

# FROM FREEDOM OF OPPRESSION TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION:

## THE EVOLUTION OF DJING

Being a Disc Jockey, a.k.a DJ, is a modern profession that's only existed a little over 60 years, but the skills required to be prolific at it span across many previous generations, long before (and especially during) slavery. During the Trans-Atlantic Slavery period, the enslaved utilized music as a way to hide and communicate messages in plain sight to prevent outsiders from uncovering important information within the community.



The same enslaved individuals who led the hymns during slavery, held a similar leadership position as Choir directors, MCs, Journalists, and DJs because they all influenced a group of people to perform a certain action. Sometimes, the action was simply to be joyous and disassociate from reality by indulging in the song, but oftentimes, it was to invoke a powerful emotion in someone that would collectively change lives from that point forward. The beauty in being a DJ honors those same leadership skills of those who led Negro Spirituals because they both assisted in formulating the identity (and resilience) of our people, all while acting as an archiver of Black history; ensuring that it is never forgotten.

The leadership that flows throughout modern DJs originates in the musical traditions of enslaved Africans, whose songs, chants, and spirituals guided, protected, and unified their communities under unimaginable conditions. According to the Library of Congress, "Slaves brought the musical traditions from Africa with them," which indicates that these musical practices existed for centuries before migrating over to the

Americas (African American Song). In the plantation fields, "African Americans accompanied their labor with work songs that often incorporated field hollers- call and response chants tinged with falsetto whoops called 'arwhoolies'". These work songs were almost always layered with multiple meanings, permitting enslaved people to communicate with one another without detection from slave owners or overseers.



