Get Up, Stand Up: Social Justice Messages in the Music of Bob Marley

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ABSTRACT

This article is an analysis of songs of Bob Marley, appearing on his solo albums, from 1965 until his death in 1981. The purpose of the article is to categorize his songs into different themes, and ten themes were identified based on the analysis. The themes included 1. Love and romantic relationships, 2. Positivity in life, 3. Spiritual dimension of justice/Rastafarianism/reggae, 4. Life in Jamaica, 5. Anti-war and anti-violence messages/calls for unity and peace/reconciliation, 6. Resistance against oppression/empowerment of the oppressed/liberation and freedom, 7. Anti-colonial and Pan-African identity/Africa, 8. Critique of inequality and poverty/economic justice, 9. Human rights and universal equality/social justice, and 10. Other. A main theme of the article is how strongly Bob Marley songs are connected to issues of justice and social justice. The article includes brief descriptions of each song recorded by Bob Marley, as well as detailed descriptions of particular songs to illustrate examples of each theme.

INTRODUCTION

Songs by Robert Nesta Marley, aka Bob Marley, are deeply rooted in themes of justice, equality, and resistance (Davis, 1988; Dawes, 2007; Farley, 2007; Huisman, 2021, 2018; McCann, 2004; White, 2006). Born in the slums of Nine Mile in Jamaica, Bob Marley went on to become the most famous reggae musician of all time (Davis, 1988; Farley, 2007), a true world rock star (Dawes, 2007), a cultural icon (White, 2006), and founder of what one writer calls a "Reggae Nation" (Huisman, 2021). Dubbed a "freedom fighter" by one (Gallardo, 2003) and an "icon for the universal struggle for justice, peace and human rights" by another (Gilroy, 2005: 226), Bob Marley became even more famous after his death in 1981.

Bob Marley's lyrics don't just entertain, they function as social commentary shaped by Jamaica's history, global inequality, and his connection to Rastafarianism. Rastafarianism is an Afrocentric, monotheistic religious and sociopolitical movement that originated in 1930s Jamaica. Rastas believe that Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia, was God (Jah) incarnate or the Second Coming of Christ. So, Rastafarianism is deeply Christian, as much reggae music makes clear (Lehusza, 2025).

Consider just a few examples from songs of Bob Marley:

- In the song Exodus (1977), Bob Marley sings about the Rasta journey as a spiritual movement to a "Fatherland," similar to the biblical exodus of Hebrew slaves;
- In the song "Survival" (1979), Bob Marley references biblical figures in the lyrics: "We're the survivors, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Thrown in the fire, but never get burn";
- In the song "Forever Loving Jah" (1980), Bob Marley quotes Proverbs 3, singing, "Only a fool lean upon his own misunderstanding."

Rastas emphasize repatriation to Africa ("Zion")—and Ethiopia in particular—long to "reunite" all nations of Africa (consistent with the "Back to Africa" movement influenced by Jamaican political activist, black nationalist, and Pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey), and oppose Western oppression ("Babylon"). Marcus Garvey, in the early 1900s, was founder and first President-General of the Universal Negro Improvement Association

and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL), through which he stated he was "Provisional President of Africa" in 1920 (PBS, 2026). The term "Rastafari" is often associated with Bob Marley (Hodges, 2005; King & Jensen, 1995); *Ras* means "head" or "prince" and *Tafari* was Haile Selassie's birth name.

This article provides a review of Bob Marley's music to examine ways in which different issues of justice appear. The analysis reveals 10 distinct areas of music that Bob Marley explored through his songs. Those core themes are identified later in this paper, and several of them relate in various ways to issues of justice and social justice. As will be shown in this paper, overall, Bob Marley's lyrics treat justice as a multifaceted struggle—political, economic, social, and spiritual.

METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out by first locating and documenting every song contained within every album Bob Marley created up until the time of his death in May, 1981. Albums created with his name on it after his death, of which there are many, including the famous "Legend" album of 1984—perhaps the most well-known and widely-listened to—are excluded from this analysis. A complete list of his albums and songs through the time of his death is presented later in this article.

The next step was researching each of the songs, including studying their lyrics and examining their meaning from various sources; the official Bob Marley website once had a song-by-song breakdown of the lyrics of each Bob Marley song, yet, this is now absent from the web. The analysis also included listening carefully to each Bob Marley song, focusing on the lyrics as well as the tone of each. Once this was complete, the author attempted to organize the songs based on the main themes of each into different, unique categories.

The core themes identified in Bob Marley's music, from the analysis, include:

1. Love and romantic relationships
2. Positivity in life
3. Spiritual dimension of justice/Rastafarianism/reggae
4. Life in Jamaica
5. 5. Anti-war and anti-violence messages/calls for unity and peace/reconciliation
6. Resistance against oppression/empowerment of the oppressed/liberation and freedom
7. Anti-colonial and Pan-African identity/Africa
8. Critique of inequality and poverty/economic justice
9. Human rights and universal equality/social justice
10. Other

One could argue that many of the themes above are related in various ways. For example, the theme "Spiritual dimension of justice/Rastafarianism/reggae" could be connected to the theme "Life in Jamaica" since, for Bob Marley, life in Jamaica was deeply connected to his Rasta faith. Similarly, the same theme could be connected to the theme dealing with Pan-African identity and Africa given the connection Bob Marley made between his faith and the African continent. More importantly for this paper, themes five through eight could all be grouped into the theme "Human rights and universal equality/social justice" given the connection between social justice and the other issues. Yet, the author keeps them separate in an effort to provide more guidance about the true meaning of Bob Marley's songs. One criticism of this analysis, thus, is that the themes are not absolutes but instead are just meant as general categories of songs that Bob Marley created across his musical career. Hopefully, the nature of the themes becomes clearer as specific songs are identified within each category.

It should be noted that unreleased recordings, collaborative works, alternative versions, singles, and songs attributed to the Wailers themselves—Bob Marley's band—are not included in this analysis. Further, no coding framework, selection criteria, or independent verification process was used in the analysis, and these are potential limitations to the work. Rather, songs were classified to the theme that the author felt they best fit based on an analysis of lyrics associated with each song.

FINDINGS

Table 1 shows a list of known Bob Marley songs; incredibly, there are 164 of them. Table 2 illustrates a list of Bob Marley albums; there are 13 of these completed during this life; many more came out after his death in 1981, as noted earlier.

Below, examples from specific songs are offered within each theme offered above to illustrate the meaning of that theme. The analysis begins with the theme, Love and Loss, the earliest theme explored by Bob Marley in his initial music of 1965.

1. Love and romantic relationships—First, it is important to note that the nature of Bob Marley's music changed across his career. For example, his earlier songs were typical of a young man starting out his musical career, focused nearly exclusively on issues of romantic love. Thus, many Bob Marley songs are about love and issues in relationships. This was especially true early in his musical career, when eight of 11 songs on his first album (The Wailing Wailers, 1965) were about love, breakups, cheating, and so on.

Yet, Marley continued to write and perform love songs throughout his career, including songs devoted to his wife, Rita, as well as to at least one other woman who fathered at least one of his children outside of marriage. Bob Marley and his wife Rita had, in essence, an open marriage, as both engaged in extramarital relationships and had children with other partners. Bob is recognized to have at least 11 children, only three with his wife.

Bob Marley's songs about love and loss include:

- Am-A-Do—a song about romantic devotion and intimacy
- Baby We've Got a Date (Rock It Baby) —a song about the excitement of meeting a lover
- Bend Down Low—a song about love and connection
- Cry to Me—a song about heartbreak, loneliness, and finding solace in a lover after enduring pain
- Don't Rock My Boat—a song about soul-satisfying love
- I'm Still Waiting—a song about yearning for romance
- I Need You (1964 version)—a song about love and loss of a romantic relationship
- Is This Love—a song about deep, passionate, and romantic love
- It Hurts To Be Alone—a song about loneliness after a romantic breakup
- Kinky Reggae—a song about an adventurous sexual encounter while traveling through London's Piccadilly Circus
- Lonesome Feeling—a song about pain and sadness after a breakup
- Love And Affection—a song about heartbreak and loneliness
- My Cup—a song about emotional release and crying to feel better after the loss of a best friend
- My Sympathy—a song about not being able to find love and sympathy
- No Water—a song about love, asking for a nurse to visit Marley in bed
- Reaction—a song about attraction, "rocking you," moving, and grooving
- Satisfy My Soul—a song about meeting up with a lover
- She's Gone—a song about heartbreak following the end of a romantic relationship
- Stand Alone—a song about wasting time in a relationship
- Stir It Up—a song about passion and sexual desire, written for his wife, Rita
- Stop That Train—a song about escaping from loneliness and hardship
- Ten Commandments of Love—a song about ten vows for a devoted, lasting relationship
- Turn Your Lights Down Low—a song about longing for intimacy and encouraging a romantic connection
- Waiting in Vain—a song about unrequited love, uncertainty, and longing
- What's New Pussycat?—a song about pursuing love
- When The Well Runs Dry—a song about cheating in a romantic relationship

The song, "Am-A-Do," is not one of Bob Marley's better known songs, but its lyrics make it clear that it is a love song. In it, he sings, "Cause every man needs a woman. Every woman, every woman needs her man. Closer together they would be, Sharing a world so free. And though we're far apart, You're still in my... Still ya bap you're in the bottom of my heart." This song is typical of early Bob Marley music.

"Baby We've Got a Date" is a better known love song by Bob Marley. He sings, "I'll meet you at your house at a quarter to eight. Oh, darlin', baby, baby, just you have some faith. I promise you, we're gonna (rock it, baby, rock it, baby, tonight). To (rock it, baby; rock it, baby, tonight). Gonna (rock it, baby; rock it, baby, tonight). Baby, (rock it, baby; rock it, baby, tonight)." "Is This Love" is even better known in the universe of Bob Marley songs. A simple love song, Bob Marley sings, "I wanna love you, And treat you right. I wanna love you, Every day and every night. We'll be together, With a roof right over our heads. We'll share the shelter, Of my single bed. We'll share the same room, yeah, For Jah provide the bread." Then he asks, "is this love? Is this love? Is this love?"

In "Satisfy My Soul," Bob Marley sings clearly about a satisfying love affair with a partner: "You satisfy my soul (satisfy my soul). Every little action (satisfy my soul), There's a reaction (satisfy my soul). Oh, can't you see what you've done for me, oh, yeah. I am happy inside all, all of the time." Then there is "Stir it Up," a rousing love song for Bob Marley's wife, Rita. In it, Bob Marley sings: "It's been a long, long time, yeah (stir it, stir it, stir it together). Since I've got you on my mind (ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh). Oh-oh. Now you are here (stir it, stir it, stir it together), I said, it's so clear, To see what we will do, baby (ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh), Just me and you. Come on and stir it up (I wanna say), Little darlin', stir it up (come on, baby). Come on and stir it up (yeah), Little darlin', stir it up (oh, mmm). I'll push the wood (stir it, stir it, stir it together). Then I'll blaze your fire. Then I satisfy your heart's desire. Said, I stir it every (stir it, stir it, stir it together), every minute."

"Turn Your Lights Down Low" expresses clear love for a partner, as well. Yet, this song was reportedly written for Cindy Breakspeare, a Canadian-Jamaican model and jazz musician who was crowned Miss World in 1976; she is also the mother of Bob Marley's youngest son, Damian, also a renowned reggae musician (he has won four Grammy awards for his music). Bob Marley sings, "Loving you is a like a song I replay (loving you is easy 'cause you're beautiful). Every three minutes and thirty seconds of every day (uh, uh). And every chorus was written for us to recite (right). Every beautiful melody of devotion every night, This potion might, this ocean might, carry me, In a wave of emotion to ask you to marry me. And every word, every second, and every third, Expresses the happiness more clearly than ever heard (uh). And when I play 'em, every chord is a poem, Tellin' the Lord how grateful I am because I know him (what? Word). The harmonies possess a sensation similar to your caress (uh), If you askin' then I'm tellin' you it's yes (yes, yes). Stand in love, take my hand in love, Jah bless (right)."

Taken together, such songs illustrate what Bob Marley's earliest music tended to be about—love and romantic relationships. Again, Bob Marley continued to write such songs throughout his career, but his music became much more politically oriented and justice-focused over time, as will be shown in this paper.

2. Positivity in life—many Bob Marley songs are simply about being positive in one's life. Separate from his love songs, these songs are about living in a particular way to find true happiness. Bob Marley's songs about positivity in life include:

- Coming in from the Cold—a song about overcoming adversity and meeting life's challenges
- Could You Be Loved—a song about staying grounded through love and fully living
- Crisis—a song about living it up and giving Jah (God) praises, in spite of real life troubles
- Easy Skanking—a song about relaxation, enjoying life, and taking a break from the pressures of reality, through marijuana it is noted by Bob Marley
- (I'm Gonna) Put It On—a song about gratitude and life positivity
- It's Alright—a song about perseverance and the idea that life will be alright
- Jamming—a song about unity, resilience, spiritual togetherness, and jamming in the name of the Lord
- Kaya—a song about finding peace and joy, often through smoking marijuana (kaya is a term for the herb among Rastas); Marley says he is feeling "so high" now

- Lively Up Yourself—a song about self-empowerment, urging people to shake off negativity, stress, and oppression to elevate their spirits and energy
- Natural Mystic—a song about an unseen, spiritual, or supernatural energy flowing through nature and the atmosphere
- Pass It On—a song about helping others and not living selfishly
- Positive Vibration—a song about optimism, resilience, and unity, and overcoming negativity with positivity
- Put It On—a song about gratitude and positive energy
- Rebel's Hop—a song about being proud, keeping on moving, and being what you want to be
- Sun is Shining—a very positive song about optimism; Marley says the weather is sweet and it makes him want to move his feet
- Wake Up and Live—a song about how to live fully

In the song, "Coming in From the Cold," Bob Marley starts out by acknowledging how sweet life is, singing "In this life, in this life, in this life. In this, oh sweet life, We're (we're coming in from the cold)." But then he goes on to say, "It's you, it's you, it's you I'm talkin' to. Well, you (it's you) you (it's you), you I'm talking to now. Why do you look so sad and forsaken? When one door is closed, don't you know another is open. Would you let the system make you kill your brotherman? No, no, no, no, no, no, no, dread, no. Would you make the system make you kill your brotherman? (No, dread, no). Would you make the system get on top of your head again? (No, dread, no!). Well, the biggest man you ever did see was was just a baby." This is encouragement for people to keep on going forward in life no matter the challenges.

In "Crisis," Bob Marley also encourages people to keep on in their lives, saying "But no matter what the crisis is. No matter what the crisis is. Doing it, doing it, doing your thing (Give Jah all the thanks and praises!). Giving it, giving it, giving it, giving it (Give Jah all the thanks and praises!)." This is after he begins by noting that not everyone has it good in life: "They say the sun shines for all, But in some people world, it never shine at all. … They say love is a stream that will find its course. I mean some people think life is a dream. So they making matters worse." The point of the song, however, is to give Jah (God) thanks and praises and keep moving forward in life.

The song "Jamming" has few lyrics and just repeatedly states how "We're jammin'" including that "We're jammin' in the name of the Lord." It is an upbeat and feel good song that makes one want to dance when it is listened to. Similarly, the song "Lively Up Yourself" encourages listeners to "Lively up yourself and don't be no drag. Lively up yourself, oh, Reggae is another bag. Lively up yourself and don't say no. Lively up yourself, 'cause I said so," urging people to "come alive today."

In the song, "Positive Vibration," Bob Marley urges listeners to live fully. The lyrics include: "Live if you want to live (Rastaman vibration, yeah! Positive!). That's what we got to give! (I 'n' I vibration, yeah! Positive). Got to have a good vibe! (Iyaman Iration, yeah! Irie ites!). Whoa! (Positive vibration, yeah! Positive!)." And he continues: "If you get down and you quarrel everyday, You're saying prayers to the devils, I say. Whoa! Why not help one another on the way? Make it much easier, yeah, yeah (just a little bit easier). Say you just can't live that negative way. If you know what I mean, Make way for the positive day." Clearly this is a song about being positive in life.

Similarly, "Wake Up and Live" says: "Life is one big road, with lots of signs, So when you riding through the ruts, Don't you complicate your mind. Flee from hate, mischief and jealousy. Don't bury your thoughts. Put your vision to reality, yeah. All together now, wake up and live." The main theme of this song is to live fully.

Each of these songs in this theme deal with living positively in life. This is a major focus of Bob Marley across his musical career, something that is amazing given how he rose from poverty to great wealth as a result of his music. Yet, Bob Marley is known for asserting that true wealth cannot be measured in material possessions; he viewed money as an endless, empty pursuit, contrasting it with the lasting richness of a meaningful, purposeful life. In fact, Bob Marley's last words, to his oldest son, Ziggy, are reportedly "Money can't buy life."

3. Spiritual dimension of justice/Rastafarianism/reggae —As noted at the outset, Bob Marley's worldview was strongly shaped by Rastafari. Many Bob Marley songs pertain to issues related to Rastafarianism, including:

- Exodus—a song about the Biblical story of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt and the hope of Rastafarians to be led to freedom
- Forever Loving Jah—a song about the Rastafarian faith and God or Jah
- Hallelujah Time—a song about resilience, Rastafarian faith, and hope for a better future amidst hardship
- Punky Reggae Party—a song about the merging of punk rock and reggae music
- Rastaman Chant—a song about the downfall of "Babylon" and the promised liberation of Rastafari to Zion
- Redemption Song—a song about spiritual and mental liberation, urging listeners to "emancipate yourselves from mental slavery"
- Ride Natty Ride—a song about Rastafarians holding firm against adversity, societal oppression, and the Babylon system
- Roots, Rock, Reggae—a song about the power of reggae music and Rastafarianism
- Zion Train—a song about a divine, unstoppable movement of spiritual awakening, liberation, and repatriation to a place of peace, from Babylon to Zion

In Bob Marley's music, justice is often spiritual as well as political. Babylon, a recurring symbol in Rastafari thought, represents corrupt systems of power, materialism, and oppression. Songs such as "Exodus" portray justice as a movement toward spiritual and social liberation: "Movement of Jah people" is a lyric contained within the song. This combines faith, resistance, and collective hope. In the song, "Exodus," the core justice theme is collective liberation. "Exodus" combines Biblical imagery with political migration and freedom struggles. The "exodus" symbolizes leaving systems of oppression ("Babylon") behind. Bob Marley sings, "We know where we're goin', We know where we're from. We're leavin' Babylon, y'all, We're goin' to our Father's land." Through Rastafarian beliefs, Marley often connects justice to a higher moral order.

In the song, "Forever Loving Jah," Bob Marley sings "Some they say see them walking up the street. They say we're going wrong to all the people we meet. But we won't worry, we won't shed no tears. We found a way to cast away the fears, Forever, yeah!" The way to cast away the fear is through the love of Jah or God, and the chorus of the song is "We'll be forever loving Jah, We'll be forever. We'll be forever loving Jah, Forever, yes, and forever! We'll be forever loving Jah, There'll be no end." The song is particularly impressive in its continued devotion to his faith, saying, for example, "So, old man river, don't cry for me, I've got a running stream of love you see. So, no matter what stages, oh stages, Stages, stages they put us through, We'll never be blue. No matter what rages, oh rages, Changes, rages they put us through, We'll never be blue, We'll be forever, yeah!", and then the chorus is repeated. Later in the song, he continues, singing "So, old man river, don't cry for me. I've got a running stream of love you see.

So, no matter what stages, oh stages, Stages, stages they put us through, We'll never be blue. No matter what rages, oh rages, Changes, rages they put us through. We'll never be blue, We'll be forever, yeah!" again followed by the chorus expressing his love of God.

In "Rastaman Chant," Bob Marley repeatedly promises the fall of Babylon, singing "Hear the words of the rasta man, say, Babylon your throne gone down, gone down, Babylon your throne gone down. Said, I hear the words of the higher man say, Babylon your throne gone down, gone down, Babylon your throne gone down. And I hear the angel with the seven seals, sayin, sayin, yeah, yeah, yeah, Babylon your throne gone down, gone down, Babylon your throne gone down."

Songs like "Redemption Song" also emphasize mental and spiritual liberation; a key lyric of the song is "emancipate yourselves from mental slavery. None but ourselves can free our minds." Justice to Bob Marley isn't just legal or political—it's also internal and psychological. This idea is made clear by Bamikole (2016: 43), who wrote: "Bob Marley identified liberation with the total, profound and radical freedom of the human mind from conditions and situations that promote oppression and injustice to a mind-set that encourages and

ensures human freedom, justice and other ideals that promote human flourishing. Thus, by talking about 'emancipation from mental slavery', Marley was suggesting that human beings, wherever they find themselves, must make use of the means at their disposal to free themselves from a slave mentality, a mentality that acquiesces in unfreedom, oppression, suppression, discrimination and other unsavoury existential conditions."

But this song also lays out the history of the Black man through slavery, saying: "Old pirates, yes, they rob I, Sold I to the merchant ships, Minutes after they took I, From the bottomless pit." Yet, he responds with: "But my hand was made strong, By the hand of the Almighty. We forward in this generation, Triumphantly. Won't you help to sing, Another song of freedom? 'Cause all I ever have, Redemption song." In other words, the song appears to be about overcoming troubles and moving on in life, positively.

Each song in this theme deals with spiritual dimensions of justice, and in particular Rastafarianism. Perhaps more than anything else, Bob Marley is known as a Rasta, and this is made very clear in much of his music, as well as by his appearance.

4. Life in Jamaica—Being Jamaican, of course many Bob Marley songs focus on issues in the country. These songs could also often be placed in the other themes developed in this paper, but since they focus explicitly on Jamaica, they are offered here. Bob Marley's songs about Jamaica include:

- Burnin' and Lootin'—a song about oppression, police brutality, and systemic injustice in Jamaica
- Concrete Jungle—a song about urban poverty in Kingston, Jamaica's Trenchtown neighborhood
- Rebel Music (3 O'Clock Roadblock)—a song about lack of freedom and political tension in Jamaica, as well wanting to be free
- Rude Boy—a song about ghetto youth in Kingston, Jamaica; the term refers to a 1960s Kingston subculture figure, who was known to be rebellious yet stylish and cool
- Simmer Down—a song about the rude boys becoming less violent
- Trenchtown Rock—a song about Trench Town, Kingston, and feeling good through music

The song "Burnin' and Lootin'" was addressed earlier, in the section on resistance against oppression; but it clearly deals with the realities of life in Jamaica that Bob Marley experienced. In "Concrete Jungle," Bob Marley says, "No sun will shine in my day today (No sun will shine).

The high yellow moon won't come out to play (Won't come out to play). Darkness has covered my light, (And has changed) and has changed my day into night, ooh. Now, where is this love to be found?" Then he sings, "Instead of a concrete jungle (jungle), Where the living is harder (concrete jungle). Concrete jungle (jungle)." Attempting to describe life in Jamaica, he sings, "

No chains around my feet but I'm not free, I know I am bound here in captivity. And I've never known happiness, And I've never known sweet caresses. Still, I be always laughing like a clown, Won't someone help me 'cause I (sweet life)."

In "Rebel Music," Bob Marley describes his frustrations with police road blocks and how it potentially interferes with his use of marijuana, a drug that is sacred to Rastas: "Never get caught in a roadblock, And tell the Mr. Police that I ain't got no birth certificate right here. Oh, why can't we roam, This open country? (open country). Oh, why can't we be what we wanna be? We want to be free, yeah (wanna be free). Three o'clock in the rain, Roadblock curfew. And I've got to throw away, Yes, I've got to throw away, A-yes, I, I've got to throw away, My little herb stock! (do-do-do-do-do)."

In "Simmer Down," Bob Marley encourages young people not to respond to tough lives with violence. He sings: "Simmer down, you lickin' too hot, so, Simmer down, soon you'll get dropped, so, Simmer down, can you hear what I say. Simmer down, that why won't you, why won't you, why won't you simmer down. Simmer down. Long time people dem used to say, What sweet nanny goat a go run him belly, so, Simmer down, oh control your temper. Simmer down, for the battle will be hotter. Simmer down, can you hear what I say. Simmer down, oh that I'm a leaving you today, Simmer down."

Each of these songs is about realities of life Bob Marley experienced in Jamaica. Many other songs about issues of justice, reviewed later in this paper, could also conceivably be placed in this category, as well. They are discussed within other themes since their main idea relates to those themes more so than just life in Jamaica.

5. Calls for unity and peace/reconciliation/ Anti-war and anti-violence messages—Bob Marley was clearly anti-war and generally denounced violence as a solution to problems (except in self-defense, which he did write and sing about). Many Bob Marley songs also call for unity among peoples of the world, as well as for peace and reconciliation. Such songs include:

- Fussing and Fighting—a song about love, peace, and harmony
- No More Trouble—a song about peace, love, and unity as a solution to problems in the world
- One Foundation—a song about unity and love
- One Love—a song about unity, peace, and coming together
- So Jah Seh—a song about love and unity
- War—a song about eradicating racism and inequality

Justice in Marley's work isn't only about confrontation, it's also about reconciliation and harmony. In the song, "Fussing and Fighting," Bob Marley writes: "We should really love each other (love each other), In peace and harmony (peace and harmony), ooh." But he notes: "Instead, we're fussing and fighting (fussing and fighting), And them workin' iniquity (... iniquity)." So, he asks: "Why's this fussing and a-fighting? I wanna know, Lord, I wanna know (... know), I wanna know now. Why's this cheating and backbiting? (I wanna know ...) I wanna know, oh, Lord, I wanna know now."

In the song, "No More Trouble," Bob Marley says clearly that we don't need anymore trouble in the world, but what we need is love: "Make love and not war! 'Cause we don't need no trouble. What we need is love (love), To guide and protect us on. (on). If you hope good down from above, (love), Help the weak if you are strong now. (love). We don't need no trouble; What we need is love. Oh, no! We don't need - we don't need - no more trouble! Lord knows, we don't need no trouble!"

The song, "One Love" promotes collective unity across racial, social, and national boundaries. The idea is that justice involves breaking down divisions that lead to conflict. Although Bob Marley addressed conflict and injustice directly, he also emphasized reconciliation and human unity. "One Love" imagines justice not simply as punishment or revenge, but as harmony among people. A key lyric is "Let's get together and feel all right." This theme became especially significant during periods of political violence in Jamaica during the 1970s. In the song, the core justice theme is unity and reconciliation. Unlike Bob Marley's more confrontational songs, this one imagines justice through solidarity and peace. The song suggests justice also requires healing social division. The lyrics include: "One love, one heart, Let's get together and feel alright. Hear the children crying (one love), Hear the children crying (one heart). Sayin', 'Give thanks and praise to the Lord, And I will feel alright.' Sayin', 'Let's get together and feel alright.'"

In the song, "So Jah Seh," Bob Marley begins: "And verily, verily, I'm saying unto thee Unite yourself and love Imanity." And then he asks: "'Cause puss and dog, they get together What's wrong with loving one another? Puss and dog, they get together, What's wrong with you, my brother?" He seems to be asserting that if cats and dogs can get along, surely human beings should be able to, as well.

In the song, "War," whose lyrics are adapted from a speech by Haile Selassie, Marley argues that true peace—and therefore justice—cannot exist until racism and inequality are eradicated. Justice is framed as global, not just local. In the song, the core justice theme is racial equality and anti-racism. The lyrics are adapted almost directly from a speech by Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie before the United Nations. An important lyric is: Until the philosophy, which hold one race, Superior and another, Inferior, Is finally, And permanently, Discredited, And abandoned, Everywhere is war, Me say war." He continues: "That until there are no longer, First-class and second-class citizens of any nation, Until the colour of a man's skin, Is of no more significance, than the colour of his eyes, Me say war." And it goes on: "That until the basic human rights Are equally

guaranteed to all Without regard to race, Dis a war." And: "That until that day, The dream of lasting peace, World citizenship, Rule of international morality, Will remain in but a fleeting illusion to be pursued, But never attained. Now everywhere is war, War." The song treats racism itself as a form of ongoing war and injustice.

Each of the songs in this theme, the most famous of which is likely "War," is about unity and peace. Much of the music of Bob Marley is about this issue, and he spoke regularly in the media about his desire for world peace, and in particular, peace on the African continent.

6. Resistance against oppression/Empowerment of the oppressed/liberation and freedom—One of Bob Marley's central themes is resisting systems of domination, especially colonialism, racism, and state violence. Songs that pertain to these issues include:

- Burnin' and Lootin'—described earlier in the paper
- Crazy Baldhead—a song about resisting exploitative power structures
- Get Up, Stand Up—a song about standing up for your rights to demand change
- Small Axe—a song about resisting oppression and empowering the powerless
- So Much Trouble in the World—a song about global suffering and moral responsibility to do something about it

Songs like "Burnin' and Lootin'" and "Get Up, Stand Up" call for dignity and self-defense against oppression. In "Burnin' and Lootin,'" discussed earlier, the core justice theme is police violence and survival under oppression. The song reflects tension between poor communities and state authority in Jamaica. The lyrics describe living under surveillance and threat while also expressing anger toward unjust systems. An important lyric is: "This morning I woke up in a curfew. O God, I was a prisoner too, yeah! Could not recognize the faces standing over me. They were all dressed in uniforms of brutality, eh!"

In "Get Up, Stand Up," Marley frames justice as something people must actively demand rather than wait for. A key lyric is: "Get up, stand up: stand up for your rights." In this song, the core justice theme is human rights and political resistance. In this song, Marley argues that oppressed people must fight actively for their rights rather than passively wait for salvation or political change. The repeated demand to "stand up for your rights" frames justice as something people must fight for, not passively wait to receive. Bob Marley wrote it partly after seeing poverty and inequality in Haiti. The song became an international protest anthem used in labor movements, anti-colonial struggles, and human rights campaigns around the world.

Bob Marley often connected justice with liberation, both physical and mental. A famous example is "Redemption Song," discussed earlier, where he echoes ideas from Pan-African leader Marcus Garvey: "Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery." Justice here is not only legal equality but freedom from psychological colonization, fear, and inherited oppression. In this song, the core justice theme is mental and spiritual liberation. This acoustic song is more reflective than militant. Bob Marley argues that oppression survives partly through psychological control.

In the song, "Crazy Baldhead," the core justice theme is resistance to exploitative power structures. "Baldhead" in Rastafari symbolism refers to corrupt elites or oppressive authorities disconnected from spiritual truth. An important lyric is: "We gonna' chase those crazy baldheads out of town." The song reflects frustration with systems that exploit ordinary people economically and culturally.

The song, "Small Axe," is also a song about resisting oppression. Key lyrics include: "If you are the big tree, We are the small axe, Sharpened to cut you down (well sharp), Ready to cut you down." The song later offers "And whosoever diggeth a pit, Lord, Shall fall in it, shall fall in it. Whosoever diggeth a pit, Shall bury in it, shall bury in it." The theme seems to be that powerless people will rise up and defeat the powerful, when necessary.

In the song, "So Much Trouble in the World," the core justice theme is global suffering and moral responsibili-

ty. Important lyrics include: "You see men sailing on their ego trips. Blast off on their spaceships. Million miles from reality. No care for you, no care for me." Justice is framed as both personal ethics and collective responsibility. This song broadens Bob Marley's focus from Jamaica to worldwide injustice.

Stated simply, Bob Marley became a voice for the voiceless. Across his music, Marley gives voice to the marginalized, encouraging pride, identity, and self-worth. Justice becomes about reclaiming agency and resisting narratives imposed by dominant powers. Importantly, Bob Marley is quoted as saying, "My life no important to me, but other people life important. My life only important if me can help plenty of people." He genuinely cared about others and wanted a better life for them.

7. Anti-colonial and Pan-African identity/Africa – Many songs of Bob Marley express solidarity with Africa and Black liberation struggles worldwide (Mshigeni, & Jones, 2026). Bob Marley's songs about Africa include:

- African Herbsman—a song about reclaiming African heritage and resisting the lasting effects of slavery; Marley speaks of a "retired slaveman"
- Africa Unite—a song about the unification of all African nations and the global African diaspora
- Survival— a song about Black power, African unity, and resilience against systemic oppression
- War—described earlier in the paper
- Zimbabwe—a song about the revolution in Zimbabwe for political freedom

The songs, "Africa Unite," "Zimbabwe," and "War" are really strong examples. The song, "Africa Unite" has a simple theme, saying: "Africa unite, 'Cause we're moving right out of Babylon. And we're going to our Father's land, yeah." It continues, "How good and how pleasant it would be, Before God and man, yeah, To see the unification of all Africans, yeah. As it's been said already, let it be done, yeah. We are the children of the Rastaman. We are the children of the Iyaman. So, Africa unite, 'Cause the children wanna come home (Africa unite), yeah, yeah. Africa unite." The key theme is obviously the unification of all African peoples.

In the song, "Zimbabwe," the core justice theme is anti-colonial independence. It was written during the struggle against white minority rule in what became Zimbabwe. Important lyric: "Every man gotta' right to decide his own destiny." Bob Marley later performed at Zimbabwe's independence celebration in 1980. "War" is especially important because its lyrics are adapted from a speech by Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, condemning racism and inequality. Marley turns the speech into a musical demand for global justice.

In the song, "Survival," the core justice theme is Pan-African solidarity. An important lyric: "How can you be sitting there. Telling me that you care. That you care? When every time I look around, The people suffer in the suffering In every way, in everywhere." This song and the album of the same name strongly support African liberation movements (Amuzu, 2025). The album cover itself features the flags of newly independent African nations at the time.

Bob Marley clearly felt a strong connection to Africa, and he traveled there four times toward the end of his life. Perhaps most significant was his trip to Ethiopia, home of Emperor Haile Selassie I. Ethiopia is significant to Rastas for this reason, but also because Pan-African leader Marcus Garvey once prophesied, "Look to Africa, where a black king shall be crowned, for the day of deliverance is near." When Selassie was crowned in 1930, early Rastas in Jamaica believed this prophecy had been fulfilled. Further, Ethiopia resisted European colonization and Haile Selassie granted 500 acres of land in the town of Shashemene, Ethiopia, to the Ethiopian World Federation, allowing Rastas to repatriate to Africa.

8. Critique of inequality and poverty/economic justice—Bob Marley frequently highlighted issues of economic inequality and injustice. Songs related to this theme included:

- Burnin' and Lootin'—described earlier in the paper
- Concrete Jungle—described earlier in the paper
- Get Up, Stand Up—described earlier in the paper

- Rat Race—a song about political corruption, violence, and the exhausting, selfish nature of modern competitive life
- Slave Driver—a song about the harsh realities of slavery
- Them Belly Full (But We Hungry)—a song about the gap between the rich and the poor
- War—described earlier in the paper

The song "Rat Race" is largely about the struggles of modern life. He sings, "You got the horse race, You got the dog race, You got the human race, But this is a rat race, yeah. Rat race!" But, in the song, he also asserts: "When the cat's away, The mice will play. Political violence fill ya city, yeah! Don't involve rasta in your say say. I'm sayin' Rasta don't work for no CIA."

In the song, "Slave Driver," Bob Marley sings: "Everytime I hear the crack of a whip, My blood runs cold. I remember on the slave ship, How they brutalize our very souls. Today they say that we are free, Only to be chained in poverty. Good God, I think it's illiteracy, It's only a machine that make money." The theme of the song is how the harms of slavery have followed people of color into modern life, a life often characterized by poverty.

In "Them Belly Full (But We Hungry)," Bob Marley contrasts wealth and hunger, exposing the gap between rich and poor. Justice here is tied to fair distribution of resources and dignity for the disadvantaged. Bob Marley frequently wrote about inequality, hunger, and exploitation of poor communities. Songs like this one criticize economic systems where wealth and power are concentrated among elites while ordinary people suffer. Justice in these songs means fair access to resources, dignity for workers, and relief from systemic poverty. In this song, the core justice theme is economic inequality. In this song, Bob Marley critiques class divisions and the suffering caused by poverty. An important lyric is: "A hungry mob is an angry mob."

Bob Marley warns that injustice and hunger inevitably create political instability. This is common in his songs within this theme.

9. Human rights and universal equality/social justice—Many Bob Marley songs, including some of his most well-known, pertain to issues of social justice. They include:

- 400 Years—a song about, often interpreted as being against oppression, slavery, and colonial injustice of centuries; one of the most significant social justice songs of Bob Marley's career
- Babylon System—a song about corrupt, oppressive, and exploitative societal structures, or Babylon
- Get Up, Stand Up—described earlier in the paper
- Guiltiness—a song about the exploitation of the poor by those in power
- Real Situation—a song about nations fighting and people struggling
- Revolution—a song about the solution of a revolution
- One Drop—a song about resisting the system through spiritual unity and cultural resistance
- So Much Trouble in the World—described earlier in the paper
- Survival—described earlier in the paper
- The Heathen—a song about fighting back to do what is right
- Them Belly Full (But We Hungry) —described earlier in the paper
- Top Rankin—a song about powerful people not wanting the people to unite
- War—described earlier in the paper
- We and Dem—a song about the divide between the marginalized "we" (the oppressed) and "dem" (the oppressors or established system)

In the song, "400 Years," Bob Marley begins essentially with a question, "Four hundred years (four hundred years, four hundred years, wo oh oh oh), And it's the same, the same (wo-o-o-o) philosophy. I've said it's four hundred years (four hundred years, four hundred years, wo oh oh oh). Look, how long (wo oh oh oh). And the people they (wo oh oh oh) still can't see, Why do they fight against the poor youth of today?" And he continues: "And without these youths, they would be gone, All gone astray." He then sings, "The youth is

gonna be strong, So, won't you come with me (come with me). I'll take you to a land of liberty, Where we can live (we can live), live a good, good life and be free." This seems to be an encouragement of people to keep going, even after 400 years of oppression.

The song, "Babylon System" is a song about refusing to play nice. It says: "We refuse to be, What you wanted us to be. We are what we are, That's the way it's going to be, if you don't know. You can't educate I, For no equal opportunity (talkin' 'bout my freedom). Talkin' 'bout my freedom, People freedom and liberty!" And it continues: "Yeah, we've been trodding on the winepress much too long. Rebel, rebel! Yes, we've been trodding on the winepress much too long. Rebel, rebel!" The song addresses Babylon, saying "Babylon system is the vampire, yea! (vampire), Suckin' the children day by day, yeah! Me say de Babylon system is the vampire, falling empire, Suckin' the blood of the sufferers, yeah! Building church and university, wooh, yeah! Deceiving the people continually, yeah! Me say them graduatin' thieves and murderers Look out now they suckin' the blood of the sufferers (sufferers). Yea! (sufferers)." And it states, in a dominant way, to "Tell the children the truth. Tell the children the truth. Tell the children the truth right now! Come on and tell the children the truth. Tell the children the truth. Tell the children the truth. Tell the children the truth. Come on and tell the children the truth."

"Guitliness" is about holding people accountable for the harms they inflict on others.

Bob Marley sings: "Guiltiness (talkin' 'bout guiltiness), Pressed on their conscience, oh yeah, oh yeah. And they live their lives (they live their lives), On false pretense everyday, Each and everyday, yeah." He describes the powerful as the big fish, saying: "These are the big fish (these are the big fish), Who always try to eat down the small fish, A just the small fish. I tell you again: they would do anything, To materialize their every wish." And he wishes them bad things, singing "Woe to the downpressors. They'll eat the bread of sorrow! Woe to the downpressors, They'll eat the bread of sad tomorrow! Woe to the downpressors, They'll eat the bread of sorrow!" Notice the term downpressor is a replacement for oppressor, as Bob Marley felt that the sound "up" in oppressor did not fit the word, whereas "down" makes much more sense in this context.

The song, "Real Situation" begins with two questions, saying: "Check out the real situation, Nation war against nation. Where did it all begin? When will it end?" Bob Marley continues, suggesting a violent end to the situation, saying "Well, it seems like, total destruction the only solution. And there ain't no use, no one can stop them now. Ain't no use, nobody can stop them now." And he characterizes the behavior of the powerful this way: "Give them an inch, they take a yard, Give them a yard, they take a mile (ooh)." But then he reasons, for all listeners: " Once a man and twice a child, And everything is just for a while" in way that may give some hope to those hearing the song.

In the song, "So Much Trouble in the World," Bob Marley begins with the statement, "So much trouble in the world." But then he sings, more positively: "Bless my eyes this morning, Jah sun is on the rise once again. The way earthly things are going, Anything can happen." Still, he focuses on the acts of the powerful, saying "You see men sailing on their ego trips, Blast off on their spaceships. Million miles from reality, No care for you, no care for me." And he continues: "Now they are sitting on a time bomb (bomb, bomb, bomb! bomb, bomb, bomb!). Now I know the time has come (bomb, bomb, bomb! bomb, bomb, bomb!). What goes on up is coming on down (bomb, bomb, bomb! bomb, bomb, bomb!). Goes around and comes around (bomb, bomb, bomb! bomb, bomb, bomb!)." So, the song has a very negative connotation, but he does seem to suggest in the song that something can be done about it.

Then, in "We and Dem," Bob Marley sings about vengeance. He sings: "We no know how we and dem a-go work it out. But someone will have to pay, For the innocent blood, That they shed every day. Oh, children, mark my word. It's what the Bible say, yeah, yeah."

Bob Marley consistently argued that justice applies to all humanity, not just one nation or group. His music links local struggles in Jamaica to global struggles against racism, war, and inequality. That broad moral vision helped make his work influential far beyond reggae music, including in anti-apartheid movements, civil rights activism, and international peace campaigns.

10. Other—Finally, Bob Marley sang a lot about a wide variety of other issues, some pertaining to themes addressed below, while others not. Such songs include:

- Ambush in the Night—a song about the December 1976 assassination attempt on his life, where gunmen opened fire at his Hope Road home in Jamaica
- Bad Card—a song about resilience against betrayal and deceitful, dirty dealings, allegedly directed at a former manager
- Brain Washing—a song using Western fairy tales that are used to distract the poor from their reality
- Corner Stone—a song about overcoming rejection after his White family would not acknowledge him
- Duppy Conqueror V/4—a song about overcoming a wrongful accusation and not being able to be held down
- I Shot the Sheriff—a song about using violence in self-defense
- Johnny Was—a song about the killing of a woman's son
- Keep On Moving (Rainford Hugh "Lee" Perry) —a song about a person accused of a killing they did not do
- Memphis—a song about overcoming adversity and being free from it
- Midnight Ravers—a song about being lost in confusion, referring to issues such the artificiality of modern nightlife, described metaphorically as "pollution"
- Misty Morning—a song about a day without sun and wanting someone to straighten out tomorrow
- Natty Dread—a song about having your way, no matter what the world says
- Night Shift—a song about hard work, perseverance, and dedication to one's job
- No Sympathy—a song about self-reliance in the face of rejection from friends who won't give Marley love or sympathy
- No Woman, No Cry—a song about comfort and hope
- Pimper's Paradise—a song about a woman caught in a lifestyle of addiction, materialism, and exploitation
- Put It On—a song about taking control of your own destiny
- Riding High (Neville Livingston)—a song about confronting a devious person and catching him in the end
- Running Away—a song about the impossibility of escaping oneself, one's burdens, or the truth
- So Much Things to Say—a song about people who have done bad things, encouraging people to "stand firm and give Jah thanks and praises"
- Soul Almighty—a song about resilience and staying strong, with references to different dances
- Soul Rebel—a song about a person gossiping about Marley
- Talkin' Blues—a song about overcoming a cold and hard place
- Three Little Birds—a song about pretty birds who would come by the window at Hope Road, his home, recording studio, and the headquarters for his Tuff Gong reggae label
- Time Will Tell—a song about the reality of life, in spite of appearances
- Try Me—a song about comfort, with Marley saying "try me" for comfort to a person who is hurting
- Want More—a song about wanting more than you need, as well about back-biters and back-stabbers
- Who the Cap Fit—a song about hypocrisy, betrayal, and fake friends
- Work—a song about resilience, labor, and spiritual dedication to pushing forward despite life's hardships

In the song, "Ambush in the Night," Bob Marley sings about the December 1976 assassination attempt on his life, where gunmen opened fire at his Hope Road home in Jamaica. Key lyrics in the song pertaining to the assassination attempt include: "Ambush in the night, All guns aiming at me, Ambush in the night, They opened fire on me now." Yet, the song is about much more, including how the powerful treat the powerless. Consider, for example, these lyrics: "See them fighting for power, But they know not the hour, So they bribing with their guns, spare-parts and money, Trying to belittle our integrity now, They say what we know, Is just what they teach us, And we're so ignorant, 'Cause every time they can reach us, Through political strategy, They keep us hungry, And when you gonna get some food, Your brother got to be your enemy, we-e-ell!"

In the song, "Corner Stone," Bob Marley sings about the rejection of him by his White father. He sings, "The stone that the builder refused, Will always be the head cornerstone." And he continues: "You're a builder baby, Here I am a stone. Don't you think and refuse me. 'Cause the things people refuse, Are the things they should use. Do you hear me? Hear what I say."

In the song, "Night Shift," Bob Marley sings "Working on a forklift, In the night shift. Working on a night shift, With the forklift. From a.m. … To p.m. (working all night!)." And he asserts that, it is because of his work, that people will eat: "Warehouse … You're empty, yeah! Go around the corner, Bring your goods! Go around the other corner, Bring your suitcases …

By the sweat of my brow … Eat your bread … By the sweat of my brow … Eat your bread!"

And in "Who the Cap Fit," Bob Marley tells people to wear the caps they earn through their behaviors. And he warns, "Man to man is so unjust, children. You don't know who to trust.

Your worst enemy could be your best friend, And your best friend your worst enemy. Some will eat and drink with you, Then behind them su-su 'pon you. Only your friend know your secrets, So only he could reveal it." This is a mind-blowing statement, reflected in one of many Bob Marley's songs about other issues besides those found in the main themes above.

Social Justice, to Bob Marley

From the review above, it is clear that many issues pertaining to social justice run through the music of Bob Marley. The author created Figure 1 to illustrate ten Bob Marley songs centered heavily on issues of social justice. They include the following songs. First, "Get Up, Stand Up" is a song about standing up for what is right. Second, "Redemption Song" is a song pertaining to mental liberation from oppression. Third, "War" is a song that condemns racism and war. Fourth, "Burnin' and Lootin'" is a song in response to police violence. Fifth, "Them Belly Full (But We Hungry)" is a song that offers a critique of economic inequality. Sixth, "Zimbabwe" is an ode to the struggle for independence in the African country. Seventh, "Slave Driver" is a song about the lasting harms of slavery. Eighth, "Concrete Jungle" is a song about urban poverty. Ninth, "Rat Race" is a song about the struggles of life. Tenth, "So Much Trouble in the World" is a song about major problems in life.

As you can tell, the music and lyrics of Bob Marley are deeply tied to justice, including social, political, spiritual, and economic justice. Across so many of his songs, Bob Marley repeatedly connects justice with liberation, dignity, equality, resistance to oppression, spiritual awakening, and collective unity. His music treats justice not just as law or government policy, but as a transformation of society, consciousness, and human relationships.

CONCLUSION

Bob Marley's music powerfully reflects issues of justice through its focus on oppression, inequality, unity, and spiritual liberation. Writing from the context of Jamaica's colonial history and ongoing social struggles, Bob Marley used his lyrics as a platform to challenge systems of power and inspire change. His songs were not only expressions of personal belief but also calls to action for listeners around the world.

One of the most prominent themes in Bob Marley's work is resistance against oppression. He consistently encouraged people to stand up for their rights and reject systems that exploit or marginalize them. This idea is closely tied to his critique of economic inequality. Bob Marley highlighted the stark contrast between wealth and poverty, drawing attention to the suffering of the poor and the injustice of unequal resource distribution. Through these messages, he emphasized that justice must include fairness and dignity for all people.

In addition to confronting injustice, Bob Marley promoted unity and peace as essential components of a just society. His lyrics called for people to come together across racial, cultural, and national divides. For Bob

Marley, justice is clearly about reconciliation and collective harmony. He suggested that true equality can only exist when divisions between people are broken down.

Bob Marley also addressed global injustice, particularly through his opposition to war and racism. He presented justice as a universal issue, arguing that peace cannot exist until discrimination and inequality are eliminated worldwide. This broad perspective reinforces the idea that justice extends beyond individual nations and must be pursued collectively.

Finally, Bob Marley's music introduced a spiritual dimension to justice. Influenced by his beliefs, he often connected freedom with inner liberation. He encouraged listeners to free themselves from mental constraints and reclaim their sense of identity and self-worth. In this way, justice is not only political or social but also deeply personal.

In conclusion, Bob Marley's lyrics reflect a multifaceted understanding of justice that includes resistance, equality, unity, and spiritual freedom. Incredibly, after more than 40 years since his passing, his music continues to resonate because it speaks to both individual empowerment and the ongoing global struggle for a more just world. As the author has traveled to every continent on the planet, as well as more than 50 countries, he can say that he has heard Bob Marley being played on six of the continents (people do live and work in Antarctica, but the author of this work did not have the opportunity to hear the music they choose to play). Some of his most vivid memories include hearing Bob Marley songs in Tel Aviv, Israel along the Mediterranean Sea, Havana, Cuba along the Caribbean, and the infamous Soweto township in South Africa. It's thus no wonder that Bob Marley's album "Exodus" was named the "Album of the Century" in 1999 by *Time Magazine*, and his song "One Love" was designated "Song of the Millennium" by the *BBC*, and that he was posthumously inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1994. Finally, in 2001 he was bestowed The Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award, an honor given by the Recording Academy to "performers who during their lifetimes, have made creative contributions of outstanding artistic significance to the field of recording."

Table 1. List of Bob Marley Songs

1. 400 Years
2. Acoustic Medley
3. Adam And Eve
4. Africa Unite
5. African Herbsman
6. All Day All
7. All In One
8. Ambush In The Night
9. Amen
10. Baby We've Got A Date (rock It Baby)
11. Babylon System
12. Back Out
13. Bad Card

14. Bend Down Low
15. Blackman Redemption
16. Brain Washing
17. Brand New Second Hand
18. Buffalo Soldier
19. Burnin' And Lootin'
20. Bus Dem Shut (pyaka)
21. Caution
22. Chances Are
23. Chant Down Babylon
24. Cheer Up
25. Coming In From The Cold
26. Comma Comma
27. Concrete Jungle
28. Cornerstone
29. Could You Be Loved
30. Craven Choke Puppy
31. Crazy Baldheads
32. Crisis
33. Cry To Me
34. Dewdrops
35. Do It Twice
36. Don't Rock The Boat
37. Donna
38. Dreamland
39. Duppy Conqueror
40. Easy Skanking
41. Exodus
42. Forever Loving Jah

43. Freedom Time
44. Fussing And Fighting
45. Get Up, Stand Up
46. Give Thanks And Praises
47. Gonna Get You
48. Good Lovin Feat. Lauren Hill
49. Guava Jelly
50. Guiltiness
51. Hallelujah
52. Hammer
53. High Tide Or Low Tide
54. How Many Times
55. Hypocrites
56. I Am Going Home
57. I Know
58. I Know A Place
59. I Made A Mistake
60. I Shot The Sheriff
61. I'm Hurting Inside
62. I'm Still Waitin'
63. Iron Lion Zion
64. Is This Love
65. It Hurts To Be Alone
66. Jah Live
67. Jailhouse
68. Jammin'
69. Johnny Was
70. Judge Not
71. Jump Nykabinghi

72. Kaya
73. Keep On Moving
74. Kinky Reggae
75. Let Him Go
76. Lick Samba
77. Lively Up Yourself
78. Looking Your Big Brown Eyes
79. Love And Affection
80. Melow Mood
81. Midnight Ravers
82. Misty Morning
83. Mix Up, Mix Up
84. Mr Brown
85. Mr. Chatterbox
86. My Cup
87. Natty Dread
88. Natural Mystic
89. Night Shift
90. No More Trouble
91. No Sympathy
92. No Woman No Cry
93. One Cup Of Coffee
94. One Drop
95. One Dub
96. One Foundation
97. One Love
98. Pass It On
99. Pimper's Paradise
100. Positive Vibration

101. Punky Reggae Party
102. Put It On
103. Rainbow Country
104. Rasta Man Chant
105. Rastaman Live Up!
106. Rat Race
107. Real Situation
108. Rebel Music (3 O'clock Roadblock)
109. Redder Than Red
110. Redemption Song
111. Revolution
112. Ride Natty Ride
113. Riding High
114. Rock It Baby
115. Rocking Steady
116. Roots
117. Roots Rock Reggae
118. Running Away.
119. Satisfy My Soul
120. Screw Face
121. She's Gone
122. Shock Of Mighty
123. Simmer Down
124. Slave Driver
125. Small Axe
126. Smile Jamaica
127. Smoke 2 Joints
128. So Jah She
129. So Much Things To Say

130. So Much Trouble In The World
131. Soul Almighty
132. Soul Rebel
133. Soul Shakedown Party
134. Sound The Trumpet
135. Stand Alone
136. Stiff Necked Fools
137. Stir It Up
138. Stop That Train
139. Sun Is Shining
140. Survival
141. Talking Blues
142. Teenager In Love
143. Thank You Lord
144. The Heathen
145. Them Belly Full (but We Hungry)
146. There She Goes
147. This Train
148. Three Little Birds
149. Time Will Tell
150. Top Rankin'
151. Trench Town
152. Trenchtown Rock
153. Try Me
154. Turn Your Lights Down Low
155. Waiting In Vain
156. Wake Up And Live
157. Want More
158. War

159. We And Dem

160. Who The Cap Fit

161. Why Should I

162. Work

163. Zimbabwe

164. Zion Train

Source: https://exceptionalcaribbean.com/2020/12/22/a-complete-list-of-bob-marleys-songs-2/

Table 2. List of Bob Marley Albums, by Year (1965-1981)

The Wailing Wailers (1965)—mostly an album about love and loss

1. (I'm Gonna) Put It On—a song about gratitude and life positivity
2. I Need You (1964 version)—a song about love and loss of a romantic relationship
3. Lonesome Feeling—a song about pain and sadness after a breakup
4. What's New Pussycat?—a song about pursuing love
5. One Love—a song about unity, peace, and coming together
6. When The Well Runs Dry—a song about cheating in a romantic relationship
7. Ten Commandments of Love—a song about ten vows for a devoted, lasting relationship
8. Rude Boy—a song about ghetto youth in Kingston, Jamaica; the term refers to a 1960s Kingston subculture figure, who was known to rebellious yet stylish and cool
9. It Hurts To Be Alone—a song about loneliness after a romantic breakup
10. Love And Affection—a song about heartbreak and loneliness
11. I'm Still Waiting—a song about yearning for romance
12. Simmer Down—a song about the rude boys becoming less violent

Soul Rebels (1970)

1. Soul Rebel—a song about a person gossiping about Marley
2. Try Me—a song about comfort, with Marley saying "try me" for comfort to a person who is hurting
3. It's Alright—a song about perseverance and the idea that life will be alright
4. 4.No Sympathy—a song about self-reliance in the face of rejection from friends who won't give Marley love or sympathy
5. My Cup—a song about emotional release and crying to feel better after the loss of a best friend
6. Soul Almighty—a song about resilience and staying strong, with references to different dances
7. Rebel's Hop—a song about being proud, keeping on moving, and being what you want to be
8. Corner Stone—a song about overcoming rejection after his White family would not acknowledge him
9. 400 Years—a song about, often interpreted as being against oppression, slavery, and colonial injustice of centuries; one of the most significant social justice songs of Bob Marley's career
10. No Water—a song about love, asking for a nurse to visit Marley in bed
11. Reaction—a song about attraction, "rocking you," moving, and grooving
12. My Sympathy—a song about not being able to find love and sympathy

Soul Revolution (1971)

1. Keep On Moving (Rainford Hugh "Lee" Perry) —a song about a person accused of a killing they did not do
2. Don't Rock My Boat—a song about soul-satisfying love
3. Put It On—a song about gratitude and positive energy

4. Fussing and Fighting—a song about love, peace, and harmony
5. Duppy Conqueror V/4—a song about overcoming a wrongful accusation and not being able to be held down
6. Memphis—a song about overcoming adversity and being free from it
7. Riding High (Neville Livingston)—a song about confronting a devious person and catching him in the end
8. Kaya—a song about finding peace and joy, often through smoking marijuana (kaya is a term for the herb among Rastas); Marley says he is feeling "so high" now
9. African Herbsman—a song about reclaiming African heritage and resisting the lasting effects of slavery; Marley speaks of a "retired slaveman"
10. Stand Alone—a song about wasting time in a relationship
11. Sun is Shining—a very positive song about optimism; Marley says the weather is sweet and it makes him want to move his feet
12. Brain Washing—a song using Western fairy tales that are used to distract the poor from their reality

Catch a Fire (1973)

1. Concrete Jungle—a song about urban poverty in Kingston, Jamaica's Trenchtown neighborhood
2. Slave Driver—a song about the harsh realities of slavery
3. 400 Years—see the description from the Soul Rebels album
4. Stop That Train—a song about escaping from loneliness and hardship
5. Baby We've Got a Date (Rock It Baby) —a song about the excitement of meeting a lover
6. Stir It Up—a song about passion and sexual desire, written for his wife, Rita
7. Kinky Reggae—a song about an adventurous sexual encounter while traveling through London's Piccadilly Circus
8. No More Trouble—a song about peace, love, and unity as a solution to problems in the world
9. Midnight Ravers—a song about being lost in confusion, referring to issues such the artificiality of modern nightlife, described metaphorically as "pollution"

Burnin' (1973)

1. Get Up, Stand Up—a song about a song urging listeners to fight against oppression and stand up for their rights, as noted earlier
2. Hallelujah Time—a song about resilience, Rastafarian faith, and hope for a better future amidst hardship
3. I Shot the Sheriff—a song about using violence in self-defense
4. Burnin' and Lootin—a song about oppression, police brutality, and systemic injustice in Jamaica
5. Put It On—a song about taking control of your own destiny
6. Small Axe—a song about resisting oppression
7. Pass It On—a song about helping others and not living selfishly
8. Duppy Conqueror—a song about overcoming oppression and personal obstacles
9. One Foundation—a song about unity and love
10. Rastaman Chant—a song about the downfall of "Babylon" and the promised liberation of Rastafari to Zion

Natty Dread (1974)

1. Lively Up Yourself—a song about joy and self-empowerment
2. No Woman, No Cry—a song about comfort and hope
3. Them Belly Full (But We Hungry) —a song about inequality, poverty, and oppression, but also about rising up above it
4. Rebel Music (3 O'Clock Roadblock)—a song about lack of freedom and political tension in Jamaica, as well wanting to be free
5. So Jah Seh—a song about love and unity
6. Natty Dread—a song about having your way, no matter what the world says

7. Bend Down Low—a song about love and connection
8. Talkin' Blues—a song about overcoming a cold and hard place
9. Revolution—a song about the solution of a revolution
10. Am-A-Do—a song about romantic devotion and intimacy

Live (1975)

1. Trenchtown Rock—a song about Trench Town, Kingston, and feeling good through music
2. Burnin' and Lootin—a song about police brutality, oppression, and systemic injustice in Jamaica
3. Them Belly Full (But We Hungry) —a song about social inequality, poverty, and the economic disparity between the rich and the poor
4. Lively Up Yourself—a song about self-empowerment to urge people to shake off negativity, stress, and oppression to elevate their spirits and energy
5. No Woman, No Cry—a song about comfort and hope, as noted in the album Natty Dread
6. I Shot the Sheriff—a song about a song about using violence in self-defense, as noted earlier
7. Get Up, Stand Up—a song about a song about a song urging listeners to fight against oppression and stand up for their rights, as noted in the album Burnin'
8. Rastaman Vibration (1976)
9. Positive Vibration—a song about optimism, resilience, and unity, and overcoming negativity with positivity
10. Roots, Rock, Reggae—a song about the power of reggae music and Rastafarianism
11. Johnny Was—a song about the killing of a woman's son
12. Cry to Me—a song about heartbreak, loneliness, and finding solace in a lover after enduring pain
13. Want More—a song about wanting more than you need, as well about back-biters and back-stabbers
14. Crazy Baldhead—a song about oppressors, called baldheads (likely White people), and how they do not appreciate who Rastas are, and chasing them out of town
15. Who the Cap Fit—a song about hypocrisy, betrayal, and fake friends
16. Night Shift—a song about hard work, perseverance, and dedication to one's job
17. War—a song about racism, injustice, and oppression, and the war that results from it, with lyrics adapted from Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I's 1963 United Nations speech, as noted earlier
18. Rat Race—a song about political corruption, violence, and the exhausting, selfish nature of modern competitive life

Exodus (1977)

1. Natural Mystic—a song about an unseen, spiritual, or supernatural energy flowing through nature and the atmosphere
2. So Much Things to Say—a song about people who have done bad things, encouraging people to "stand firm and give Jah thanks and praises"
3. Guiltiness—a song about the exploitation of the poor by those in power
4. The Heathen—fighting back to do what is right
5. Exodus—a song about the Biblical story of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt and the hope of Rastafarians to be led to freedom
6. Jamming—a song about jamming "in the name of the Lord"
7. Waiting in Vain—a song about unrequited love, uncertainty, and longing
8. Turn Your Lights Down Low—a song about longing for intimacy and encouraging a romantic connection
9. Three Little Birds—a song about pretty birds who would come by the window at Hope Road, his home, recording studio, and the headquarters for his Tuff Gong reggae label
10. One Love/People Get Ready—a song about unity, peace, and love

Kaya (1978)

1. Easy Skanking—a song about relaxation, enjoying life, and taking a break from the pressures of reality, through marijuana it is noted by Bob Marley

2. Kaya—a song about a song about finding peace and joy, often through smoking marijuana, as noted in the album Soul Revolution
3. Is This Love—a song about deep, passionate, and romantic love
4. Sun Is Shining—a song about positivity, resilience, and appreciation for life's simple blessings
5. Satisfy My Soul—a song about meeting up with a lover
6. She's Gone—a song about heartbreak following the end of a romantic relationship
7. Misty Morning—a song about a day without sun and wanting someone to straighten out tomorrow
8. Crisis—a song about living it up and giving Jah praises, in spite of real life troubles
9. Running Away—a song about the impossibility of escaping oneself, one's burdens, or the truth
10. Time Will Tell—a song about the reality of life, in spite of appearances

Babylon by Bus (1978)_

1. Positive Vibration—a song about helping others and living positively
2. Punky Reggae Party—a song about the merging of punk rock and reggae music
3. Exodus—a song about the Biblical story of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt and the hope of Rastafarians to be led to freedom, as noted in the album Exodus
4. Stir It Up—a song about passion and sexual desire, written for his wife Rita
5. Rat Race—a song about political corruption, violence, and the exhausting, selfish nature of modern competitive life, as noted in the album Rastaman Vibration
6. Concrete Jungle—a song about urban poverty, emotional despair, and the loss of innocence within Kingston, Jamaica's, impoverished Trenchtown
7. Kinky Reggae—a song about a song about an adventurous sexual encounter while traveling through London's Piccadilly Circus, as noted in the album Catch a Fire
8. Lively Up Yourself—a song about self-empowerment, urging people to shake off negativity, stress, and oppression to elevate their spirits and energy
9. Rebel Music (3 O'Clock Roadbloc)—a song about a song about lack of freedom and political tension in Jamaica, as noted in the album Natty Dread
10. War / No More Trouble—a song about a song about racism, injustice, and oppression, with lyrics adapted from Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I's 1963 United Nations speech, as noted in the album Rastaman Vibration
11. Is This Love—a song about deep, passionate, and romantic love, as noted in the album Kaya
    The Heathen—a song about resilience, resistance against oppression, and ultimate victory over corrupt systems, as noted in the album Exodus
12. Jamming—a song about unity, resilience, and spiritual togetherness, as noted in the album Exodus

Survival (1979)

1. So Much Trouble in the World—a song about troubles in the world and powerful people being out of touch with that
2. Zimbabwe—a song about the revolution in Zimbabwe for political freedom
3. Top Rankin—a song about powerful people not wanting the people to unite
4. Babylon System—a song about corrupt, oppressive, and exploitative societal structures, or Babylon
5. Survival—a song about Black power, African unity, and resilience against systemic oppression
6. Africa Unite—a song about the unification of all African nations and the global African diaspora
7. One Drop—a song about resisting the system through spiritual unity and cultural resistance
8. Ride Natty Ride—a song about Rastafarians holding firm against adversity, societal oppression, and the Babylon system
9. Ambush in the Night—a song about the December 1976 assassination attempt on his life, where gunmen opened fire at his Hope Road home in Jamaica
10. Wake Up and Live—a song about how to live fully

Uprising (1980)

1. Coming in from the Cold—a song about overcoming adversity and meeting life's challenges

2. Real Situation—a song about nations fighting and people struggling
3. Bad Card—a song about resilience against betrayal and deceitful, dirty dealings, allegedly directed at a former manager
4. We and Dem—a song about the divide between the marginalized "we" (the oppressed) and "dem" (the oppressors or established system).
5. Work—a song about resilience, labor, and spiritual dedication to pushing forward despite life's hardships
6. Zion Train—a song about a divine, unstoppable movement of spiritual awakening, liberation, and repatriation to a place of peace, from Babylon to Zion
7. Pimper's Paradise—a song about a woman caught in a lifestyle of addiction, materialism, and exploitation
8. Could You Be Loved—a song about staying grounded through love and fully living
9. Forever Loving Jah—a song about the Rastafarian faith and God or Jah
10. Redemption Song—a song about spiritual and mental liberation, urging listeners to "emancipate yourselves from mental slavery"

Died May, 1981

Source: https://www.bobmarley.com/discography/

Figure 1



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