"I had never been that me before. And once I became that me, I have never let that me go."

"The Civil Rights Movement changed my view of music."

Having recently joined her first protest with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Bernice is asked to lead a song. "Over my head I see freedom in the air!

Over my head I see... Freedom in the air! Over my head I see... Freedom in the air..."

That's when she started changing music to reflect her situation.

But when she got to the line in the song "Trouble in the Air"... "I don't see any trouble here. I think I should use a different line.

"Over my head I see... Freedom in the air!"

That's when she started changing music to reflect her situation.

Bernice is arrested while protesting. She is detained with around 60 women of different ages and classes.

There is a lot of tension between all these women.

Over my head I see... Freedom in the air...

She is detained with around 60 women of different ages and classes.

Over my head I see... Freedom in the air...

That's when she realized that music could bring different people together.

Over my head I see... Freedom in the air...

She founded the Grammy-nominated African American women's a cappella group Sweet Honey in the Rock (1973).

She achieved many academic accomplishments:

- Appointed as Distinguished Professor of History at American University.
- Awarded a MacArthur Genius Grant for work in African American music.
- Directed the Black American Culture Program at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

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Joshua fit the battle of Jericho.

Jericho Jericho Jericho

And the walls came tumbling down

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And the walls came tumbling down

When Bernice starts singing, she hears a whole new voice.

And she used that voice to become....

An original member of the SNCC Freedom Singers (1962)

They toured nationally.

Bernice had a long and successful music career, working as an performer, producer, and curator.

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Raising money for SNCC and increasing support for the civil rights movement.

Bernice, you should sing a song

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https://s.si.edu/music-herstory

Written and drawn by Evan Keeling

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

Smithsonian Center for Folklife & Cultural Heritage

Smithsonian Women's Committee