

NORTHLIGHT THEATRE

Season Access Curriculum Preview

Student Matinee February 7



16th Street Baptist Church Bombing

the American South took place in Birmingham, Alabama on Sunday, September 15, 1963. A bomb exploded that morning at the 16th Street Baptist Church and took the lives of four black girls.

The victims, all between the ages of 11 and 14, were Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, Addie Mae Collins, and Cynthia Wesley. They were at the church that Sunday morning to take part in the services. After the bombing, scores of African American community members gathered outside of the church, beginning hours after the explosion and continuing on and off for days in protest. On September 18th, an estimated 7 thousand people gathered in and around the church as Dr. Martin Luther King lead services for the girls that were killed.

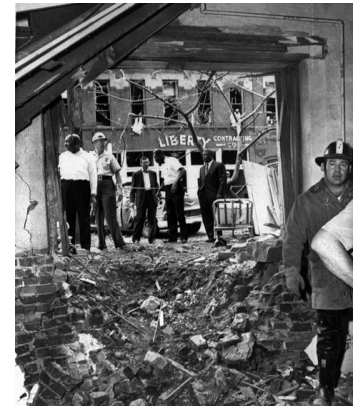
The bombing had occurred at a time when Birmingham, as well as the entire state of Alabama, was in turmoil over school desegregation. Federal courts had ordered a total of twenty-four black children, including five in Birmingham, to be admitted to all-white public schools in Alabama.

Nina Simone said about music as protest: “How can you take the memory of a man like Medgar Evers and reduce all that he was to three and a half minutes and a simple tune? That was the musical side of it I shied away from; I didn’t like ‘protest music’ because a lot of it was so simple and unimaginative it stripped the dignity away from the people it was trying to celebrate. But the Alabama church



bombing and the murder of Medgar Evers stopped that argument and with ‘Mississippi Goddam,’ I realized there was no turning back.”

Shortly after the song’s debut in New York, Nina Simone performed it to a mostly white audience at Carnegie Hall in March, 1964. It starts off at a clip. “The name of this tune is Mississippi God-DAMN,” Simone declares to nervous laughter as the band vamps behind her, “and I mean every word of it.”



Music and Protest

Resource!

Read the full article [“A History of American Protest Music: When Nina Simone Sang What Everyone was Thinking”](#)

Songs in the Show

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| “I Love(s) You, Porgy” | “Sinnerman” |
| “To Be Young, Gifted, and Black” | “Images” |
| “His Eye is on the Sparrow” | “Brown Baby” |
| “Mississippi” “Goddam” | “Go Limp” |
| “Nobody” | “Old Jim Crow” |
| | “Four Women” |

To learn more about Northlight’s Season Access
visit our website

or

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