



Wadada Leo Smith's *Ten Freedom Summers*

*Defining Moments in the
History of the United States of America*

Ten Freedom Summers is a large work inspired by the activity of the civil rights movement from [The Niagara falls congress](#) in 1905 and 1948, when President Harry S. Truman signed the [Executive Order 9981](#) and up to [Dr. Martin Luther King's Memphis speech](#) in 1968.

Over the years I thought that I would compose a tribute to the civil rights movement, centered in the activities of two decades 1948-1968, much in the same way that [August Wilson's plays](#) comment on ten decades of the African-American experience in America, but through musical composition/improvisation.



This musical work is the result of my research and reflection concerning the philosophical, social and political history of the United States of America. *Ten Freedom Summers* is programmed as three evenings of music, and is composed for [Golden Quartet](#) and [Southwest Chamber Music](#), an ensemble of nine performers. The world premiere will take place [October 28-30, 2011, at REDCAT](#) at Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, California.

Medgar Evers: A Love Voice of a Thousand Years Journey, Liberty and Justice was completed in 1977, and is the earliest work in the collections.

John F. Kennedy's New Frontier and the Space Age completes *Ten Freedom Summers* cycle.

Five compositions were composed during my 2009/2010 Fellowship with the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation.

Southwest Chamber Music commissioned four compositions, funded by the James Irvine Foundation and Clarence E. Heller Charitable Foundation.

Ten Freedom Summers was commissioned by Chamber Music America with support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation; and Southwest Chamber Music.

The work has three major collections;

- *First Collection: Defining Moments in America*
- *Second Collection: What is Democracy ?*
- *Third Collection: Ten Freedom Summers*

**First Collection:
Defining Moments in America**

- 1) [America parts 1 and 2](#)
- 2) [Fannie Lou Hamer](#) and the [Mississippi Freedom Democracy Party](#), 1964
(1-2 composed during Djerassi Foundation residency)
- 3) [Emmett Till](#): Defiant, Fearless (commissioned by Southwest Chamber Music with support from NEA and MAP Fund)
- 4) [Rosa Parks](#), and the [Montgomery Bus Boycott](#), 381 Days
- 5) [The Freedom Riders Ride](#)
- 6) [The Washington D.C. Memorial Wall](#)

**Second Collection:
What is Democracy ?**

- 7) [Dred Scott](#): 1857: The Issuers of Immigration, Human Rights and who can be an American
- 8) Democracy
- 9) Buzzsaw: The Myth of the Free Press and Corporate Power



- 10) [Al Hajj Malik Al Shabazz](#) and the People of the [Shahadah](#)
- 11) [September Eleventh, 2001](#): A Memorial
(7-11 composed during John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship)
- 12) [Medgar Evers](#): A Love-Voice of a Thousand Years
Journey: Liberty and Justice

Third Collection: Ten Freedom Summers

- 13) [Thurgood Marshall](#) and [Brown v. Board of Education](#): A Dream of Equal Education, 1954
- 14) [Little Rock Nine](#): A Force for Desegregation in Education, 1957
- 15) [Freedom Summer](#): Voter Registration, an Act of Compassion and Empowerment, 1964
(13-15 commissioned by Chamber Music America with support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation)
- 16) [John F. Kennedy's New Frontier](#) and the Space Age, 1960
(commissioned by Southwest Chamber Music with support from NEA and MAP Fund)
- 17) [Lyndon B Johnson's Great Society](#) and [The Civil Rights Act of 1964](#)
- 18) [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.](#): Memphis, the Prophecy
- 19) Courage to Dissent, Forces for Change
(17-19 commissioned by Southwest Chamber Music with support from the James Irvine Foundation and Clarence E. Heller Charitable Foundation)