

COMPARING LANGUAGE OF SELF-EMPOWERMENT**TEACHER TOOL 2: BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JAMES BROWN**

James Brown, who is known as the "The Godfather of Soul," the "King of Soul", and "The Hardest Working Man in Show Business," was born May 3, 1933 in Barnwell, South Carolina. As an only child born into poverty, he experienced much isolation and loneliness at an early age. Brown was often teased in school because he was smaller than the rest of the children and because he did not have nice clothes. He developed a passion for music at a young age and earned money entertaining soldiers at Fort Gordon, an army base near his home. Brown started his first band when he was thirteen, but he also began to get into trouble for stealing at that age. He spent most of his teen years in juvenile detention facilities, and while incarcerated he formed a gospel quartet and continued to develop himself as a performing artist. By the age of 19, he was released and determined not to return to a life of incarceration.

Brown began his professional music career in 1953, and rose to fame during the late 1950s and early 1960s. He thrilled audiences with his unique and dazzling dance moves. He had many hits on Billboard Magazine's top ten list, including "I Got the Feelin'," "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag," "It's a Man's Man's Man's World," "Cold Sweat, Part 1" and "Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud," a highly political song directed to his broad African American following and especially to black youth. During the period that James Brown was becoming a national and international superstar, the civil rights movement was also gaining momentum. When Brown performed in the South the audiences were segregated, with the best seats in the house available only to whites. He began to refuse to play shows unless the audiences were integrated. The first integrated performance he played in the South was in Macon, Georgia. It was uneventful with both African Americans and whites enjoying Brown's music.

James Brown became an advocate for the rights of African Americans. He consulted with Martin Luther King Jr., President Lyndon Johnson, and Vice President Hubert Humphrey as well as with James Meredith, the first African American student at the University of Mississippi, whose attendance was a watershed event in the Civil Rights movement. In 1968, Brown released two songs that were political and controversial. One was "America Is My Home" written in honor of the United States, which he played while entertaining troops in Vietnam. While meant to be a song about American pride, many African Americans were upset that Brown would express such patriotic sentiments toward a government that was not providing equal rights to all its citizens. On the flip side of "America is My Home," Brown also released "Say it Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud." This upset many whites because they thought the song was too militant. As a result of both of these controversial songs, there were often protests at James Brown's performances. There were also threats on his life. James Brown stopped all live performance for several years. In the late 1970s he resumed his concerts, mainly performing in Europe and Africa.

During the early 1980s, Brown's music infused the rhythms of hip-hop music. Many groups used Brown's "funk grooves" and turned them into what became hip-hop classics and the foundations of that music genre. During his long career, James Brown received several prestigious music industry awards and honors, including being named one of the first inductees to the Rock-n-Roll Hall of Fame, and receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 1992 Grammy Awards Ceremony. In 2004, *Rolling Stone* magazine ranked James Brown as 7th on its list of the 100 Greatest Performing Artists of All Time. On Christmas Day, 2006, James Brown died from congestive heart failure resulting from complications of pneumonia. Brown's relatives,

friends, and thousand of fans attended memorial services for him at the Apollo Theater in New York City and in Augusta, Georgia. James Brown is recognized as one of the most influential figures in twentieth-century popular culture and music. He will be remembered for his musical genius, his performance artistry, and also for the empowering lyrics of "Say it Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud" which helped to "craft freedom" for many African Americans during the Civil Rights era.

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