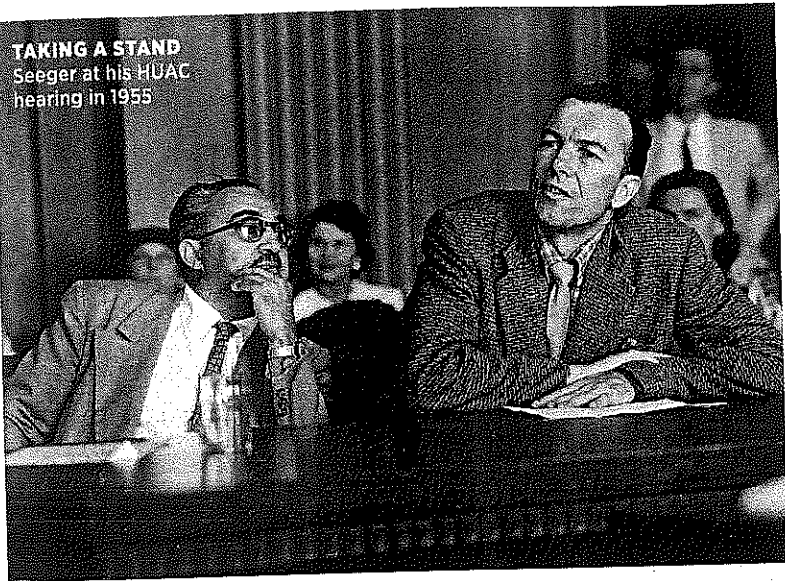


TAKING A STAND
Seeger at his HUAC
hearing in 1955



HIS GREATEST BATTLES

"Seeger looked like a kindly grandfather," says Tom Morello. "But he was a *threat*." Here are seven of the fights that defined his life

WORKERS' RIGHTS

Seeger began his career singing songs like "Talking Union" and "Union Maid" to striking workers. He remained a mainstay at union rallies all his life. "I would say every artist is, in effect, trying to figure how the human race can be saved from itself," he said. "When I sing on a picket line, I'm not really being all that different."

WALLACE '48

In 1948, Seeger sang folk songs on the campaign trail with Progressive Party presidential candidate Henry Wallace, whose early opposition to segregation made him a target of white supremacists. "I think [singing] probably helped prevent people from getting killed," he said. Wallace lost resoundingly, but Seeger remained committed to ending Jim Crow.

MCCARTHYISM

Called before the House Un-American Activities Committee to explain his Communist ties in 1955, Seeger refused to name names or even invoke the Fifth Amendment. He did, however, offer to sing for HUAC counsel Frank Tavenner: "I know many beautiful songs from your home county," he told the Virginia lawyer.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Seeger redoubled his civil rights work in the early Sixties, popularizing "We Shall Overcome" and joining Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1965 march from Selma to Montgom-

ery, Alabama. In a letter to his father, he recalled a run-in with a Mississippi man in 1964: "He accosted me with blood in his eye - 'Are you coming down here to sing for the niggers?'" Seeger replied, "I've been asked down here by some friends to sing. I hope anyone who wants to hear me can come."

VIETNAM

After 15 years on the blacklist, Seeger was finally allowed back on television in 1967 - only to have CBS cut off his performance of an anti-war song he'd written "when I was looking at a picture of American troops wading across the Mekong River." Said Seeger, "I think the public should know that their airwaves are censored for ideas as well as for sex."

THE ENVIRONMENT

From the late 1960s onward, Seeger made cleaning up the Hudson River a major priority - often working with unlikely allies. Said former New York Gov. George Pataki, a Republican, "Pete was a master at finding common cause with people."

OCCUPY WALL STREET

In October 2011, at age 92, Seeger persuaded Arlo Guthrie to join him on an Occupy march through Manhattan after they played a show together. "I thought, 'Wait a minute - we just did a gig! I was gonna have a drink and enjoy myself!'" recalls Guthrie. "He looked at me and said, 'I just bought two new canes.'" JULIA WONG

that was increasingly identified with civil rights and pacifism, among other causes. They often sang the Weavers' songs - like "If I Had a Hammer" (a hit for Peter, Paul and Mary) and songs Seeger had adapted, such as "The Bells of Rhymney," "Turn! Turn! Turn!" (both recorded by the Byrds) and "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" (covered by a wide array of artists). For his part, Seeger paid great respect to the new music by these artists, particularly Dylan, whose "Blowin' in the Wind" and "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" owed much to Seeger's own lyrical and musical style. (Critic Ralph J. Gleason adeptly noted, "Dylan sings of alienation of the individual in many of his songs, whereas one of the continuing themes of Seeger's music over the years has been the theme of community.") During these years, Seeger was also a columnist for the folk-music journal *Sing Out!* and wrote regularly for *Broadside*, a folk and topical magazine.

Seeger's greatest contribution during the folk revival was to the civil rights movement. He recalled "We Will Overcome," an old spiritual that miners sang at strike meetings that Seeger had first heard in 1947. "I just gave it a banjo accompaniment," he later said. "Eventually, I changed the 'will' to 'shall.' Toshi jokes that it's my college education, but I've always used *shall* in the first person. 'Are you going to town tomorrow?' 'Yes, I *shall*.' It opens up the mouth better.

"I am not sure where Dr. King heard it, but there was a woman... and she remembered driving Dr. King to a speech in Kentucky and him in the back seat saying, "We Shall Overcome," that song really sticks with you, doesn't it?" It was solemn, indomitable, a pledge and a prayer. In June 1963, Seeger recorded a majestic version of it at Carnegie Hall, accompanied by the spontaneous harmony of the audience. His remarks during the performance underscored it as an eternal hymn to remain unfinished as long as it needed to be sung. "Now, you know it," he told the audience. "The best verse was made up down in Montgomery, Alabama. It says, 'We are not afraid.' And here you and I are, up here, and like every human being in the world, we have been afraid. But you still sing it: 'We are not afraid.'" Several months later, on August 28th, 1963, at the end of the historic March on Washington, led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., thousands joined in voice, clapping hands, swaying, singing the oath that Pete Seeger had helped give new life to.

The dangers were still real. In the summer of 1964, Seeger visited Mississippi, along with activists and entertainers who were encouraging voter-registration campaigns. He arrived around the time that three civil rights volunteers - Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James Chaney - had disappeared. As David King Dunaway related in his book *How*