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Hello, music lovers, and welcome to another exciting episode of Busy Kids Love Music! I'm your host, Carly Seifert, the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and I'm thrilled to have you with me today for a special episode in honor of Black History Month. Today, we'll be exploring the extraordinary life and music of the incomparable Nina Simone.

Before we get started, I just wanted to let you know that this episode is brought to you by my brand new, completely free Wizard of Oz Camp. You can learn more about this fun, interactive camp for kids at [busykidsdopiano.com/oz](https://busykidsdopiano.com/oz), and I'll link to that in the show notes as well.

Nina Simone, born Eunice Waymon on February 21, 1933, in Tryon, North Carolina, was a pioneering artist known for her unique blend of jazz, blues, and classical music. As we celebrate Black History Month, let's dive into her fascinating world.

Nina's journey into the world of music began at a young age. Growing up in a modest household, her piano teacher recognized her talent and co-founded a fund to enable Nina Simone to continue her musical studies despite financial challenges. As a gesture of thanks to the fund's donors, her teacher organized a debut recital for 10-year-old Nina to perform the music of Mozart, Beethoven, Czerny and Bach.

The recital was attended by over 200 people in the community. But because Nina's parents were Black, they were told to give up their front-row seats to white audience members. 10-year-old Nina refused to take the stage and play the piano until her parents were allowed to be seated in their original place.

Simone's ultimate goal was to become a leading African-American classical pianist. But her path took a turn when she faced discrimination while applying to a prestigious music school. Simone persevered and continued her education privately. Her

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classical training laid the foundation for her distinctive musical style, blending classical elements with jazz, blues, and soul, contributing to the richness and uniqueness of her later compositions. Simone's classical roots not only shaped her artistic identity but also added a layer of sophistication to her groundbreaking contributions to the world of music. She was a master of all trades – she could play everything from Bach to the Blues, and was one of the greatest female jazz musicians of all time.

Nina Simone channeled her classical music training into an interesting direction –singing and songwriting. She became an influential figure in the Civil Rights Movement, using her powerful voice and stirring compositions to advocate for equality and justice.

One of Nina's most iconic songs was written in response to the 1963 bombing of a church in Birmingham, Alabama, where four African American girls lost their lives. The poignant piece captured the urgency of the Civil Rights Movement and remains a powerful anthem for social change.

Nina Simone's music wasn't just about activism; it also delved into themes of love, heartache, and the human experience. Her soulful voice and masterful piano skills created a unique sound that resonated with audiences around the world. Some call her “The High Priestess of Soul” because of the way she blended her jazz voice with gospel and blues and classical styles. She spent time with artists and intellectuals like James Baldwin and Langston Hughes.

The song you're listening to now, “Feeling Good”, was released by Simone in 1965, and is one of her best known. It starts a cappella – which means it is performed without instrumental accompaniment – and then gradually builds into a show-stopping finale.

Most of Nina Simone’s work – including the pieces you’ve heard in today’s episode – are derived from her live performances rather than studio recordings. If you head to this episode’s show notes at

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[busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/116](https://busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/116), you'll see a curated playlist of performances by Nina Simone that will allow you to view and appreciate her skills as an extraordinary performer.

As we honor Black History Month, let's recognize the indelible mark Nina Simone left on the world of music and activism. Her legacy serves as a reminder of the power of art to inspire change and unite people in the pursuit of justice.

Thank you for joining me on this musical journey through the life and music of Nina Simone. If you enjoyed today's episode, be sure to subscribe for more musical adventures. I look forward to connecting with you again in two weeks when our next episode of Busy Kids Love Music airs. Bye for now!

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