A group of “socialist feminist women who like to sing” came together to form the Red Berets in Toronto in 1981. Their first gig was at the International Women’s Day rally held at City Hall on Saturday, March 7, 1981.

The Red Berets sang regularly at benefits, rallies, demonstrations and picket lines in and around Toronto from 1981 to 1988. Singing feminist songs as well as traditional songs of solidarity and struggle, the Red Berets also wrote their own songs or rewrote lyrics to highlight current issues. A Red Berets pamphlet from the early years says:

*We are a grassroots singing group dedicated to making music accessible by encouraging audience participation....While we sing about a wide diversity of social issues – workers’ rights, disarmament, anti-intervention, anti-racism, choice on abortion and sexual orientation – our emphasis is on integrating these issues with concerns of the women’s movement.*

Participation in the group was open, and numbers rose and fell over the years, but the group maintained a core of about twelve singers. The group resurfaced in 2002 and 2005 to sing at labour history conferences and in May 2014 to be themselves in the play, *Life on the Line: Women Strike at Eaton’s 1984-85*, by Pat McDermott. The Red Berets still sing together in protest from time to time. Eight Red Berets gathered to sing with others at the Toronto Harperman Singalong (“Harperman, it’s time for you to go!”) on September 17, 2015.

*The information on the Red Beret pages has been compiled from members’ collective memories, diaries, songbooks and other records. Apologies for any errors.*

— Liz Martin, Jane Springer, & Helena Wehrstein
These are not professional recordings. They were originally made for rehearsal purposes, and are included just to give a sense of the Red Berets' sound and the kinds of songs they sang.

IWD, Harbord Collegiate, March 7, 1981

A Si Katali
Traditional Zulu, written on ANC picket lines
Recorded Feb. 24, 1987: York University

[Click here to listen]

Fight Back
Holly Near 1978, with permission
Recorded Nov. 11, 1986: Workshop on Violence Against Women, Adult Learning Centre, Toronto

[Click here to listen]

Gonna Rise
Susan Howlett (Red Berets)
Recorded Oct. 1984: Red Berets rehearsal

[Click here to listen]
It’s My Body – Medley
Based on three Leslie Gore songs, lyrics rewritten by Andrea Knight and other Red Berets
Recorded Feb. 18, 1986: York University

Moving Mountains
Arlene Mantle 1981, with permission, lyrics adapted by Red Berets
Recorded Feb. 18, 1986: York University

Oh Come All Ye Shoppers
Traditional, lyrics rewritten by Red Berets
Recorded Feb. 24, 1987: York University

Old Woman
Michal Brody (formerly Michelle) 1973, with permission; lyrics adapted by unknown person
Recorded Nov. 11, 1986: Workshop on Violence Against Women, Adult Learning Centre, Toronto

Union Maid
Kerry Mills (Red Wing), lyrics adapted by Woodie Guthrie (1961) and Nancy Katz (third verse)
Recorded Oct. 1984: Red Berets rehearsal

We Will Not Be Denied
Jan Hillegas 1982, with permission, lyrics adapted by Andrea Knight (Red Berets)
Recorded Oct. 1984: Red Berets rehearsal

Women Walk More Determined
Kristin Lems 1983, with permission
Recorded Nov. 11, 1986: Workshop on Violence Against Women, Adult Learning Centre, Toronto
The Red Berets sang many traditional songs, and often modified the words to be compatible with a socialist feminist perspective or rewrote them to fit a specific occasion. Imagine the joy in replacing the first few lines of “God Rest Ye Merry Gentleman” with “Arise ye proletariat, let nothing you dismay/We all could buy more presents if we all got better pay”!

from a Red Beret’s songbook
SONGLIST

(* indicates full lyrics in a booklet available HERE )

* A Si Katali traditional Zulu, written on ANC picket lines
   Apartheid No Carole Rose Livingston 1983
   Arise Ye Merry Comrades traditional, adapted by Red Berets
* Bella Ciao traditional Italian folksong, adapted by the Italian Partisans
   Boys Will Be Boys
* Bread and Roses Mimi Farina 1974, poem by James Oppenheim 1915,
   adapted by Red Berets
   Carry It On Gil Turner
* Cruise Blues Susan Howlett (Red Berets) 1984
   Cuanto Trabajo Gloria Martin
   Deck the Halls traditional, adapted by Red Berets
   Default Is the Fault of the IMF Bob Carty 1984
   Die Gedanken Sind Frei traditional, adapted by Arthur Kevess
   El Pueblo Unido Sergio Ortega ca.1973, lyrics by Quilapayún
   * Fifties Sound Kristin Lems 1983
   * Fight Back Holly Near 1978
* For All Women in Struggle Kristin Lems 1979
Free Trade Song (“Ca-na-da”) Bobby Gimby 1967, lyrics adapted by unknown author
   Freedom Voices Patty Huntington
* Gonna Rise Susan Howlett (Red Berets) 1984
   Harriet Tubman Walter Robinson 1980
* Hay Una Mujer Desaparecida Holly Near 1978
   Hold On Women Frank Lynch
   Housewife’s Lament Anonymous, mid-19th century from Sara A. Price’s diary
   Hymn of Sandinista Unity Carlos Mejia Godoy
* If You Miss Me at the Back of the Bus (“Oh Mary Don’t You Weep”) traditional,
   adapted by Charles Neblett 1962, and others
   I’m a Friend of the Foetus Carole Rose Livingston 1982
* In Contempt traditional folksong, adapted by Aaron Kramer and Betty Sanders 1950,
   to protest US House Committee on Un-American Activities
   International, The Pierre De Geyter 1888, lyrics from poem by Eugène Pottier 1871
* It’s My Body, Medley Based on three songs by Leslie Gore, adapted by Red Berets
   * Jingle Bells traditional, adapted by Red Berets
   * Joy to the World traditional, adapted by Red Berets
   Limpopo Human Condition
   Look to the People Ruth Pelham 1982, adapted by Red Berets – zipper song
* Love Me, I’m a Liberal Phil Ochs 1966, updated by many singers over the years,
   including Andrea Knight (Red Berets)
MacGregor Don’t Allow No Striking Around Here
   March On
   Mayn Rue Platz traditional, adapted by Morris Rosenfeld 1911
   More than a Paycheque Y.M. Barnwell (Sweet Honey In The Rock) 1981
* Moving Mountains Arlene Mantle 1981 Red Berets – zipper song
   Nicaragua
Nine to Five  Dolly Parton 1980
  * No a la intervencion Sabia, a nueva canción group in the 1980s
No More  David Paul 1982
  * No More Shit (“Ain’t She Sweet?”) Milton Ager 1927, adapted by Chris Mills (Red Berets)
  * Oh Come All Ye Shoppers traditional, adapted by Red Berets
  * Oh Freedom Post-Civil War African-American song, adapted by Red Berets – zip song
Old Woman Michal Brody (formerly Michelle) 1973, unknown adaptation
  On Children Sweet Honey In The Rock, poem by Kahlil Gibran
  * Onwards Eaton’s Workers traditional, adapted by Red Berets
Pa Donde  Ixim Wanima
Punch It In (“Breaking Up Is Hard To Do”) Howard Greenfield & Neil Sedaka, adapted by Julie McCall
Same Boat Now  Betsy Rose 1983
Shameless Hussies (“I Wish I Was In Dixie”) Dan D. Emmett, unknown adaptation
  Shnel Loifu Di Reder
  * Silent Night traditional, adapted by Red Berets
  * Singing for Our Lives Holly Near 1979, adapted by Red Berets – zip song
    * Smash the Right Arlene Mantle 1982, from a collective song-writing session facilitated by Arlene Mantle
    * Smash the Right Red Berets 1981
So Let the Union In
Solidarity Forever (“Battle Hymn of the Republic”) Ralph Chaplin 1915, and others
  * Stand Up, Oh Eaton’s Workers traditional, adapted by Red Berets
Step by Step traditional, arranged by John McCutcheon
  Still Ain’t Satisfied Bonnie Lockhart 1974
  * Superwoman Cathy Miller (the Singing Quilter) 1982
  * Swing Low, Sweet Paddywagon (“Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”) traditional, adapted by Red Berets
Testimony Ferron 1980 (for This Movie Is About Rape)
There Was a Young Woman Who Swallowed a Lie Alan Mills 1952, adapted by Meredith Tax 1970
  * Twelve Days of Christmas traditional, adapted by Andrea Knight (Red Berets)
Two Good Arms  Charlie King 1978
Union Maid (“Red Wing”) Kerry Mills 1907, adapted by Woodie Guthrie 1961 and Nancy Katz (third verse)
  * We Have a Little Problem (“The Dreidel Song”) traditional, adapted by Red Berets
  * We Shall Not Be Moved African-American spiritual, adapted by Red Berets
  * We Will Not Be Denied Jan Hillegas 1982, adapted by Andrea Knight (Red Berets)
  * We Won’t Go Back Chris Mills (Red Berets) 1983
  * What Shall We Do (“Drunken Sailor”) traditional sea shanty, adapted by Red Berets
Which Side Are You On (“Lay the Lily Low”) traditional, adapted by Florence Reece 1946
  * Who Gave You the Right Bob Carty
Whole World, The traditional, adapted by Red Berets
Will the Circle Be Unbroken Charles H. Gabriel and Ada R. Habershon, Red Berets – zip song
  Woman Am I
  * Women Walk More Determined Kristin Lems 1983, adapted by Red Berets
Working Girl Blues Hazel Dickens 1986
WE WON'T GO BACK

(As done by the Red Berets)

by Chris Mills

[Music notation]

The right-to-lifers wanna turn the clock back to the so-called good old days.

When a woman who's pregnant had the exact amount of choice could afford to pay. If she was rich she got a doctor who would do anything for money.

If she was poor, just a backstreet butcher or else one more mouth to feed.

CHORUS

On sister mother daughter lovers, fighting together we can't lose.

And we won't go back to the back streets. We do need our right to choose.

2. Ask your mother, ask her mother,
How many women have they known
Who lost their lives or their fertility
On a dirty kitchen table or at home alone.
Women bleeding, women dying,
Sister, listen to them cry.
Well, I say any is too many
Don't want one more woman to die.

Chorus

3. Hell, they threaten, attack and harass us;
They wanna run us into the ground.
And they didn't hold life so precious
When they set the fire that burned our women's bookstore down.*
You know violence against women
Has been around more years than you can count.
If it hasn't stopped us yet,
It sure as hell ain't gonna stop us now!

* The third verse was written after a Right-to-Life fanatic set fire to a building which housed Toronto's first free-standing abortion clinic (a test case for federal law which forbids abortions outside hospitals and in strictly limited circumstances. The other tenant of the building was the Toronto Women's Bookstore which was completely gutted in the fire.)
The list of performances was put together from songbooks, diaries and agendas (members’ copies of the Women’s Press Everywoman’s Almanacs were indispensable in the research).

### Red Berets Gigs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Songs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| March 7 | **International Women’s Day (IWD) Rally**  
11 am (practice at 9:30), Toronto City Hall and Harbord Collegiate | Bread and Roses                                            |
| May 10 | **Mother’s Day Pro-Choice Rally**  
12:30 pm, College and University |                                                            |
| May 13 | **Domitilia Barrios de Chungara, Bolivian Woman Speaker** Settlement House |                                                            |
| May 31 | **Riverdale Action Committee Against Racism (RACAR)**  
1:30 pm, Greenwood Park |                                                            |
| June 20 | **El Salvador Demo**  
11 for noon, Queen’s Park |                                                            |
| June 28 | **Gay Pride Day**  
3 pm, Grange Park |                                                            |
| Sept 26 | **Gays and Lesbians Against the Right Everywhere (GLARE)**  
1-3 pm, Yonge and Eglinton, NW corner | Moving Mountains, In Contempt, Gentle Angry People, Love Me I’m a Liberal, Still Ain’t Satisfied, What Shall We Do |
| Oct 8  | **Irwin Toy Picket Line**  
7 am, Etobicoke |                                                            |
| Oct 16 | **Action Daycare Rally**  
5:15 pm |                                                            |
## Red Berets Gigs

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1982</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 6</td>
<td>Marxist Institute Party</td>
<td><em>March:</em> Which Side Are You On, Oh Freedom, Bella Ciao, Internationale, Still Ain’t Satisfied, Hay Una Mujer, 9 to 5, Moving Mountains, Bread and Roses.  <em>Fair:</em> Will the Circle Be Unbroken, There Was a Young Woman, Testimony, Woman-time A Come, Solidarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 6</td>
<td>IWD Rally, March and Fair</td>
<td><em>March:</em> Which Side Are You On, Bella Ciao, Internationale, Still Ain’t Satisfied, Hay Una Mujer, 9 to 5, Moving Mountains, Bread and Roses.  <em>Fair:</em> Will the Circle Be Unbroken, There Was a Young Woman, Testimony, Woman-time A Come, Solidarity</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 1</td>
<td>Canadian Union of Educational Workers (CUEW) Rally OISE</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 6</td>
<td>Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) Rally, Metro Labour Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 13</td>
<td>Anti-Cruise Missile</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>OFL Solidarity Picket 6 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>Fight the Right Demo</td>
<td><em>Which Side Are You On, Still Ain’t Satisfied, Bella Ciao, Love Me I’m a Liberal, Internationale, Fight the Right</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 16</td>
<td>Control of Our Bodies March</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 27</td>
<td>Gay Pride Day 3 pm</td>
<td><em>No More</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 15</td>
<td>Ontario Nurses Association (ONA)</td>
<td><em>Which Side Are You On, Solidarity Forever, Moving Mountains, Will the Circle Be Unbroken, Hold On Women, Working Girl Blues, Union Maid</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 6</td>
<td>Women’s Press Book Launch of Still Ain’t Satisfied</td>
<td><em>Still Ain’t Satisfied, Hold On Women, Teen Angel, Testimony, Bread and Roses</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 18</td>
<td>Morgentaler Event</td>
<td><em>In Contempt, We Shall Not Be Moved, Moving Mountains, What Shall We Do, Still Ain’t Satisfied, Bread and Roses</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 21</td>
<td>Launch of Laura Sky Film, Good Monday Morning</td>
<td><em>Union Maid, Which Side Are You On, Solidarity Forever</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 29</td>
<td>Miniskool Picket Line, Mississauga</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1983</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 5</td>
<td>IWD Rally</td>
<td><em>Intro:</em> In Contempt, Internationale, Hay Una Mujer, Bella Ciao, Hold On Women, Back of the Bus.  <em>Main Set:</em> For All Women in Struggle, Nicaragua, Fight Back, Teen Angel, Women Walk More Determined, Bread and Roses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Dates, events, and songs are approximations and should be verified with original sources.
### Red Berets Gigs

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1983</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>April 23</td>
<td>Against Cruise Testing (ACT) Demo</td>
<td>Oh Freedom, Down by the Riverside, Moving Mountains, Gentle Angry People, What Shall We Do, We Shall Not Be Moved, Will the Circle Be Unbroken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>New Trojan Horse Café Opening</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 8</td>
<td>Mother’s Day Midwife Demo 1 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 22</td>
<td>Abortion Rally 7 pm, City Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 26</td>
<td>Gay Pride Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 1</td>
<td>New Trojan Horse Café Benefit</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 29</td>
<td>Abortion Meeting 8 pm, International Student Centre</td>
<td>In Contempt, Bread and Roses, I’m a Friend of the Foetus, We Won’t Go Back, Testimony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 1</td>
<td>Pro-Choice Rally 1 pm, City Hall</td>
<td>Fight Back, Swing Low, We Won’t Go Back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 20</td>
<td>Cheryl Walker, Women in South Africa, TCLSAC 7:30 pm, International Student Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 21</td>
<td>Book Launch</td>
<td>Bread and Roses, Hold On Women, Which Side Are You On, Union Maid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 19</td>
<td>Arlene Mantle’s On the Line: Songs for Social Change Book Launch</td>
<td>Moving Mountains, Still Ain’t Satisfied, Teen Angel, A Si Katali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 9</td>
<td>Women’s Vigil for Nicaragua 5:30-7:30 pm, US Consulate</td>
<td>Singing for Our Lives, Nicaragua, Hay Una Mujer, Moving Mountains, A Si Katali, We Shall Overcome, Oh Freedom, Carry It On, Internationale, Still Ain’t Satisfied, Bella Ciao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1984</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 4</td>
<td>Marxist Institute 8:30 for 9:00 pm</td>
<td>Internationale, For All Women in Struggle, Bella Cao, Still Ain’t Satisfied, Oh Freedom, Women Walk More Determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 10</td>
<td>IWD OISE</td>
<td>Harriet Tubman, We Won’t Go Back, Punch It In, Gonna Rise, Bread and Roses, Women Walk More Determined, Carry It On, Cruise Blues, A Si Katali, We Will Not Be Denied, Still Ain’t Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 4</td>
<td>Trojan Horse</td>
<td>A Si Katali, Cruise Blues, Harriet Tubman, Punch It In, Fight Back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>Ontario Coalition of Abortion Clinics (OCAC) Mother’s Day Picnic 12-3 pm, Queen’s Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 20</td>
<td>OCAC Rally Morgentaler Clinic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 15</td>
<td>York University Support Staff Picket Line</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 17</td>
<td>Library Picket</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 16</td>
<td>African National Congress (ANC) Women’s Conference 7:30 pm, OISE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 29</td>
<td>Library Workers’ Benefit 8 pm, OISE</td>
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</table>
### Red Berets Gigs

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1984</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 15</td>
<td>Eaton’s Strike Support 10 am, Yonge and Dundas</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>picket line</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 22</td>
<td>Eaton’s Picket Line</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1985</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 2</td>
<td>Eaton’s Strike Rally</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 18</td>
<td>Cafe Sandino 7 pm, Trojan Horse</td>
<td>Women Walk More Determined, Hay Una Mujer, Nicaragua, Canto Trabajo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2</td>
<td>Eaton’s Picket Line 11 am</td>
<td>Which Side Are You On, Will the Circle Be Unbroken, Oh Freedom, Union Maid, Solidarity Forever, Women Walk More Determined, We Shall Not Be Moved, Bread and Roses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9</td>
<td>IWD Convocation Hall, University of Toronto</td>
<td>Old Woman, Limpopo, More Than a Paycheque, Same Boat Now, Canto Trabajo, Still Ain’t Satisfied, Bread and Roses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 21</td>
<td>Emily Stowe Benefit 8:30 pm, Trojan Horse</td>
<td>Women Walk More Determined, More Than a Paycheque, Old Woman, Superwoman, Same Boat, Gentle Angry People, Fight Back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 28</td>
<td>Picket at T. Eaton’s House</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 11</td>
<td>Ontario Working Women (OWW) 7 pm, Jorgenson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 5</td>
<td>Public Research Group (PRG) DEC Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 14</td>
<td>Visa Strike</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1986</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 31</td>
<td>Trojan Horse 9 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 16</td>
<td>Visa Workers’ Benefit 3:25 pm, A Space</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 18</td>
<td>The Power of Music: Singing for Social Change 8:30 pm, York University</td>
<td>Women Walk More Determined, Moving Mountains, Punch It In, Limpopo, Harriet Tubman, No A La Intervencion, On Children, Old Woman, It’s My Body Medley, Bread and Roses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 8</td>
<td>IWD Convocation Hall, University of Toronto</td>
<td>No A La Intervencion, Limpopo, Whole World, Bread and Roses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 3</td>
<td>Socialist Network Party 7 pm, The Battery</td>
<td>Whole World, No A La Intervencion, On Children, It’s My Body Medley, Which Side Are You On</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 2</td>
<td>Morgentaler Rally District Courthouse, 361 University Ave.</td>
<td>You Don’t Own Me, What Shall We Do, Swing Low, A Si Katali, Gentle Angry People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 14</td>
<td>Women’s Press Book Launch 6 pm, Canadian Hearing Society</td>
<td>On Children, Old Woman, Look to the People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 22</td>
<td>Rape Crisis and the Y: Workshop on Violence Against Women 9:30 pm, Adult Learning Centre</td>
<td>Fight Back, Old Woman, Women Walk More Determined, Look to the People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 29</td>
<td>Sheila Rowbotham Talk Stanford Fleming Building</td>
<td>Bread and Roses, A Si Katali, Moving Mountains, Look to the People</td>
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# Red Berets Gigs

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 24</td>
<td>Meg Luxton’s Women’s Studies Class 8:30 pm, York University</td>
<td>Punch It In, For All Women in Struggle, Women Walk More Determined, Leslie Gore Medley, Hay Una Mujer, A Si Katali, Old Woman, On Children, What Shall We Do, Swing Low, O Come All Ye Shoppers, Harriet Tubman, Bread and Roses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 7</td>
<td>Homeless Women’s Breakfast Community Centre</td>
<td>Women Walk, Old Woman, What Shall We Do, Bread and Roses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 7</td>
<td>IWD Ryerson Fair</td>
<td>Punch It In, A Si Katali, 9 to 5, Harriet Tubman, Shameless Hussies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 25</td>
<td>Against Cruise Testing (ACT) Demo Queen’s Park</td>
<td>Will the Circle Be Unbroken, A Si Katali, Oh Freedom, Old Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 30</td>
<td>Arms Around Queen’s Park Daycare Rally 1 pm, Queen’s Park (9:45 sound check)</td>
<td>Old Woman, Moving Mountains, On Children, Bread and Roses, Women Walk More Determined, A Si Katali, Shameless Hussies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 30</td>
<td>Greenham Common Benefit 7 pm, Hamilton (Women Folk)</td>
<td>Punch It In, For All Women in Struggle, It’s My Body Medley, A Si Katali, Old Woman, Shameless Hussies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 11</td>
<td>Opportunities for Advancement Benefit 7 pm, 427 Bloor St. W.</td>
<td>Punch It In, For All Women in Struggle, Women Walk, Harriet Tubman, Daycare Equal Pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 24</td>
<td>Education Wife Assault General Meeting 7:30 pm 427 Bloor St. W</td>
<td>Punch It In, Bread and Roses, It’s My Body Medley, A Si Katali, Old Woman, Shameless Hussies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 28</td>
<td>OFL Women's Caucus Brunch 12 pm – 3 pm Steelworkers Hall, Cecil St.</td>
<td>Step by Step, It’s My Body Medley, More Than a Paycheque, Free Trade, Bread and Roses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 5</td>
<td>IWD Convocation Hall</td>
<td>Old Woman, It’s My Body Medley, Shameless Hussies, A Si Katali, Bread and Roses</td>
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<td>2002</td>
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<td>May 26</td>
<td>Labour History Conference (Learneds) Labour History Museum, Hamilton</td>
<td>Which Side Are You On, Union Maid, Internationale, Silent Night, Oh Come All Ye Shoppers, A Si Katali, Hay Una Mujer, Bella Ciao, Harriet Tubman, Old Woman, Will the Circle Be Unbroken, Bread and Roses, Solidarity Forever</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 21</td>
<td>Benefit for Striking Guatemalan Electrical Workers Labour History Museum, Hamilton</td>
<td>Which Side Are You On, A Si Katali, Bella Ciao, Old Woman, Pa Donde, Bread and Roses, Union Maid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 3</td>
<td>Left Words New College, University of Toronto</td>
<td>Which Side Are You On, A Si Katali, Bella Ciao, Old Woman, Pa Donde, Bread and Roses, Union Maid</td>
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</tbody>
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# Red Berets Gigs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Songs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td><strong>Labourizing Feminism and Feminist Working-class History in North America and Beyond</strong>&lt;br&gt;Munk Centre, University of Toronto</td>
<td><strong>Union Maid, A Si Katali, Two Good Arms, Which Side Are You On, Punch It In, Old Woman, Mein Ruhe Platz, Bread and Roses</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td><strong>IWD Daycare Rally</strong>&lt;br&gt;City Hall</td>
<td><strong>Bread and Roses, A Si Katali, We Shall Not Be Moved, Old Woman, Which Side Are You On</strong></td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td><strong>Participated (as Red Berets) in play, Life on the Line: Women Strike at Eaton’s 1984-85 by Pat McDermott</strong>&lt;br&gt;8:15 pm, Berkshire Conference of Women Historians Hart House, University of Toronto</td>
<td><strong>Union Maid, Which Side Are You On, Oh Come All Ye Shoppers, Silent Night, Arise Ye Proletariat, Will the Circle Be Unbroken, Bella Ciao</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td><strong>Harperman Singalong</strong>&lt;br&gt;Noon, Queen’s Park</td>
<td><strong>Moving Mountains, Harperman (including feminist verse by Red Berets)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Included here is an article about the Red Berets from the 1983 *Everywoman’s Almanac* and two brochures outlining “who we are” and “what we sing,” written for groups who wanted the Red Berets to perform at an event.
The Red Berets

WHO WE ARE

The Red Berets are a group of socialist feminists who like to sing. We first got together to protest against war and in support of international women's Day in March, 1981. We found the idea of singing issues of concern to women so touching and persuading that we decided to continue our work. We have been singing together ever since. We meet in a comfortable and accessible location and we have the fun of being together.

All women are encouraged to come and sing, and we encourage others to join us. We have been singing together for over a year and we are now looking forward to the next step in our work.

WHERE WE'VE SUNG

The Red Berets have sung at a number of different events, including women's rights rallies, peace rallies, and anti-war rallies. We have also been invited to sing at various events, such as conferences and workshops, and we have been invited to sing at events in other countries.

WHAT WE SING ABOUT

The Red Berets sing about women's oppression - everywhere from home to war - and we believe that music has the power to bring people together.

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH WITH US

If you would like to perform with us, please contact us at our website. We are always looking for new members and we would love to hear from you.

The Red Berets

Office of the Master
967-6434

The Power of Music

Singing for Social Change

THE RED BERETS

You and your friends are invited to a special event at the Fellows' Lounge on Tuesday, February 18th.

TUESDAY

FEB. 18th

8:30 p.m.

Fellows' Lounge

004A Atkinson

Atkinson College

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967-6434
WELL PROBE WAS FIXED: SCIENTIST

Gov't rigged Stouffville water results, says chief tester: Page 2

5,000 women on the march

TOMORROW is International Women's Day, and to get in the mood 5,000 women marched through downtown Toronto yesterday. Story: Page 4.
SINGING ALL TOGETHER

Born in Spain, Mariana Valverde came to Canada when she was thirteen. She works, teaches at York University, and has been active in the women's movement for a number of years. Mariana is a founding member of the Red Berets, a Toronto-based singing group with seventeen members.

I had thought for a long time that there should be a group to sing at demonstrations and events like that, to make things more lively. In other countries I've been in, singing has been part of the culture of the left. That's not really the tradition here. So a few of us pulled together a group of women, mostly socialist feminists, in early January 1981. We were so happy to discover that we could all sing a lot of the same songs—"Union Maid," "Bread and Roses," "Solidarity Forever"—and happy that we didn't need to have elaborate practices and a lot of theory. We made our début on International Women's Day. Everyone thought it was wonderful because nobody had offered that kind of music before. People are used to having one person do his or her thing, but they're not used to a group of people who will put in the energy to motivate everybody to sing.

We decided to have a distinctive symbol, so that people could identify us. It had to be something we could wear in all seasons; it couldn't be a T-shirt because in the winter everyone is wearing coats. Someone hit upon the idea of red berets—a stroke of inspiration, because now people can recognize us immediately, and when we're at a demonstration or a picket we can see who of our partners is there. And it adds a touch of revolutionary tradition. We want very much to recover for ourselves some of the cultural traditions of the left, whether it's singing "The Internationale," carrying red flags or wearing red berets.

We're a rather ad hoc, free-flowing group. In deciding where to sing, we don't usually sit down to argue the merits of each case. It's more a matter of people wanting to go. And we don't go en masse to everything. We come from a variety of musical backgrounds: church music, both traditional and of the Catholic left, Yiddish socialist influences, and of course folk music and the more recent women's music.

As far as skill is concerned, we're a mixed and democratic group. We walk a fine line between wanting to improve, sing good part harmonies and on, and staying accessible to anyone who wants to join. I find it a very non-competitive group. We see one of our functions as the building of connections between all the different movements. We're singing at an El Salvador rally, an anti-nuclear rally, and union benefits, as well as women's events. We basically present all our issues at all the events we go to. If we're at a trade union event and we're doing a song that has a stanza about gay rights, we'll leave it in. Sometimes we get flak about this. If people ask us to sing specific songs, of course we will, and we'd shift our repertoire depending on the audience, but we will not eliminate issues altogether.

Because we are a feminist group, we change sexist lyrics in the song, "Which Side Are You On?" There's a verse that goes, "Will you be a lovely cab or will you be a man?" We changed this to "...or will you take a stand?" We also encourage the writing of new songs, or adding new stanzas to songs. Different people write material about different struggles, and the Red Berets can act as the channel. For example, the Communications Workers in Oshawa can learn what the Steelworkers were singing at Irwin Toy.

It seems to me that in North America, the revolutionary movement has been a little too intellectually oriented. It hasn't given people those cultural manifestations they can really identify with. Singing is one of the most powerful of these and one of the most accessible. I've always thought that it's an incredible empowerment and alienation when people say they can't sing. Not many people will be chefs, but we can all have basic cooking skills. It should be the same with singing. To me, the fact that it isn't is very much a sign of what consumer capitalism does to you. You think that music is something you buy; it is important that we reclaim singing, and singing together.

Group singing does impose certain limits on our choice of music. The tunes should be easy to carry, and people must be able to understand the words when we sing. Folk songs and church hymns usually meet these requirements, because that's what they were designed to do. The music for a lot of early trade union songs came from hymns.

JANUARY

Singing all together can be very powerful and moving. I remember being in Spain in 1977 when the country had free political expression and free elections for the first time in forty years. On a train after a political rally, coming into the station, thousands of people singing "The Internationale," knowing the words and singing together—it was one of the most powerful experiences of my life.

We really have a good time in the Red Berets. Sometimes it seems like a hassle to get to practice, to make one more meeting, but whenever I go, I'm always in a good mood when I leave. It's the kind of group that breaks down the barriers between the woman who shares our ideas but isn't a member of any political group, and the heavy politico who goes to meetings all the time. It's a fun group.

SAT

1

New Year's Day

SUN

2
An International Women’s Day rally held at Convocation Hall last Saturday attracted feminist musicians and women’s groups. The event is held annually at UofT and across North America.
The Red Berets began as a small support group singing mainly on picket lines and at rallies. As we were increasingly asked to sing on stage in concert-like situations, there was pressure to be more accomplished and well-rehearsed.

These notes are from a discussion held by 12 Red Berets in June 1984. The discussion went around the circle, allowing everyone a chance to speak. The different voices reflect a tension between strengthening the support group role and wanting to be a more polished performance group.

Many members expressed a desire to widen the membership. Any woman was welcome to join. But members expected a minimum commitment – as the discussion makes clear – of attending the previous practice in order to sing at a more formal event.

- The rule of a practice before the performance shouldn’t apply to demos. We’re something new, not a professional choir, and that’s good. We shouldn’t be overly critical of our members.
- It’s good to be serious about the group. I agree we’re not professionals but we should still be well prepared.
- Why do we attend some events and not others? It’s frustrating to be at times a support group, and at other times a performance group.
- There should be collective leadership – we should all take responsibility rather than have one person who’s watching for quality control.
• Everyone should take a bit more initiative, not just leave it up to the real musical types.
• We should be able to do picket-line support on our own initiative.
• I favour the support side, singing at demos. Perhaps with time we could become more professional.
• I’d like to see our status clarified, and for us to be more polished.
• I would hate to see the group closed so that people couldn’t keep joining. I don’t see the contradiction between being more professional and having fun.
• People are in the group for different reasons. I’d like a stronger sense of collectivity. We need to find a way to be more honest with each other.
• I like the idea of bringing groups their own music. Let’s recruit women from groups we’d like to support.
• We should make more links with women of colour and other groups.
• Let’s remember how far we’ve come. We now have a built-in quality control and we should encourage new members – they’re what’s made us great.
• We need help with our presentation – let’s have a workshop from some director.
• We have a basic standard that we must all be in tune. We need some way of ensuring we’re in tune, of telling people when they’re not.
• We could use more instruments because it would improve the sound.
• I don’t like being the only guitarist because I don’t have enough time to practice.
• We should have a portable sound system. It’s a drag having to be “good sports” when the sound systems are rotten.
• I enjoy performances and would like to develop a facility and ease on stage.
• It would be great to get away from churchy, hymn-type music.
• We need a checklist for performances and for strike support.
• We should have some colour coordination in clothes for our performances.
• We could get Red Berets t-shirts.
• We need to learn how to teach songs to people.
• Teaching songs requires a lot of confidence.
• Womanly Way gives workshops on how to use mics, etc.
• Doing workshops would require a lot of time that people probably don’t have.
• In performances, our hearing isn’t always as acute because we’re nervous.
• Someone should bring a tape recorder to every practice so we can tape and critique our singing at the next practice.
• We have 16 people, whereas we used to have 25 or 26. We’ve always benefited from “new blood.” Let’s see if we can get more people committed for the next year, beginning in September.
SINGERS

These women sang with the Red Berets at one time or another between 1981 and 1988, and agreed to have their names appear.

Alison Griffith
Andrea Knight
Ann Lacey
Ann Manicom
Arlene Mantle
Betsy Alkenbrack
Brenda Roman
Carole Houlihan
Catherine Goetz
Catherine Silverglen
Chris Mills
Deni Wise
Ellen Passmore
Enid Moscovitch
Ester Reiter
Faith Nolan
Frumie Diamond
Helen Lenskyj
Helena Wehrstein
Jane Adams
Jane Springer
Joan Malcolmson
Judy Blankenship
Karen Wehrstein
Katherine Arnup
Liz Martin
Lynn Mantle
Mariana Valverde
Marm Goldstein
Naomi Binder Wall
Nuala Doherty
Roberta Rivers
Ruth Perkins
Susan Howlett
Terry Dance

IWD, Toronto City Hall, March 6, 1982
PHOTO GALLERY

Toronto City Hall, March 7, 1981

IWD, Harbord Collegiate, March 7, 1981
IWD, March 7, 1981

Our fearless conductor

— Liz Martin

— Helena Wehrstein
IWD, March 7, 1981

IWD, March 7, 1981
IWD, March 7, 1981

Gay Pride Day, Grange Park, June 28, 1981
GLARE Fight the Right Day, Sept 26, 1981

—Helena Wehrstein
Control of Our Bodies Rally, Queen’s Park, May 16, 1982

Queen’s Park, May 16, 1982
Queen’s Park, May 16, 1982
IWD, Convocation Hall, March 5, 1983
Against Cruise Testing (ACT) demo, April 23, 1983

ACT demo, Old City Hall April 23, 1983

Rehearsal, 1984
Wally Secombe

IWD, Convocation Hall, March 9, 1985

IWD, Convocation Hall, March 9, 1986
Hamilton Labour History Conference, May 26, 2002

Feminist Working-Class History Conference, U of T, October 1, 2005