music video are the different court hearings that were happening at the time in which Native people fought for their sacred mountain and religious sovereignty. The protectors in Hawaii are also known to build human roadblocks in order block the police and the construction workers through to stall the construction. It is interesting as well as resourceful to depict all these aspects of the TMT protest. Ceremonies connect religious people together, but those that are not religiously connected to the protest can seeing a more tangible fight by witnessing peaceful demonstrations as well as court battles, reaching a wider audience.

All in all, this song is an instructive example of how music can be used by Indigenous communities as a way to protest and resist against the opposing party. ‘Warrior Rising’ creates religious emotion in the viewers by showing religious ceremonies on the mountain and this in turn unifies the protectors in their fight. Hawane Rios and Lakea Trask decided to use the medium of music to show solidarity to the movement and help create a song to further the cause and the protest.

**Song three: ‘Rise Up’** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4qQ0uhQbSg>

Please take a moment to view and listen to the song ‘Rise up’ by Ryan Kiraoka and Keala Kawaauha.

The last song I analyze is called ‘Rise Up’ by Ryan Kiraoka, featuring Keala Kawaauha. Ryan Hiraoka is a recording artist and music producer from the Big Island of Hawaii. Keala Kawaauha was a former lead singer of the musical group Sudden Rush and an outspoken Hawaiian activist who passed away earlier this year. The song was released in April of 2015, is about 4 minutes long, and unlike the other songs analyzed, has no music video. In the description

Ryan Hiraoka explains that he was inspired to create this song because of the ‘Protect Mauna Kea’ & ‘Aloha Aina’ movement and goes on to state “We, the people of the Big Island of Hawaii do not approve of the building of a 180 foot tall telescope & the bulldozing of a 5 acre parcel on top of our sacred Mauna Kea. Keala & I are proud to represent the musical community as we share our manao on the topic. Mahalo & God bless! Aole TMT!”. Similar to the description of Sanding Rock in ‘Stand up’ analyzed above, functions to inform the reader why this song was created and teach those who do not know about the movement and the impact of the telescope. In my eyes, it is very powerful, because from the start it is very obvious that the song was created as part of the protest and serves to help the movement and show solidarity. It also shows that Mauna Kea, to Ryan Hiraoka, is sacred and has religious importance to him.

Similar to the song ‘Warrior Rising,’ this song starts with a spoken word section, that reaffirms the culture, unifies the listener, and calls to action, read by Keala Kawaauha in Hawaiian that talks about Mauna Kea: “E nā Hawai‘i mai a Ni‘ihau a hiki i ka moku o Keawe, ‘o kēia ka manawa a kākou e kū ha‘aheo, e kū no ka Mauna a Wākea.” In English this translates to “Hawaii from Ni‘ihau to the district of Kiawe, this is the time we all must stand proud, stand for Mauna Kea” (Morishita). I find this introduction to the song very powerful because by it being in Hawaiian it is most likely directed to the Hawaiian Natives that are dealing with this protest but can also be seen as a way to show that Native Hawaiians are still around and that their culture, religion and requests should be respected. This start also includes a strong call for action and encourages the listener to be part of the movement and to stand strong. Mauna Kea, to him, is in a time of need and he calls people out to stand up and fight for the sacred mountain in Hawaii. In an interview, Ryan Hiraoka shared that: “I was watching what was happening on the mountain and I realized that a lot of these people were my friends and family and my neighbors. And I

thought that they did not have a voice, so as musicians, I thought that it was our platform to give them a voice and be their voice for what they were trying to say” (HNN Staff). In this interview he touches on a very important aspect of protests, especially protests that are run by Indigenous people or other minority groups, which is the lack of being heard and listened to. In such situations the media, the internet and music can give these people a platform to share their voices and opinions and Ryan Kiraoka felt like it was his job to provide that platform for the mountain protectors.

The song starts with “Rise up, rise up, rise up Hawaiian people, we must unite and fight against evil.” This is another call for action directed to the listener and in specific Hawaiian people and also acts as a unifier. The artist urges everyone to put everything else aside and unite in the fight for their sacred mountain. In this passage, the word choice of ‘evil’ sounded strong. I decided to look into what the artist meant by this phrase and I realized that online, other listeners have the same question. In one of the comments to the video on YouTube, Hirako himself clarified: “What I’m referring to as ‘evil’ in the song is the mindset of people who put money and politics before what is right. This has happened throughout history and is what I’m calling Hawaiian people to rise up against” (Hiraoka). ‘The evil’ he is referring to is not the science that could be completed with this telescope but the economic and political aspects of it, which is similar to the section in ‘Black Snakes’ by Prolific the Rapper, which talks about the economic aspects of the pipeline. With this comment he also touches on the long Hawaiian history of colonization and oppression and how this is the basis of the protest. The phrase ‘rise up’ is very similar to the phrase ‘stand up’ of the song by Taboo, a simple message for people to get up and fight for their people, culture and religion. In my eyes these two phrases aim to achieve the exact same goal to unity and encourage protectors to get up and fight. It goes on by saying: “Because

they fear us if we stand as one.” This proves the point I was trying to make earlier of the people having to unite in order to fight and win this protest. He is telling the listener that all Hawaiian people need to stand together in this movement and fight for Mauna Kea.

Even united, there is a clear dichotomy between Western and Indigenous views of land. One line that makes people smile, but also has a moving aspect to it, is “They want to look for life on Mars, so they look up to the stars while they desecrate the land of our ancestors.” This line depicts very well how the Hawaiians view the construction of the telescope. For Hawaiians, the land of the ancestors is much more valuable than finding out something about the cosmos, because their mountain is part of their genealogy, history and religion. What I find very interesting but also ironic is how this passage also shows perfectly how both sides have totally different viewpoints on the telescope but both sides cannot really relate to the other side’s argument. Most of the people that I have interacted with, say that they cannot grasp why anyone would be against new scientific discoveries, especially when the ‘only reason’ is the land. Just like the song ‘Love Letters to God,’ this song also tries to portray the different views on land by the Western and Indigenous community. Native people look at it in a totally opposite way. To them it is crazy that anyone would destroy sacred land in order to look up in the sky. This section goes hand in hand with Merriam’s argument that music can help portray, but at the same time crush, social values. Music can reinforce social values, but in the sense of protest it can also challenge them. This is seen in the TMT protest as Hawaiian social and religious values clash with Western values of scientific pursuit and use of land.

This clash results in the suppression of Native voices. Then Ryan Hiraoka goes on to show the listener what is happening at the protest, the court hearings, and how no one is listening to what the Native Hawaiians have to say.

Never listen to oppositions of the Hawaiians

They say they got the legal right but people will unity when they see that it's not  
righteous

We will fight this until our last breath

Protecting Mauna Kea because we know what's next

This goes back to the reason why he created the song in the first place, because Hawaiians do not have a voice and are not listened to. He depicts what is happening but he turns it around with something that the Hawaiian listeners can get energy and faith from. He is trying to say that this is happening, that the Hawaiian voices are not being respected, but that with unity and resistance they can protect Mauna Kea even if it is going to be the last thing they do. This phrase reminds me a lot of what I understand protests to be about: there is always one side that gets less attention. This song serves to show that in this case, like in most other protests involving Indigenous people, their side of the protest is the one getting less attention.

The next verse of 'Rise Up' resembles protest and resistance the most. It says:

Protest us no we are protectors, the policeman arrests us, know we are defenseless

Relentless we fight for what is right for the mountain is our life-blood, so we are fighting  
for our lives

We are tired of the lies, we cry out for this land we call Hawaiian

The money speaks loudly so we cannot be silent

The island united we will not stop

The first aspect of this verse that is worth noting is the fact that the artist highlights they prefer to be called protectors rather than protestors. In their eyes, they are protecting the land rather than protesting construction. To me, this is very powerful because in the time we live in now, when



hearing about a protest we automatically associate it with violence and brutal standoffs with the police. This is why they are highlighting the fact that they are protectors, who peacefully are protecting their land and asserting their sovereignty. He goes on singing “policeman arrest us, know we are defenseless.” There have been multiple protectors arrested for making their stand. What makes this point so strong is that even with these known negative outcomes, the movement is still constantly growing and more and more people are willing to be arrested over protecting their sacred mountain. Even people that have been charged with felonies and imprisoned return to the mountain and stand strong. They still ‘rise up’ and fight for their sacred mountain, which is part of their life-blood and their genealogy. This points at the high religious and cultural significance of this sacred mountain. No one would willingly be arrested for something they don’t believe in. The next line shows what they are fighting against: money. By saying that the ‘money speaks loudly,’ he suggests that the reason why people want to build this telescope is because of the economical profit and ‘the island’ needs to ‘unite’ and speak as loudly as the money does in order to stop this telescope for happening. This point is similar to songs listed in the Standing Rock case study and this shows that religious sovereignty and recognition are the driving forces of the protest.

Without sovereignty-recognition, the people associated with the land will feel the impacts. This is evident when Keala Kawaauha comes in and brings the song to a nice end. The section starts with crying sounds and then he raps:

I can hear my people crying, trying

What do we have to do to keep our way of life from dying?

We don’t care what is way out there, flooding a million miles in space.

Our kuleana is right here. Our people, our peoples aina, our race of a place

So far, we kept it peaceful in the ways of the righteous people

but don't mistake our aloha for weakness when it comes to fighting evil

By actually hearing people cry in the background it helps the listener to realize that this movement is much more to them than just an environmental movement; it impacts not only the land but also the people that are associated with it. He asks the question "What do we have to do to keep our way of life from dying?," which suggests that if Mauna Kea will be destroyed even more than it already has been. It will impact the life of Hawaiians negatively and change it immensely. This line proves that the mountain has cultural and religious value and that it is still being used for religious ceremonies and ritual. The Hawaiian life includes sacred land and religion so if this mountain is being disrespected, their way of life could drastically change. At the end he raps: "Mauna kea is our mother, Mauna Kea is our brother, Mauna kea is our sister," showing that the mountain is part of his family, genealogy and history. With his song and this passage Keala Kawaauha, wants to show that what is important is not learning more about the stars that are so far away but rather about respecting what is right there in front of us: the sacred mountain.

In my opinion, this passage also includes a peaceful threat to the people on the other side of the movement. He shouts out to them that they should not underestimate the power of the movement and the Hawaiian people, just because the protectors are peaceful and do not seem to be taking it to a violent level, does not mean that this movement and the protectors are any less serious about their cause or are going to be demolished any easier. In my opinion, this is the most powerful aspect of the song because it is also directed at the people that fight against them, but

still does that in a humane and non-aggressive manner, which is something that I respect and look up to. The word ‘kuleana’ is a Hawaiian word meaning personal and collective responsibility. A Hawaiian friend of mine taught me that in reference to the song the word refers to ‘the responsibility that the Hawaiian people have to the land of Hawaii.’ In this way, this section fulfills two functions of music listed by Merriam: expressing social values and validating of social institutions.

At the end, the song takes a slight turn by both expressing and contradicting social values of the protectors. It says, “Make no mistake this is war and the line has already been drawn but the only question is what side of the line do you stand on.” On the one hand, this line is very powerful and directed towards the listener and confronts them directly to take a stand. The way I see it, this is directed at the listeners that are on the side of protecting Mauna Kea, and it aims to unite the protectors and show that there are only two sides to the movement. Either you are on the side to build the telescope or you are on the side of the mountain, not matter who you are or what your motivations are, if you are on the side of the mountain you are part of them. To me it has a motivative touch to it and gives the feeling that the listener is part of something big. On the other hand, the decision of the rapper to use the word “war” surprised me, because it is a very strong word and has a lot of negative connotations to it. They are violent and aggressive connotations, which is not something that I would associate with the Mauna Kea movement. It paints a picture that includes physical violence, a good and a bad side, guns and devastation. In my eyes this is nothing close to what the movement is about.

This song was published without a music video, just with a picture of Ryan Kiraoka in front of Mauna Kea. I have to admit that this specific song does not have a lot of direct and voiced religious content in the song, but it still has the power to hold a religious meaning for the

listener, who has a religious and sacred connection to the mountain. In my eyes, songs do not have to directly be dealing with religious content but just the simple aspect of the song being created for a sacred mountain and for the movement is enough to have religious significance to the listener.

In conclusion, this song also can be put into the category of protest and resistance songs. Just like all the songs listed above this song reaffirms Native culture, unifies the protectors and also calls for action by the listeners. To explain the reason why protest like these can occur the song explores the dichotomy of views on land by Western and Indigenous communities. This song ultimately serves to give Indigenous people a place to voice their opinions and concerns, and furthers the protest and the movement that way.

## **Conclusion**

Music has a profound place in society's heart because of its capacity to immortalize words and emotions. During the '80s and '90s in the South Bronx, music empowered an entire community through unification. Now history is repeating itself with a newly visible disenfranchised community. Native Americans across the United States have adapted music to empower their movements and protests, to reach new communities and fuel support for their beliefs and their rights as a sovereign people.

This thesis explored the use of music and music videos as forms of resistance and protest by Indigenous people facing oppression. Specific focus was put on aspects of the songs and music videos pertaining to the religious, ceremonial content and as a way to unify the protectors. It analyzed lyrics and music videos of the chosen songs to see how they are used to express

religious content, and as a form of protest and resistance. The Standing Rock protest in North Dakota and the Thirty Meter Telescope protest in Hawaii served as my case studies. Specifically, the following songs were examined: ‘Stand up’ by Taboo featuring other indigenous artists, ‘Blacksnakes’ by Prolific The Rapper and A Tribe Called Red, ‘Love Letters to God’ by Nahko and the Medicine for the People, ‘I Mua’ by Nahko and Medicine for the People, ‘Warrior rising’ by Hawane Rios featuring Lakea Trask, and ‘Rise Up’ by Ryan Kiraoka featuring Keala Kawaauha.

There are many different functions of music listed by Alan Parkhurst Merriam that are fulfilled by the songs examined in this thesis. One function that all the songs utilize and emphasize is the use of music to communicate information within one culture. In the case of the songs from the Standing Rock protest and the TMT protest, the main points communicated are religious content/emotion, unity and solidarity. Another function fulfilled by some songs listed above is the function of symbolic representation. ‘Stand Up’ by Taboo, for example, was not just created for the sake of producing music but to symbolically represent the protest, its cause, and its goals. This representation goes along with another function met by all of the songs analyzed, which is the function of using songs to express social values, to create social order and to stabilize the community. Each song expresses social values that are shared by all the protectors at the different camps and these manage to create social order and also stabilize the community part of the protest. The last function by Merriam that is also touched on this thesis is the aspect of music to validate social institutions and religious rituals. Multiple songs listed above validate the movement and the protest by emphasizing the proper and the improper in the protest community.

The analyzed songs also exhibit many of Stephen A. Marini’s characteristics of religious music, which argues for the fact that this music, in one way or another, is religious. One of the

characteristics is the expression and creation of religious emotion in both the listener and the producer. Both the lyrics and the videos analyzed in this thesis are evidence of this characteristic. This emotional aspect is further achieved by another characteristic fulfilled in the songs: the inclusion of religious content and belief. The songs talk about prayers, ceremonies, Gods and spirits, and the music videos show these prayers and ceremonies calling upon religious feelings in the Indigenous listener. Similarly, the language and content used in the given music deals with simple rather than complex religious elements, another characteristic mentioned by Marini. For example, it states the sacredness of the Earth, which is shared and understood by most Indigenous people but does not dive into specific practices that require lifelong experience of an Indigenous religious background, which serves to reach a wider audience. Every analyzed song with a music video included footage of protectors completing religious rituals, prayers and ceremonies, which impacts the viewer by creating a variety of emotions as well as a sense of solidarity. Like the inclusion of the religious activities, the given music also fulfills the characteristic of religious music being a collective rather than an individual activity. All of the songs call for community. 'Stand Up,' for example, was created by multiple Indigenous artists working together as a form of protest and resistance. Lastly, Marini argues that "songs of protest call attention as well to propriety and impropriety" (225) which is achieved by every song listed above by voicing values of Indigenous communities and working against Western economic beliefs and values.

All in all, I believe that the songs listed above are a form of resistance and protest, and are all successful at achieving what they set out to do. The music pieces include a call for unity of people, not only for Indigenous people but non-Native people as well. All the songs listed above appreciate and ask for all the help they can get in their fight for their sacred land.

Consequently, these protests go beyond a fight against corporate injustice but represent a stand for preserving the earth, her resources, and by extension, all of her people. Another aspect that they have in common is how each song depicts and explains what the movement and protest is about. By creating a song, they all raised awareness on the topic in a global way that only music is able to reach. They also created a platform for the Indigenous people to be heard since Indigenous people often do not get the voice or the attention that they deserve. Music functions to fulfill this gap and can be utilized as a platform to be heard, reach a wider audience and resist against a power that often seems higher than them.

The reason I decided to dedicate my thesis project to this topic is that, in my opinion, when analyzing protests like Standing Rock and Mauna Kea, such songs are an important component, and in order to get to the real meaning of these protests, the music that develops from them needs to be considered. Society evolves, and this evolution results in a change in the way protests and political movements are being conducted. In all sectors of life, music is becoming more and more important and prominent, and it is no surprise that this expansion is also used by Native and Indigenous communities fighting for their sacred land and religious sovereignty. Even though both of these protests ultimately did not achieve their main goal, the music created for them will have long-lasting impacts on the communities involved and the resistance of Indigenous people against opposing forces as a whole. This new form of resistance and protest will help future generations to continue their fight for Indigenous rights and recognition. The songs explored also do not just give us a deeper understanding of these two specific protest movements, but can also help us understand Indigenous protests as a whole and give us valuable insight into their present struggles.

Such analysis of songs can help us understand other social movements and this is a way to expand on the project. Going into this project, I intended to have a third case study of music resulting from the Holocaust, which I sadly need to drop due to lack of time and resources at this stage in my academic career. However, I think that this case study could expand and give more evidence to my thesis. Another way this project could be expanded on is including and acknowledging music created by refugees, immigrants and displaced people in general. When conducting my research online, I stumbled upon many well-known artists, with such a background, who put their thoughts and feelings about their life and their journey into the form of songs and music, for example, artist K'naan. The medium of music, just like for Indigenous people, is a resource that manages to give them a platform to voice their ideas and feelings. Their voices exist and are very important to listen to and acknowledge when talking about refugee crisis, resettlement and immigration policies, and their rights and needs.



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