

IDENTITY & ADVERSITY PLAYLIST

by Heather Campbell

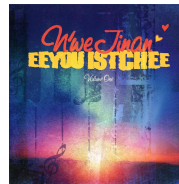
As the universal language, music has the ability to inspire us, ignite creativity, provide us with comfort during trying moments, and teach us that we are not alone in this world. For teens, music is often an outlet through which they can express themselves, where lyrics convey emotions and experiences they may be unable to otherwise articulate. The following list is a collection of songs and albums addressing various themes of identity and adversity, along with songs that contain uplifting messages of hope and perseverance for teens facing difficult times.



Taylor Swift – “Shake it Off”, 2014

How often are people expected to fit into a certain box, or told they're wrong, not good enough, not suitable? Taylor Swift, in “Shake it Off” explores her experiences of

being stereotyped and pigeon holed. Entirely relatable, Swift sings to just “shake it off.” This is an anthem for everyone - encouraging us to be who we want to be, and to disregard those who want to push us into boxes that don't fit.



N'we Jinan Eeyou Istchee (Volume 1), 2014

Montreal rapper David Hodges visited 10 Cree communities within Quebec on the N'we Jinan Eeyou Istchee Tour, during which he held workshop

for First Nation youths on all aspects of the music industry, including music recording, producing, and performing. This album is the culmination of the youths' efforts, consisting of original songs written and performed by them with a focus on expressions of cultural identity.



Against Me! - Transgender Dysphoria Blues, 2014

Transgender Dysphoria Blues is Against Me!'s first album following lead singer Laura Jane Grace's coming out as a transgender woman

in 2012. The band retains their punk rock sound while addressing the theme of gender dysphoria throughout the album. It should be noted that some very coarse language is used and this would not be suitable for younger teens.



Yuna - “Rescue”, 2013

This uplifting anthem from Yuna about a girl who has gone through a difficult time and has come out the other side stronger and happier.

While the song talks appears to be about a particular girl, Yuna sings “That girl is you yeah and that girl is me / That girl is stronger than the raging sea,” indicating that the song is for anyone and that we can all be strong in our own way. Furthermore, the lyrics remain non-descript so the listener can easily apply the lyrics to their own particular situation.



Kendrick Lamar - "i", 2015

Lamar's refrain of "I love myself" throughout this song is an important message for any teen struggling with accepting their self-identity or adversity. This single is a bright light

in a genre of music that does not often address themes of mental illness, but Lamar singing "I've been dealing with depression ever since an adolescent" ensures that teens know they are not alone and that even some of the biggest rap stars have suffered from the same issues. "i" demonstrates that learning to love oneself can help when dealing with outside negativity.



Macklemore and Ryan Lewis - "Same Love", 2012

"Same Love" was released in 2012, and became an anthem for those fighting to legalize same-sex marriage. "Same Love" fights for

equality and human rights for all people – for love and acceptance, not hate and rejection. The following lines sum up what Macklemore and Ryan Lewis were fighting for: "When everyone else is more comfortable remaining voiceless / Rather than fighting for humans that have had their rights stolen / I might not be the same, but that's not important / No freedom 'til we're equal, damn right I support it."



Colbie Caillat - "Try", 2014

Although written about the pressure Caillat was facing within the music industry to present a certain image, "Try" is an empowering song for anyone feeling the need to fit in with

society standards. The accompanying music video is equally poignant, showing women and adolescent girls shedding makeup to reveal their beautiful selves as Caillat sings "Wait a second / Why should you care, what they think of you / When you're all alone, by yourself / Do you like you?".

Chansa feat. Gord Richards - "Immigrant", 2013

This song by Zambian born rapper, Chansa, is a powerful look at the immigrants experience within Canada. Chansa raps about about the financial struggles and discrimination they face within their new country. He also raps about the difficulty adjusting to a new culture: "Lord knows the struggles I've had to endure to get me here / And where is here? / Here's a place that I'm still adjusting to, feeling' culture shock, seein' things that I'm not accustomed to."



K'naan - "Wavin' Flags", 2009

Somali-Canadian K'naan's "Wavin' Flags" was arguably made famous when selected for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, but the original version is an homage to his homeland and the

struggles of his people. Lyrics of "Born to a throne, stronger than Rome / A violent prone, poor people zone / But it's my home, all I have known / Where I got grown, streets we would roam" point to K'naan's identification with his homeland and how it influenced his development.



Fun - "Carry On", 2012

This up-tempo song from Fun, is indeed just that - a fun song for anyone dealing with difficult times in their present or past. The chorus lyrics of "If you're lost and alone / Or

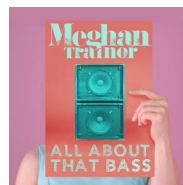
you're sinking like a stone. / Carry on. / May your past be the sound / Of your feet upon the ground. / Carry on." provide encouragement to look forward and move on from



Blink 182 - "Adam's Song", 2000

Despite being released before many of today's teens were born, Blink 182's "Adam's Song" remains a prominent song for tackling the topics of depression and suicide. While the

central character is struggling with depression and contemplating ending their life, by the end of the song they come out the other side having survived this dark time.



Meghan Trainor - "All About that Bass", 2015

Meghan Trainor's song "All About that Bass" is a celebration of bodies that don't necessarily fit the popular mold. Her message is mainly body

positive, singing: "If you got beauty beauty just raise 'em up / 'Cause every inch of you is perfect / From the bottom to the top."