

## **Research Assessment #2**

**Date: 9/8/2020**

**Subject: The History of the Blues**

### **APA Citations:**

SULLIVAN, J. J. (2017). The Curses. *Sewanee Review*, 125(1), 1.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/sew.2017.0000>

Hall, S. (2017, February 24). The Painful Birth of Blues and Jazz. Retrieved September 10, 2020, from <https://blogs.loc.gov/folklife/2017/02/birth-of-blues-and-jazz/>

### **Assessment:**

The blues, which still hold a strong influence on all sorts of music, originated in a pit of pain and torture; the slavery plantations of the south. After the Civil War, the Emancipation of African Americans released unto the world what was originally called the “blue sound”, which was not well received. The blue sound, which is made “blue” by its use of notes that are technically outside of the song’s key, eventually became extremely popular, with musicians like Dora Goldberg, Marion Harris, W.C. Handy and Ma Rainey leading the pack. However, African Americans, who created the sound, could not record their blues music until the 1920’s. African Americans were even further oppressed by the segregation of the music industry: Whites played for the whites and Europeans, while African Americans could only play for themselves. The creation of blues played a key role in developing music, however its beauty stems only from despair.

Like any other example of influential or beautiful art, the blues comes from a place of raw emotion. Slaves used the blues as an outlet, and the indescribable emotions they felt transformed it into what it was. While musicians like myself will hopefully never experience such a horrendous thing, it is important to do the same: channel our strongest emotions into the

music that we create. A more recent blues-player, Eric Clapton, comes to mind. After the tragic death of his son, who was only 4 years old, Clapton wrote the famous tearjerker "Tears in Heaven". Clapton poured his grief and sorrow into this piece, and the listener can tell. This tells me that, as a producer and songwriter, I need to take a second look at negative emotion. Like Clapton, W.C Handy and Ma Rainey, I can use the hard times in life to create music which reflects these feelings and helps others to work through their own. This, in my opinion, is why music is so commonly written about love or heartbreak. Falling in love is an experience that is full of bliss and excitement and hope. On the other hand, heartbreak is an equally strong emotion, however going through it puts one in a place of depression and pain. The effect that these experiences have on people are so powerful that songs written about them, like Nat King Cole's "You Call it Madness But I Call It Love", are especially moving. While my personal experiences with grief and heartbreak have been very painful, it is important that from now on I use my musical aptitude to create something worthwhile when in these situations.

The origin of Blues music is full of pain, yet out of it came something wonderful. In the future, I need to be aware in times of sorrow and use those emotions to channel my creativity and, perhaps, perform a service for my listeners just as the Blues did.