

12 Music as resistance to state crime and violence

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Like any form of communication, music reflects a range of political and social ideologies and commentaries. In this chapter, musical authorship, performance, consumption and interaction are seen as potentially powerful activities of resistance to harmful state and corporate activities. The analysis is based on an ongoing ethnographic, auto-ethnographic, participant observation and interview research project with politically radical punk rock musicians in the United States (US), Canada and the United Kingdom (UK). Specifically, I explore the extent to which music constructions provide windows for collective opposition and resistance to forms of state crime and violence, such as war, human rights abuses, oppression, state–corporate collusion and corruption. The analysis raises questions about the utility of music as a tool of resistance but also identifies several ways in which it can be effective in developing critical consciousness and social action. The chapter concludes by presenting five general premises on the relationship between music and resistance to state crime and violence.

Few expressly criminological studies have been conducted on the relationship between music, politics and deviance. One exception is Hamm's (1995) impressive work on how music helps neo-Nazi skinhead groups recruit and sustain membership. Another critical criminological example can be found in the work of Finley (2002), who has shown that the band Rage Against the Machine created songs that were critical of mainstream criminal justice policy and that their art might be productively used to illustrate the spirit of radical criminology to students. Further, Muzzatti (2004) has examined how the defiant and confrontational music of Marilyn Manson was identified by some audiences as a cause of youth violence, especially the 1999 Columbine school shootings. However, there appears to be no systematic criminological examination of how modern popular music specifically relates to resistance to *state crime*. While there are some edited volumes in criminology that include discussion of punk music in relation to crime (see, for example, Deflem 2010), and passing references to punk music in the work of other criminologists (Ferrell 2001), there have been no scholarly analyses of state crime and non-mainstream music.

Maffesoli's (1996) work redirects ethnomusicology through two main concepts: sociality and neotribes. To him, society is increasingly chaotic, dispersed, fragmented and unpredictable, and young people in particular are constantly

bouncing among ephemeral groupings in the search to declare sovereignty over their own lives. They do this not by joining formal social action groups bounded by bureaucratic rules, roles, regulations and hierarchy, but rather through sometimes serendipitous, everyday associations with others who are also seeking autonomy from the structures and agents (such as parents, teachers and bosses) that regulate them at all other times. To Maffesoli (1996), society is not dead, but rather social essence has changed so that hedonism, celebration, spontaneity, release, venting, escapism and emotional epiphanies become the glue that binds young people together outside their formal regulated and obligatory everyday realities. This is not to be confused with a pure subcultural approach, as the groupings discussed here are not as tight-knit and distinct as subcultural theorists suggest.¹ Rather, the fluidity of everyday experience, mediated by structural and institutional forces, produces momentary collectives more than stable, oppositional social networks. In other words, instead of paying their dues, attending meetings and occupying a distinct role in an organization, young people prefer to seek out less demanding, shorter term solutions in their search for identity. In terms of independent punk music, this means going to or playing shows, possibly getting drunk and high, 'moshing' in the pit, occasional vulgar displays of hypermasculinity and, especially for performers, enjoying any bit of attention they might get from those in the audience during or after a performance. This, in a nutshell, is ephemeral individual solidarity reinforced and to a greater or lesser extent shared with others in a situational context. Contrast this with an instrumental manoeuvre, such as joining a university student group or community organization, and working on some issue of political injustice. When viewed through the lenses of cultural criminology and Maffesoli's perspective, this kind of traditional social activism is increasingly seen by young people as boring and too reminiscent of the regulatory and rule-based climate they seek to escape in their everyday lives at school, at home and in the workplace.²

In addition to Maffesoli (1996), I follow a cultural criminological approach that reflects the work of those at the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies who investigated how inequality and alienation work to produce counter-hegemonic and oppositional resistance to mainstream practices and structures. Music, especially oppositional forms of punk rock, can thus be viewed as forms of cultural engagement, which may take on political or social organizational purposes. As Ferrell (2001, 2003, 2006) found in his ethnographic studies of urban graffiti artists, dumpster divers and others on the street, 'crimes of style' are partly developed out of the desire to share creativity with others and to enact individual artistic expression (which is often quashed in schools, jobs and home life). At the same time, this drive often produces various forms of resistance to agencies of social control, such as the police, schools and government. This dovetails nicely with Maffesoli's (1996) position that young people are constantly seeking out others to share exciting experiences and situations in order to declare their independence from adult regulation.

Traditional scholarly writing about the political possibilities of music often frames the process as rational, goal-laden and palpable, as demonstrated by

studies into the effects of protest music, for example, on ideology and attitudes toward state policies (Peddie 2006). Most research finds that music can be an important component of social movements in a variety of contexts (Bennett and Peterson 2004; Eyerman and Jamison 1998; Roberts and Moore 2009). For example, there is ample evidence to show that the historic work of popular musicians such as Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger and John Lennon made some impact on more people than those who were already sympathetic to anti-war messages during the Vietnam War era (Lee 2009). Further, labour organizations, civil rights groups and the like have been found to benefit from the galvanizing power of words put to music (Eyerman and Jamison 1998). As discussed below, however, the cultural landscape in late modern societies has changed to become one of greater fluidity, in terms not only of commodities but also of social relationships and indeed music (Kauzlarich and Awsumb 2012). This has major implications for understanding the connection between present-day music and contemporary opposition to various state policies.

From the minds and mouths of musicians

The present analysis is limited to Western liberal forms of political punk music. While the emergence of punk rock in the 1960s and 1970s in the UK and the US is often characterized as unsophisticated, self-indulgent and hedonistic, a number of subgenres have since emerged that reveal how much the style has changed. Certainly there are still many punk bands that do not speak to serious political or social concerns, but an increasing number of artists over the past 20 years have organized their music around critiques of war, inequality, homophobia, state abuses and corporate capitalism. The most notable bands within this category are Propogandhi, Anti-Flag and Leftover Crack, whom I have previously analysed as ideal types of major radical-left punk rock artists (Kauzlarich and Awsumb 2012). As with most forms of Western rock music, overtly political discourses are in the minority within punk, but given the genre's somewhat unique place in history as a voice for alienated youth, it is not surprising that out of all of the styles of rock music, punk has the potential to create alternative visions and critiques of structural inequality and oppression.

I am currently conducting a large research project involving interviews with active and formerly active punk and rock musicians in the US, Canada and the UK. All of these artists have written and performed original songs that are critical of various forms of state and corporate crime and malfeasance.³ In addition to writing songs critical of capitalism, sexism, homophobia and racism, these artists have produced music with strong themes against war, human rights abuses, governmental corruption, state–corporate crime and a number of other state crimes. Eighteen interviews have been completed. Here I will share the preliminary results from the interviews as well as my own experiences as a politically radical punk rock musician.

The first theme that has emerged from the interviews is that artists have very mixed experiences in connection to using their music as a form of resistance to

state and corporate crime. For instance, several musicians who write political songs with explicitly radical lyrics are somewhat disappointed that their calculated message seems to be consumed hedonistically, not intellectually or rationally by their audience. These interviewees report that audience members will often dance, mosh and recite the lyrics during performances but little beyond this ephemeral catharsis seems to be accomplished. Bemoaning this reaction, Josh noted in one of the last punk songs he wrote:

Another curtain closes on another night
And I wonder if a thing has changed...
If you take one thing home with you tonight
Let it be a mind for change
And take it to your workplace
And take it to your school
And do something great.⁴

Among the most radical of the musicians and activists I have interviewed, Josh has produced dozens of expressly political punk rock songs with titles such as ‘System Overhaul’, ‘Reaction Dies Tonight’ and ‘Collateral Damage’, but he recently retired from political punk rock performance and composition partly because he believed that his efforts to change minds through music had limited results.⁵ However, he shared several stories of young people who seemed to be affected by the music he performed in his small town in Illinois. Josh emphasized that it was not the music alone that changed the minds of these young people, but also the discussions he and his bandmates had with them before and after their shows. This reveals a central theme in my research at this point, which is that music can be a part of social change, but is probably not alone sufficient to reach people on a political–intellectual level. Josh now occasionally plays acoustic sets at anti-war, social justice or worker gatherings, and believes this is probably a better way to use music than to try to convince the general public of the importance of structural and economic change. Beyond the fact that acoustic music seems to be more listenable given the public’s current cultural palate, it is simply much easier to grab an acoustic guitar and sing during a protest than to set up a stage with amplifiers, microphones, public address systems, mixers, monitors and drums.

Another interviewee, Andy, who wrote and performed rather blatant and sophisticated anarchistic punk songs, has also experienced the frustration of not getting through to his audience: ‘I was noticing people who knew the songs at shows – then talking to people afterwards and they voted Bush – they were conservative, and I said fuck this.’⁶ He too became semi-retired from punk rock performances and now occasionally plays acoustic sets at expressly political events.

Turning to my own experiences as an activist-musician, my various bands have written, performed and recorded many original songs about exploitation, racism, inequality and other forms of social injustice. Our shows, usually performed on a bill with two other independent bands, are short 45–60 minute sets

with an audience ranging from 15 to 100 people, depending on the venue. I perform for both personal and political reasons, like all of the interviewees in this study. On a personal level, it is enjoyable to share my creations with others, drink beer, laugh with my friends and become absorbed in playing very loud, distorted and aggressive guitar riffs. On a political level, I hope that the songs do much more than entertain by educating and helping produce something in the way of a collective understanding of inequality, whether through the telling of stories of struggling workers, of the oppression of racial and ethnic minorities, or of the victims of war crimes.

One song we perform is titled 'Stolen' and is a condemnation of the theft of Native American land and culture. The lyrics read:

You thought in me was you
 That thought has died
 That dream you told was true
 Became a lie
 Your time has clearly come
 To face my eyes
 Peltier lives in my heart
 Despite your cry
 You took me from my home
 To make me like a clone
 Now that the world has grown, you're left with you.⁷

We have played this song dozens of times live and it has also been freely downloaded or listened to thousands of times over the Internet, but audience reactions seem to range from apathetic to a moderate degree of excitement over the content. Usually the excitement over the song is strong when the storyline and topic is clearly introduced before the music is played. Disappointingly, however, we have rarely been engaged by an audience member about the song's lyrics or meaning except by those who are already politically energized and active in radical social movement activities, which is entirely expected given what scholars know about the difficulties in changing entrenched political ideology (Lakoff 2004). Another example of the challenge music faces in being able to directly speak to political issues in both a recorded and live context is seen in a song we perform titled 'I Won't Die For You' – an indictment of war and exploitative military recruitment. The lyrics read:

I won't die for you
 Can't trick me with the red, white and blue, 'cause I know you
 And if I fight for you
 I'd be a part of your brutality, so I reject you
 Hunt the poor so they hunt for you
 Keep them high so there is no coup
 When they talk back to you

Lock 'em up in a little room
TV glam and deceptive spam
Make them look like rock stars
They come back poorer than before
Another pest for you to ignore
So sad to hear what you won't say
About economic motives and the underclass
Printing money on a copy machine
But I'm guessing that you know what you're doing
Have to think about years of commitment
While my friends slowly die from your neglect
Ask me now where my loyalties lie
And I'll tell you what the heck did you expect?⁸

The reaction to this song when played live is similar to that for 'Stolen', but because we recorded 'I Won't Die For You' in a slower acoustic format – that is more musically accessible – the song is one of our most popular. Ironically, people with conservative views will compliment my band on this song, which makes me wonder, like many of my interviewees, whether anyone is really listening to the lyrics.

Other musicians in the study, even some who are disappointed in their attempts to incite collective social justice action, have some optimism about their efforts to educate and rally audiences along political lines. Eleanor, a young woman fronting a hard rock band in Los Angeles known as Rooftop Revolutionaries, told me that her goal is to plant seeds of critical thought and that, while she is occasionally engaged by audience members after live shows, the absence of such conversation does not necessarily mean she has not succeeded. 'You never know what kind of an impact you have on people', she said⁹; and as I argue in the last section of this chapter, the lack of collective action does not mean that the music has failed. Indeed, individual forms of micro-resistance are necessary for larger networks of coalescence. A Canadian interviewee whose band has toured on two continents echoed this sentiment, adding that a live show 'is its own space' and that reaching people in that space requires the delivery of relevant and practical information.¹⁰ Too many bands, he believes, focus on global issues that people, especially young people, feel ill equipped to act on. His approach, similar to that adopted by several other interviewees, is to say through the music 'here is what you can do today' to challenge inequality and oppression. His band regularly makes available reading materials, such as pamphlets, flyers and books, on various social justice issues alongside the merchandise table at venues.

This leads to another theme that emerged from this research: because music elicits multiple physical and emotional responses, lyrics, unlike words in a book, can be secondary to the rhythm, melody, instrumentation, speed and overall feel of a song. Add to this the very personal and unpredictable tastes in genres and musical instruments (especially guitar, drum and vocal tones) and it is clear that

music provides a more complex discourse than most political speeches or written works. Further, and as pointed out earlier, punk music has typically appealed to the young as the speed, heaviness and sometimes unmelodic delivery tends to be too intense and loud for most older adults to enjoy. To reach people via music, then, raises unique challenges compared to other forms of communication. As Steve from the UK notes:

I suspect, however, that ‘messages’ come across better when performed by the ‘traditional’ singer-songwriter accompanied by an acoustic guitar than they do when set to a more danceable, technological backing of the sort that I use. Then again, the people who listen to that sort of music are probably more disposed to looking out for a message, for meaning... If a song has any subtlety, most people will tend to interpret it in the light of their existing views.¹¹

This is an important point because the most popular leftist musicians in the US, the Caribbean and Europe have produced what is known as ‘accessible’ or ‘listenable’ music, which involves softer instrumentation, clearly articulated vocal parts, fairly predictable melodies, standard 4/4 tempos and relatively slow beats. The music of Bob Marley, Woody Guthrie and Billy Bragg fits all of these criteria, and genres such as folk and reggae have strong histories of progressive vocal storytelling that is relatively absent in most other genres. Punk music is typically much heavier, faster and harder, and the hardcore variety in particular often contains lyrics that are almost undecipherable unless accompanied by lyric sheets. There is also an interesting difference between listening to recorded music and music that is performed live. Many independent punk bands do not have the luxury of a ‘sound person’ dedicated to delivering to the audience, or even to the performers through monitors, a well-balanced mix that ensures the vocals are clearly discernible above the musical instruments. Problems with sound mixes are not an issue in the case of recorded music as affordable and easily accessible computer programmes can produce balanced output without much labour.

Another emerging theme from this research is the importance of situating radical punk music in the context of other social protest activities or organizations and community groups devoted to social change. As digital technology and Internet social networking advances, major music labels have diminished rapidly and thousands of independent labels have surfaced in the past decade to provide artists with music distribution, booking and other services. No longer does it require significant capital to own musical instruments, buy recording equipment and go to a professional studio to get a high-quality sound and mix. This has opened up the opportunity for political radicals, and of course thousands of others, interested in music to develop specialized label rosters, whether by genre or message. One example of this is the Canadian label Rebel Time Records, which only works with leftist political bands. Their catalogue includes bands with obvious political messages, such as The Class War Kids. Interviews with the co-founders and co-owners of the label reveal that, while there is some

optimism in terms of whether people are understanding the intended political messages, there is also some doubt.¹² On the positive side, the label owners and their bands are very involved with non-musical social action causes and organizations, which provides them with connections across Canada so that scheduling shows at social justice benefits, meetings and other organizational events provides a sizeable opportunity for the music to be heard. Further, the label is well-connected to like-minded activists who provide them with technical, computer and artwork services at no charge. The label seeks to sign bands that produce listenable (that is, not hardcore or with 'brutal' style vocals) and melodic instrumental and vocal music because these are what most musical listeners seem to prefer. Again, this is a common point raised by many of the interviewees in this study. As Andy notes: 'We were trying to teach through lyrics and we would create slogans for choruses that would be catchy versus just talk. This allowed for callbacks.'¹³

Another example of the salience of political music linked to social change organizations and activities is found in the Occupy Wall Street movement against massive income inequality, corporate control of government, and war. At the time of writing, roughly 100 cities around the globe are now home to leftist activists occupying streets, parks and other gathering points to raise consciousness about a series of social justice concerns. Music has been a central part of these protests. Activists bring their guitars, drums and other instruments to perform impromptu sets, while some cities have seen both famous and local musicians perform in solidarity with the cause. Some of the more notable musicians who have performed or otherwise allied their music with the movement are Justin Sane from the punk band Anti-Flag, indie artist Moby, R'n'B artist Kanye West, Tom Morello from the band Rage Against the Machine, and many others. Saint Louis, Missouri's Occupy group has had dozens of local bands perform at their occupation, some of whom are expressly political artists. Interestingly, some organizers have said that, as long as the bands playing at these events are not anti-movement, they are welcome to play because the occupiers need some entertainment, and rest and relaxation, and music can fill that need. This does, however, reveal a fundamental problem: there are not enough expressly leftist musicians in most areas. By way of example, Saint Louis, Missouri, has a total metropolitan population of over 2.3 million, yet there are only a handful of expressly political artists regularly playing shows.

Interviewees expressed additional concerns about the impact of their music depending on the setting. Many know full well that unless they are playing a set at a political event such as Occupy Wall Street, a community peace organization meeting or among friends, it is challenging to get people tuned in to the lyrics and the overall message. I asked all interviewees whether they try to overcome this problem by delivering speeches or commentary between songs. Some have indicated that they do not, for fear of alienating audiences by 'hitting them over the head'. One American interviewee, Ian from the band Voice of Addiction, indicated that at public venues the last thing people want is someone 'preachy', and he prefers to let the music do the talking while 'trying to help people open

their eyes to injustices around them'.¹⁴ Another interviewee has come to the conclusion that both political movements and those who write leftist music should not 'do anything to scare the public' because the message will then be ignored.

This tactic is somewhat surprising, although I have previously found support for this reluctance to use overt political discourse in public settings. Indeed, in my study of peace activists in the context of the second US Gulf War, many respondents indicated that calling former President Bush a war criminal would be counterproductive because it would be automatically seen as hyperbole by the media and general public, even though the activists, and myself, see this as an indisputable fact (Kauzlarich 2007). In the current study, many of the interviewees, while politically active and outspoken on YouTube, on blogs, in interviews, in their lyrics and on their websites, fear that an equal measure of critique on stage could cost them credibility, perhaps result in the audience leaving the venue or completely tuning out, the band not being invited back to play in that space or fewer CD sales. Interestingly, this latter economic concern is also shared by corporate radio stations and the remaining major labels, who often choose to avoid music with obvious political messages (Artz and Kamalipour 2003).

The final theme to arise out of the interviews with artists is the problematic audience–performer dichotomy. Some of the more radical musician-activists interviewed in this study reject the binary between audience and performer, preferring to see live music shared and created by all in attendance. One interviewee, Stephen, indicated that this is why his band did not play in many standard clubs or venues – the stage literally separated the band from the people.¹⁵ Instead, his band would play house shows or rent out a cheap space (such as a local community centre) and this would provide both physical and performative proximity and equality. In fact, at every show, his band tries to have many microphones available so that anyone can join in at any point. Further, one artist, Andy, indicated that he invited audience members to bang on his guitar, hit the drummer's cymbals and place themselves between band members at any time they desired. Other interviewees have indicated that they make a special effort to play at the ground level whenever possible to diminish their physical separation from others. As one very experienced musician told me, 'It is much better to look people in the eyes when singing than to look down at them from a stage.'¹⁶

From my own experience, I have played shows in a range of physical environments, from large stages well removed from the audience to ground-floor performances in garages, alternative venues and basements with little room to manoeuvre around non-band members. There is a clear and palpable difference in the experience from both a musical and a social standpoint, as performing at a distance feels like a reified one-way conversation, while physical closeness with others feels like one is a momentary leader in a larger social moment of solidarity. Prior to the sixteenth century, most cultures practised a form of music that involved little if any distinction between performer and audience (Turino 2008). This changed with modernity, when the commodification of entertainment

became a wage-labour relationship under capitalism in which profit could be made through musical performances (Turino 2008). Most of the interviewees, and certainly I, see the cultural corollaries of the economic commodification of music, such as the hegemonic rock star image and the concept of 'fans', to be to a greater or lesser extent counterproductive to using music as a political instrument for social change and critique. In other words, the interviewees view the cult of personality as a distraction from the real message of their music because it places the focus on the messenger rather than the issue.

Music and resistance premises

Music, like the written word, film and other forms of art, has many functions and meanings, and to expect that rationality and instrumentalism will necessarily emerge from even the most well-intentioned performances and dissemination is highly optimistic. Although music is clearly a powerful force in many social and individual contexts, caution should be employed when conceptualizing a direct relationship between punk music and resistance to state crime and violence. As an autonomous act of rebellion and outrage by musical individuals or bands, music can certainly operate as a vent and a voice. As Eleanor put it: 'It can add emotional weight and power to political arguments and movements.'¹⁷ Further, political punk music is obviously salient to already like-minded people engaging in other forms of social activism, although some interviewees who perform for social justice or anti-war events feel like they are invited to perform less for their skills and more to keep the crowds coming. In this context, however, music can offer emotional, psychological and communal solidarity, and allow actors to become closer and more united. The real question, however, is the extent to which music can change undecided or antithetical minds on issues related to resistance to state and governmental abuses. Although my study is incomplete and this question cannot be fully answered until far more research has been conducted, I have found that there is cause for both optimism and scepticism. To conclude, I identify five premises to consider in future scholarly work on the relation between music and resistance to state crime and violence.

First, music as a force in resisting state crime and violence is most powerful when situated within other nested contexts of protest. As a moment on the radio, a song in a live set, a preview on iTunes or a link on a Facebook or Twitter account, a song with 'pleasing' instrumentation and vocal tone is more likely to be appealing to people not already predisposed to radical thought. The lyrics, and thus the message, are then secondary to other concerns. This empirical observation is consistent with Maffesoli's (1996) argument that people 'hop around' in social groups and possess an overriding penchant for immediate gratification. While some music listeners may be able to consume, digest, analyse and process lyrics, most cannot. This is especially notable when political punk bands play local shows not expressly organized for political change. Some in the audience are drunk or high, but most are simply looking to shed their work, school and/or family identities and to reclaim sovereignty over their own lives

through dancing, moshing, fist-shaking and screaming. While Maffesoli's 'sociality' is still possible under these conditions, contemporary Western life is just as likely to result in brief texts, Facebook updates or Twitter feeds the next day, which are then likely to become lost in a sea of data and keystrokes.

Second, music cannot genuinely be a force for social change, notwithstanding the above, unless the audience–performer dichotomy becomes blurred and perhaps is ultimately dismantled. An inherently unequal power situation is created when one becomes the performer and the other becomes the audience. The audience is passive, the performer active. The audience receives and the performer gives. The audience has no voice, the performer all of the voice. Such a sharp and defined separation, as one interviewee noted, plays right into the dynamics and structure of larger forms of oppression and inequality, and is very much a microcosm of national and increasingly global political, economic and philosophical estrangement between the masses and the corporate state. Until people other than musician-activists become invested in creation and critique, the message and action cannot be truly social.

Third, music should be understood as a special form of communication but one that is bound by the same rules governing other forms of communication. This means that presentation is just as important as substance, and that being young means being more open to alternative forms of discourse. This relates to Maffesoli's (1996) assertion that youth search for sovereignty, and that having different musical tastes can be a form of social capital, an opportunity to raise one's status, while those older and more beholden to the status quo are more resistant to difference and change (North and Hargreaves 2007). The Occupy movement, mostly composed of young people, is an excellent example of this because of the organic and wide net of progressives being extended hearty welcomes to join the movement.

Fourth, while music can certainly play an important corollary role in social change, there are many types of resistance to state oppression and violence that do not result in a groundswell of collective action. As pointed out by Stanley and McCulloch (see Introduction in this volume), resistance can be very personal and emotional, such as when a musician writes a line, while sitting on her or his couch, that is critical of human rights abuses, or when a fan or two in the audience yells with enthusiasm after an artist introduces an anti-war song. Even the terse and often superficial communicative formats of Facebook and Twitter offer people the opportunity to share their ideas and provide a space for others to consider the discourse. Indeed, there are countless acts of what I shall call micro-resistance occurring around the world every day which can fuel further individual and collective energies to accelerate, spread or deepen these individual acts of rebellion. As Riley *et al.* (2010: 358–9) note in their Maffesolian analysis of electronic dance music scenes:

Everyday politics can be understood as a cluster of values that orient around the pleasure of being together (including notions of hedonism, belonging, solidarity, sociality), in temporary social groups that form through

proxemics at the local level... The lenses of everyday politics allow for an understanding of practices that enable sovereignty over one's own existence and a celebration of counter-hegemonic values as political, without these practices needing to be permanent or associated with ideologies of social change.

At the very least, as pointed out earlier, micro-resistance can solidify and spark small networks of oppositional cultures and thereby ensure the survival of replacement discourse in an increasingly muddled and confusing world of claims, data and representations.

Finally, it is not completely unfortunate that hedonism and intellectualism happen to be in the same room when people listen to, write or create oppositional music. As the charismatic speaker, passionate writer, enthusiastic teacher and energetic performer all know, substance can be successfully connected to the lives of others when it is accompanied by a dash of fun, smiles and excitement, especially given that young people, *à la* Maffesoli, are tired of the cold and staid sobriety of school, work and family life. My observations at various Occupy events, interviews with musician-activists and experiences as an active agent in music and politics suggest that the synergy of art and politics, with its mix of seriousness and flippancy, may be the strongest way for social movements to spread wider and deeper layers of oppositional challenges to state oppression.

Notes

- 1 There are many studies and commentaries on youth culture and subcultures which reveal the modernist/postmodernist tensions between post-subcultural, neotribal and traditional subcultural approaches to studying crime, deviance, music and art (Bennett 1999, 2005; Chaney 2004). As Martin (2009) notes, Maffesolian-inspired post-subcultural scholarship has been criticized for ignoring structural disadvantage and glorifying consumerism. I cannot seriously grapple with this theoretical debate here. See Blackman (2005), Hayward (2004) and Martin (2002) for a thorough treatment of this matter.
- 2 Ferrell's (2004: 294) charge that 'criminologists must continue to investigate the circumstances of collective boredom, circumstances both historically structured and situationally negotiated' is just as salient to understanding the dynamics of political resistance as it is crime causation.
- 3 Interviewees thus far range in age from 22 to 44, and the political positions with which they self-identify range from Marxist, anarchist, feminist and green, to 'progressive' and 'independent'. Most interviewees are men who have college or university degrees and identify themselves as working class.
- 4 'Are We Listening', by Softer Than Yesterday, lyrics by Josh Lucker.
- 5 Interview, 10 November 2011, St Louis, Missouri.
- 6 Interview, 27 October 2011, St Louis, Missouri.
- 7 Resoldered (2010) *Everybody in Between*. Independent release.
- 8 Resoldered (2010) *Everybody in Between*. Independent release.
- 9 Telephone interview, 25 September 2011.
- 10 Telephone interview, 8 September 2011. Name withheld by interviewee request.
- 11 Email correspondence/interview, 24 August 2011.

- 12 Telephone interview, 8 September 2011. Name withheld by interviewee request.
- 13 Interview, 27 October 2011, St Louis, Missouri. 'Callbacks' occur when audiences vocalize lyrics or words from the encouragement of performers.
- 14 Telephone interview, 23 October 2011.
- 15 Interview, 3 November 2011, St Louis, Missouri.
- 16 Interview, 10 November 2011, St Louis, Missouri. Name withheld by interviewee request.
- 17 Telephone interview, 25 September 2011.

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Confronting state oppression

The role of music

David Kauzlarich and Clay Michael Awsumb

Introduction

Music is a universal form of communication that provides avenues for artists and listeners to explore and critique an unlimited variety of social problems, including state crime and oppression. Ferrell (2013) and his cultural criminological colleagues (Ferrell, Hayward, & Young, 2008) have called for increased attention to the relationship between deviance and crime, and the reactions to them, through an intellectual prism that views the phenomena as dynamic and ever-changing processes linked to creating and maintaining meaning through resistance, power, and reactions to everyday conflict and dilemmas (Ferrell, 2013). Music is indeed a multi-faceted cultural vehicle through which meaning is created and recreated. The effects of protest music, for example, on ideology and attitudes toward state polices has been painstakingly researched by ethnomusicologists, sociologists, and those in the area of cultural studies (Peddie, 2006). Most research finds that music can be an important component of social movements in a variety of contexts (Bennett & Peterson, 2004; Street, 2013; Roberts & Moore, 2009). For example, there is ample evidence to show that the historic work of popular musicians such as Bob Dylan, Woodie Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and John Lennon made *some* impact on more than those already sympathetic to anti-war messages during the Vietnam era (Lee, 2009). Further, labor organizations, civil rights groups, and various other interest organizations have been found to benefit from the galvanizing power of words put to music (Street, 2013). Punk music has been particularly influential for groups of youths who feel alienated from traditional social institutions such as school and family, largely because of its technical and technological simplicity, do-it-yourself spirit, and rejection of traditional self-indulgent rock song structure and performance (Dunn, 2008; Roberts & Moore, 2009). Even more, entire subcultures have developed directly out of punk music, with the most visible being “straight edge,” a youth movement which rejects the use of alcohol, drugs, and sexual promiscuity (Mullaney, 2012).

Although we are interested in addressing the progressive political messages offered by punk musicians in this chapter, like any form of communication, music reflects a range of political and social ideologies and commentaries. Understanding the meaning of these direct or indirect messages has been greatly enhanced by an increasing number of content analyses of song lyrics and music videos (Atkin & Abelman, 2009). One topic that has received considerable attention

is the degree of misogyny or sexism found in musical offerings, especially in modern gangsta rap music (Armstrong, 2001; Oliver, 2006; Weitzer & Kubrin, 2009). While these studies have found that most rap music is not misogynistic, Weitzer & Kubrin (2009) determined that almost one-quarter of the songs in their sample of platinum selling rap albums contained language and imagery that are substantially degrading to women, especially in their themes of sexual objectification. Further, other genres of music, such as rock, country, metal, punk, and pop have also been found to contain either misogynous lyrical messages or otherwise reflect the longstanding patriarchal culture and structure of the music industry in general (Leonard, 2007).

Few expressly critical criminological studies have been conducted on the relationship between music and deviance. One exception is Hamm's (1995) impressive work on music and how it helps neo-Nazi skinhead groups recruit and sustain membership. Another critical criminological example can be found in the work of Finley (2002), who has shown that the band *Rage Against the Machine* created songs critical of mainstream criminal justice policy and their art might be productively used to illustrate the spirit of radical criminology to students. Muzzatti (2004) has examined how the defiant and confrontational music of Marilyn Manson was identified by some audiences as a cause of youth violence, especially the 1999 Columbine school shootings.

Kauzlarich's (2012) work on punk rock appears to be the only publication that specifically addresses, from a critical criminological perspective, how modern popular music relates to resisting state crime. Using autoethnographic and secondary interview and documentary data through interviews with active musicians, Kauzlarich (2012) develops a way to understand how musicians see their emotional and political work through writing and performing punk rock. In this chapter, we continue on that path by examining the lyrical content, social movement activities, and political activism of three punk artists and some of our own experiences as active musicians to further develop an understanding of the role of modern underground music as a component of opposing state violence and oppression.

Music and society

Before delving into music as a modern oppositional tool, let us first consider the social development of the art form. Indeed, a complex system of organizations, cultures, communities, economies, ideas, experiences, skills, objects, people, and knowledge are all tied together by music. Music is ubiquitous and spans many of the centuries of human existence. As integrated as music is in contemporary society, its beginnings are found in the cultural rituals of our ancestors. Simple chants, rhythmic beats, and primitive noise-making instruments were used by people to punctuate times of celebration, war, hunt, harvest or some other poignant and significant ceremony to the group (Wallin, Merker, & Brown, 2000). Music was a means to heighten the experience, focus people's attention, and mark the event with something that was sacred and not an everyday experience. As civilizations grew and moved into settlement societies, music changed. With labor specialization, the technological growth of new tools and materials, and the dedication of specialized players and performers with the extra time agricultural life provided, the musical rituals, instruments, number of musicians and complexity of the events became more intense, varied, and specialized.

Viewed as an economically driven part of culture, the production and distribution of modern popular music is primarily controlled by large corporations who employ musicians contractually for their works to be sold in stores, used in film and television, and placed on the radio. Instruments are designed and produced mainly by industrial corporations who sell them to shop owners who sell them to consumers. Performers in symphonies, concert bands, and choirs are

the products of years of formal training beginning most often at young ages and through some degree of college education.

With the industrialization and now post-industrialization of musical technology, the objects of music are widely available in society. Instruments are at countless stores. Sheet music, instructions for how to play, lessons, recording equipment and venues for performances are all abundantly available. The internet also has many resources to offer those interested in both the consumption of music and the performance. Free sources of music both for recordings and for lessons exist. Instructions on how to build one's own instruments along with videos demonstrating the techniques can be found. Online communities for performers connect musicians with listeners, other musicians and places in which to perform.

This form of individualized and small scale engagement with music is mirrored in the larger economic structures of society. While large record companies dominate the production and market of music, thousands of small independent record companies are started as outlets for artists who cannot achieve or desire major-label contracts. Alternatives to the venues where corporate-backed national and international signed artists perform exist in local bars and clubs that offer not only places for bands to perform, but also for open mics and karaoke. Large institutions of culture embrace individual musical activities as well, in shows like *The Voice*, *American Idol*, and *America's Got Talent*.

As a cultural activity, reflexive to society and the systems of organization, norms and values it represents, interprets and re-defines, music possesses unique qualities. Individuals who engage in the production of original musical authorship are interacting with the cultural identities of a society and producing works that are self-referent while contributing to the cultural landscape of a particular society in a very individualized and significant way. These cultural products are developed from the same influences of the given culture they are created within, but have the potential to achieve outcomes and meanings that are very different from institutionalized mass-produced and economically driven cultural products. Hall and Jefferson's (1977/2006) classic anthology on resistance rituals is helpful here, as it points to the relativity of cultural options and how oppositional behavior, attitudes, and practices can develop in spite of strong mainstream cultural hegemony. Indeed, in the continuum of options available to engage in a cultural practice, knowledge of alternatives largely depends on networks (e.g., family, friends) as well as the perceived viability of subcultural options (Crichter, 1977). Radical music, then, is one form of communication that can be created, accessed, and used as a cultural tool provided there are perceived structural and subjective advantages to both the musician and the listener.

Transformative music

Normative understandings of music are likely to regard it as entertainment, much like popular culture films, but this overlooks the extent to which popular music can convey and reflect more important messages about problematic social arrangements and practices. Counter-hegemonic cultural production by musicians is certainly nothing new, as any serious examination of the roots of folk, blues, punk, and even country music would reveal (Martinez, 1997; Pratt, 1990). We posit that music can be understood through outcome categories of pure, applied, and transformative, the latter of which is of most interest to us here. Knowledge, to us in this context, is quite simply meaningful exposure and accurate memory of songs and this is no less factual than a census statistic; the reaction to the facts/knowledge is what really matters in terms of political action.

Pure knowledge of music includes the understanding of musicological structure (harmony, progressions, and scales), song arrangement techniques, and technical proficiency. While those

in this category are likely to be academics or otherwise serious students of music, some are less formally trained musicians and perhaps some are even critics and producers. The emotive aspect of music is less important to those in this category than the underlying structure of music *per se*. Just like exposure to facts about social inequality, global atrocities, or human rights violations, having knowledge may produce little or nothing in the way of implications for action.

Applied knowledge of music includes a much broader spectrum of people and is largely composed of people who say “they love music.” While they do not likely understand the structure of musical composition, they do find their knowledge of music, whether in a song, an artist, or a group, meaningful in their daily lives. The melody might be hummed at work, the lyrics mouthed in the car, or the rhythm pounded out by taps on their desk. The ubiquitous presence of music at weddings, funerals, and other important events further illustrates applied knowledge. More sociologically, applied knowledge of music is a major form of social activity whether in the collective singing and listening to songs in recreational settings, talking about and researching bands and artists; or even materialized in severe emotional reactions to the death of famous artists, as was the case with millions upon the deaths of Kurt Cobain and Michael Jackson. For any number of reasons, the songs and/or the artists become a part of the person and integral to her or his social networks and moments of individual existence.

The third general form of knowledge and music is transformative. By this we do not mean anything other than political awakening in the deepest sense of the term. If social conditions are right, music, especially the lyrics, can open up new ways of political consciousness rather than simply help a party go better or cheering someone up for the night (the applied function of music). Rather, as a tool of education, a la Freire’s (2006) hope of a “pedagogy of liberation,” music, unlike words alone, can cast powerful emotional energy. If buttressed in other contexts, it can create a sense of social consciousness, but there is always a problem to be faced: Traditional applied commercial music has conditioned the masses, largely because of predatory record companies and the corporatization and commodification of music more generally, against really studying, absorbing, digesting, and wrestling with lyrics that are not deeply personal. The profound social conditioning to use music in only limited ways (to get through the day, perhaps), endangers music to a hyperreality (Baudrillard, 1994), a sign that signifies nothing, only a prop for the ephemeral moment. This superficiality, masquerading as meaning, but in actuality divorced from the real social conditions of oppression and violence (e.g. hunger, genocide, exploitation, war, and oppression) acts as a temporary relief and distraction, which obviously people think they need, but which they do not really need at all. Here Gramsci’s (1971) notion of hegemony and Marx’s (1970) notion of false consciousness may be applied in full force. Indeed, as Adorno (1976) wrote, the revolutionary potential of music is compromised by the specter of saleability, marketability, and feeding the masses what they think they want rather than what they probably really want: A life free from oppression along with the freedom to be creatively engaged in solidarity with others. At its core, we believe many critical criminologists studying state crime share this perspective, and to that subject we now turn.

State crime

Genocide, human rights violations, war crimes, illegal war, and crimes against humanity are actions that fall under the category of state crime, which is defined as crimes committed by individuals acting on behalf of, or in the name of, a state in violation of the principles or spirit of international public law and/or a state’s own domestic law (Rothe & Kauzlarich, 2016). State crimes are historically and contemporarily ubiquitous and result in more injury and death

than traditional street crimes such as robbery, theft, and assault. Consider that genocide during the 20th century in Germany, Rwanda, Darfur, Albania, Turkey, Ukraine, Cambodia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and other regions claimed the lives of tens of millions and rendered many more homeless, imprisoned, and psychologically and physically damaged (Rothe & Kauzlarich, 2014, 2010). Unlike political white-collar crime in which offenders benefit personally from an act or omission, state crime is organizational in nature wherein motivation is tacitly or explicitly related to larger structural or cultural goals and objectives of government or its agencies.

One example of a state crime is the U.S. war on Iraq, and given that the bands discussed later in this chapter have written songs that concur with this conclusion, let's briefly review the issue. Wars are illegal if they are not conducted out of strict self-defense or with the express approval of the United Nations' Security Council. The illegality of the United States' recent war on Iraq has been thoroughly documented by criminologists (Kramer, Michalowski, & Rothe, 2005; Kramer & Michalowski, 2005). On the most basic level, any war not clearly in self-defense is prohibited by international law. The United Nations' Charter, a principle source of the laws of war, specifies that "All members shall refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any state in which the United Nations is taking preventive or enforcement action" (United Nations Charter, Article 2, Chapter 1:4). The only exception to Article 2(4) is found in Article 51 of the Charter: "Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security" (United Nations, 2010). The intention of this article is to allow a state under direct attack to defend itself. Importantly, however, such a right is limited and only executable until the U.N. Security Council provides an international plan of action (Kauzlarich, 2007; Kauzlarich & Kramer, 1998).

In the history of the United Nations, the specific legal meaning of the Article 51 exception in relationship to Article 2(4) has been defined in only one case: *Nicaragua v. The United States* (1986). Here the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that Article 51 applies only when a state has been subject to an armed attack, and thus the decision reaffirms a fundamental precept of international law that war must be the very last measure taken in times of international dispute and conflict (Kramer & Kauzlarich, 1999). The Bush administration did half-heartedly attempt to gain the U.N. Security Council's permission to launch a war on Iraq in February 2003 when U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell presented what is now known to be mostly fictional information on Iraq's apparent possession of weapons of mass destruction and ties to Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda, and the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States. Finding the evidence unconvincing, the U.N. Security Council voted not to support a U.S. attack on Iraq, but this was ignored by the Bush administration and the war commenced shortly thereafter in violation of the most basic principles of international law. While the war could be labeled criminal through a variety of non-legal and humanistic definitions, there appears to be no clearer prohibition of the action than that found in the United Nations Charter (Kauzlarich, 2007).

Following a cultural criminological approach, we see music as cultural engagement which can take on highly political or social organizational purposes. As Ferrell (2001, 2006, 2013) has found in his ethnographic studies of urban graffiti artists, dumpster diving, and others on the street, "crimes of style" are partly developed out of the desire to share creativity with others and to perform individual artistic expression (which is often quashed in schools, jobs, and home-life) while at the same time having qualities of resistance to agencies of social control such as the police, schools, and government. Expanding upon the latter, the following discusses how several punk bands extend their critique of power and inequality to state crime. Of course, many other genres and even musical groups within punk could have been selected to examine below, but

based on the authors' knowledge of punk and politics, these bands represent the firmest and most consistent anti-state crime messages.

Three bands

Punk music has its roots in opposition to traditional authority and is thought to have emerged in the early 1970s with the work of many obscure bands in the United Kingdom (Sabin, 1999). Most people, however, tend to think that the early pioneers of punk are The Ramones and the Sex Pistols, who indeed became much more known in the larger cultures of England and the United States. As the genre developed, more political artists emerged who wrote songs critical of capitalism, war, the state, and inequality. The bands reviewed below, Leftover Crack, Anti-Flag, and Propagandhi, are among the most radical and politically active bands in the punk/hardcore genre.

The New York-based hardcore punk band Leftover Crack is among the most politically active and explicit groups in the genre. Formed in 1998, the band has released over a dozen full-length albums, toured the world, performed at many informal and formal political rallies and protests, and most importantly for our purposes, consistently delivered lyrical content that is anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, anti-globalization, anti-imperialist, and highly critical of the use of state violence, especially by police. Even a cursory glance at their album titles reveals their standpoints: *Give 'Em The Boot II* (1999), *Give 'Em The Boot III* (2002), *Against Police Injustice* (2003), *Fuck World Trade* (2004), and *Constructs of the State* (2015). The second to last album is arguably the band's most radical album release which contains numerous angry songs directed toward state abuses, including the haunting track "Operation M.O.V.E.," which recounts the Philadelphia Police department's 1985 tear gassing and bombing of a house occupied by members of MOVE, at that time a small but active black liberation organization. Eleven MOVE members were killed in this widely condemned atrocity. Another song on the album, "Burn Them Prisons," excoriates U.S. penal policy, the incarceration of minor property offenders, and the growing privatization of prisons. The song speaks of a radical solution to the expanding net of control over the oppressed: bombing the police state and assassinating a magistrate. The song "Super Tuesday" provides a broader critique of globalization and state preference to the wealthy at the expense of the poor. It identifies the historical legacy of genocide and slavery in the U.S. as a path leading to continued class struggle and again, calls for violent revolt.

The band sells t-shirts that have a number of both political and non-political themes. Of the former, one shirt reads "World Trade is a Death Machine" while another reads "under the guise of protecting society from 'crime,' people are harassed, beaten, brutalized and murdered . . ." However, Stza Crack, the leader, guitarist, and main vocalist of Leftover Crack is careful not to glorify himself as a social movement leader. In a 2008 interview with Roya Butler of thepunksite.com, the artist says this about his lyrics:

It is poetry. It is art. It is free speech. It's not a textbook. It's not a law. It's not a decree. I'm not here espousing lyrics that I expect people to take completely seriously. I don't expect people to go out and kill cops. But if a day came, per se, where all the poor people in the world were backed up against the wall—where you're going to die unless you fight back against the police and the government—maybe people will think about some things that we had to say. Or other people that are like-minded to us in what they think about the government and the police will use our lyrics to express themselves.

(thepunksite.com, 2008)

Sentiments such as these are common among progressive musicians and songwriters, and demonstrate the reality that music, like all forms of premeditated communication, may have direct or indirect effects on opinions and attitudes (Longhurst, 2007).

Canadian punk-hardcore band Propagandhi, formed in 1986, uses the transformative properties of music to deliver and provide the political, cultural and philosophical messages the band has maintained since its conception. Politically out-spoken, critical and satirical of modern capitalist economic and political structures, the band takes on a seriously activist nature at times. In 2005, the band went as far as to take several years off from writing and performing to volunteer and fundraise for a number of activist groups including the Sea Shepherd Society and the Canadian-Haiti Action Network. Throughout the five albums released by the band, Propagandhi has communicated a radical message against human rights and animal rights violations. While the titles of their albums are less overtly political or critical in their names, every album has been released with informational materials, links, essays, and videos to various liberal and radical political organizations, including human rights and animal rights non-profit groups. Album sales have also been used to support various causes, such as AK Press, an anarchist publishing company, the Grassy Narrows blockade, and the Middle East Children's Alliance. Two members of the group, Chris Hannah and Jord Samolesky, formed the G7 Welcoming Committee Records label in 1997, which has functioned as the group's label since their third album. As a critique of the then G7 economic summit held annually by the world's wealthiest nations, the label was founded with the economic structure of Participatory Economics, an anarchistic economic model, founded by Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel. The label is defined as the means for politically radical messages to find support and a place to call home.

Musically, Propagandhi is a fast-tempo and energetic punk band which found popularity within the punk scene in the 1990s. Their songs continue the band's theme of resistance to political, cultural, and economic inequality that their overall message proclaims. Their second album *Less Talk, More Rock*, released in 1996 on Fat Wreck Chords, we find songs such as "Apparently I'm a P.C. Fascist" and ". . . And We All Thought Nation States Were a Bad Idea" which attack the ideas of what the group perceives as the status quo. In the former song, they write of the exploitations of workers, women, and Native Americans.

In a 2001 interview with Al Burian, the band said "we hope that our lyrics and the content of our records create more potential for somebody to be hostile towards the ideas in this culture" (www.mediareader.org). Like the other bands discussed in this chapter, members of Propagandhi are keenly aware of the highly commodified nature of the popular music industry and actively work to produce, support, and advance the opposite: transformative and oppositional forms of art that deliver socially conscious commentary on a range of issues important to progressive and leftist radicals. In the song "Resisting Tyrannical Governance", for example, they discuss eradicating capitalism and how privileged people (including themselves) must resist and revolt.

Perhaps the most commercially popular political punk band is the Pittsburgh born Anti-Flag, a group that has been together since 1988. The band's album titles speak volumes about their commitment to social justice and anti-war causes: *Die for the Government* (1996), *Their System Doesn't Work for You* (1998), *A New Kind of Army* (1999), *Mobilize* (2002), *The Terror State* (2003), *For Blood and Empire* (2006), *The People or the Gun* (2009), *The General Strike* (2012), and *American Spring* (2015). Members of Anti-Flag, especially lead singer and guitarist Justin Sane, have been very involved with peace, anti-war, and anti-globalization organizations, demonstrations, and protests, such as those against the World Bank, G20, International Monetary Fund, and numerous other corporate-capitalist adventures. Amnesty International supported one of their tours and the band has brokered contracts with record labels for a certain portion of album sales to be donated to left of center charitable organizations. The group also regularly works with small

local homeless, animal rescues, and women's rights organizations in addition to playing shows supporting leftist political candidates. The band regularly includes political action materials and resources in their CD packaging and provides numerous links, information, and protest gathering details on their various websites.

In terms of lyrical content, a surprisingly popular song, Turncoat, released on *The Tenor State* album, is a searing indictment of war, and presumably about former President Bush and his administrative team. The chorus is simple but telling as it pegs the subjects as traitors, murderers, liars, and thieves who go unpunished because of their privilege. "Depleted Uranium Is A War Crime," a song from the *For Blood and Empire* album also invokes critical criminological themes comparing the use of uranium ammunition to Agent Orange in the Vietnam War in which soldiers and citizens alike suffered long term health problems because of exposure to these elements. Many other songs speak to issues of injustice and victimization, such as the song "Exodus," which is about escaping genocide, "Fuck Police Brutality," a tale of punk youths being harassed by police, "Kill the Rich" about greedy and selfish capitalists, and "Free Nation?" which attacks state-supported discrimination of gays, lesbians, and people of color.

Some of Anti-Flag's merchandise, especially their t-shirts, is equally direct in their political messages. For example, t-shirts read "Fuck War," "This Much Madness is Too Much Sorrow," and "We pledge allegiance to our flags. Pieces of cloth that cloak like daggers. Material that is immaterial to our humanity. That divides us but never unites us. Patriotism is nationalism is Jingoism. As long as we identify by country we will never know who the other is."

In an interview with *Skratch Magazine* (2008), Sane commented that "the goal is that once people are educated about ideas, they will take action in some way." In another 2008 interview with Julie Conney of *absolutepunk.net*, Sanc elaborates:

while we are not against those enlisted in the military per say (I even have family in the military – a lot of good people serve in the armed forces), we have seen time and again that people in power too often send the military into harm's way unnecessarily – more than often to enrich the pockets of a few. I believe Iraq is an example of this. For this reason we strongly encourage people NOT to serve in the military. This has always been a core message of Anti-Flag because nationalism, especially in the form of flags, is a powerful powerful tool of those trying to lure people into the military. Attacking nationalism was a central inspiration in the formation of Anti-Flag. Hence, the name.

(*absolutepunk.net*, 2008)

Ferrell's (2013) call for more creative research in cultural criminology suggests that auto-ethnographical approaches to understanding crime, deviance, and resistance can be useful. To that end we offer insight into our experiences as practicing musicians, songwriters, and performers in the Saint Louis, Missouri original scene.

Our now defunct bands wrote many songs about exploitation, racism, inequality, and other social justices and we performed these as well as non-political songs regularly at small venues. Kauzlarich's band, Resoldered, played original punk and post-punk rock while Awsumb's group, The Union Blue, wrote original songs with a mixture of blues, punk, and rock. Our shows, usually performed on a bill with two other independent bands, were short 45–60-minute sets with an audience ranging from 15–100 people, depending on the venue. We performed songs from our independently released albums for both personal and political reasons. On a personal level, we enjoyed sharing our creations with others and performance allowed us to express ourselves without constraint. And quite frankly, most of the time it was just fun to play music. On a political level, we hoped that our songs do much more than entertain by educating and helping

produce a collective understanding of inequality, whether through the telling of stories of struggling workers, oppression of racial and ethnic minorities, or victims of war crimes.

One song Kauzlarich's band played is entitled "Stolen," and is a condemnation of the theft of Native American land and culture. The lyrics read:

You thought in me was you
That thought has died
That dream you told was true
Became a lie

You're time has clearly come
To face my eyes
Peltier lives in my heart
Despite your cry

You took me from my home
To make me like a clone
Now that the world has grown, you're left with you.

Kauzlarich's band has played this song over a dozen times live and it has been freely downloaded or listened to thousands of times over the internet, but audience reactions seemed to range from apathetic to a moderate degree of excitement over the content. Usually the excitement over the song was strong when the story line and topic was introduced before the song was played live. Disappointingly, we were rarely engaged by an audience member about the song's lyrics or meaning except by those who were already politically energized and active in radical social movement activities, which is entirely expected given what scholars know about entrenched political ideology (Lakoff, 2004).

In "Waters Lit by Fire", a song Awsumb's band The Union Blue wrote about the United States' response to September 11, 2001, the lyrics are similarly critical of government officials' actions which come at the cost of lives. The following lyrics are taken from the second and fourth verses, respectively:

I've seen the night lit up in fire,
as the black-hawks screamed all through the sky.
You say we won, but what a prize. I've read the numbers,
they're on the rise. Now we've shamed ourselves. Yeah,
we told some lies. I saw no one take blame or no one resign.

[. . .]

I've seen their face lit up with fire. Away on missions, they don't
plan to die. A road-side grave, oh is where they'll lie. Another American
soldier all burned alive. Oh any day now, it'll be my time. Are you ready baby, were you
born to die?

The Union Blue's shows attempted to prompt audience interaction, contemplation and consideration for a number of social topics. Between songs, the band frequently gave short dialogues about workers' rights and history, economic inequality and political activism, which received mixed reactions. "Waters Lit by Fire" in particular has been met with very enthusiastic responses and those of disapproval.

Conclusion

The presence of music in most aspects of daily life suggests that the art form contains numerous and diverse functions and roles. As entertainment or education, a release from reality or a mechanism to engage in certain realities, the power of music to shape and reflect social and political life makes it necessary to consider the extent to which it can be a valuable form of communication for resisting state violence and oppression. As we have discussed throughout this chapter, there are some artists who engage in directly political forms of musical expression, and who have achieved some degree of publicity from their efforts. The three punk bands we previously discussed have created radical art that is critical of war, state oppression, and inequality, and at least two of the bands collaborate with other left-leaning organizations and social movement to advance their political agendas. Our own music is also aimed toward transformative goals, although like the larger and more successful groups, the largest question to be answered is “Does the music really make a difference?”

The short answer is that it depends. From the standpoint of the musician, delivering messages critical of injustice and violence is generally a meaningful form of activism that satisfies the need to do *something* about social problems. But activism can be tiring, especially if responses to the messages are inconsistent (Downton & Wehr, 1997). For example, as the now defunct Saint Louis radical post-punk band Softer than Yesterday wrote after years of feeling like their anti-war and anti-capitalist lyrics were not getting through to their listeners:

Another curtain closes on another night
And I wonder if a thing has changed . . .

If you take one thing home with you tonight
Let it be a mind for change
And take it to your workplace
And take it to your school
And do something great

*(“Are We Listening?” by Softer than
Yesterday, reprinted with permission)*

Audiences, on the other hand, will differ in their reactions depending on a variety of variables and situations. Beyond the fact that much music is never heard by people because of distaste for a genre, delivery of vocals and instruments, or performing style, there are literally billions of songs from which anyone with an internet connection can choose to experience. With that kind of choice, the most likely impact of music on resisting and confronting state violence is to be found in existing groups and organizations already organized around anti-war and anti-state violence efforts. As Hamm (1995) notes, this is among the most empirically supported notions in the literature, and as such makes sense from both our personal experiences as musicians and activists as well as our review of political punk bands.

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