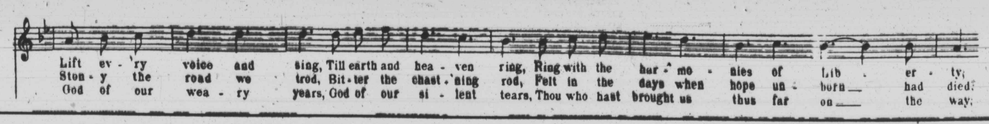
Lift Every Voice and Sing

Words by
JAMES WELDON JOHNSON

Music by
J. ROSAMOND JOHNSON

Copyright 1900 by Jos. W. Stern & Co.
Copyright 1927 by Edward B. Marks Music Co.
Copyright assigned 1932 to Edward B. Marks Music Corporation.



SPEAKING OF BLACK HISTORY

Here is the real James Weldon Johnson story and how our National Anthem was born

By Elizabeth M. Oliver,
City Editor

(Clip and Save)

"Lift Every Voice and Sing," our national anthem, (sometimes called the "National Negro Anthem") has been at the top of the music list for over 80 years.

Today it is sung everywhere in the U.S. and abroad.

Badly, it is frequently listed on programs without the author's names. Thus an important part of the history of the soulful song is lost.

James Weldon Johnson wrote the words and his brother, J. Rosemond Johnson, the music. The story is one of the most fascinating of all music history.

Also, few persons know that "Lift Every Voice and Sing" was intended by the brothers to be sung LAST since it contains a prayer in the last verse, "God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, etc."

Usually, heads are bowed.

I was a student at Fisk University in Nashville, TN when James Weldon Johnson taught Creative Literature. I shall never forget his revelation that words with a Southern accent are like music and he inspired our respect as he said, "Listen to the black woman in the marketplace when she says 'Good mawnin'". . . the sound of music.

Among others who sat at his feet were Dr. John Hope Franklin, the noted historian and Judge L. Howard Bennett.

Both men sang on the Fisk University Choir which also rose to fame as it exalted the Negro Spiritual to world acclaim . . . accenting the musical words of the slave.

IMMORTAL STORY

You can hardly recall James Weldon Johnson or sing "Lift Every Voice and Sing" without knowing the story of the song.

The music was first published by Edward Marks Music Co. of New York. The composition of "Lift Every Voice and Sing," came later quite by accident.

FOR LINCOLN CELEBRATION

James was a teacher in the Jacksonville (FL.) schools, and wanted something extra for a Lincoln Day celebration on Feb. 12. He tried a verse on Lincoln, but could not make it go.

The brothers talked it over and agreed to write a song for the exercises and to have it sung by a chorus of 500 school children.

James got his first line, "Lift Every Voice and Sing" and then worked along grinding out the next five lines.

When near the end of his first stanza there came to him the words —

"Sing a song, full of the faith that the dark past has taught us
Sing a song, full of the hope
That the present has brought us . . ."

The spirit of the poem possessed him then. He finished the stanza and turned it over to Rosamond.

In composing the two other stanzas, he didn't use pen and paper.

While Rosamond worked out the music, James paced back and forth on the front porch repeating the lines over and over to himself, going over all the agony and ecstasy of creating.

COULDN'T CONTROL TEARS

As he worked through the opening and middle lines of the last stanza,

"God of our weary years;
God of our silent tears;
Thou who hast brought us thus far on our way,
Thou who hast by thy might led us into the light
Keep us forever in the path we pray,"

James said he could not keep back the tears and made no effort to do so.

When Rosamond finished the music, the manuscript was sent to Marks in NY, requesting mimeographing a sufficient number of copies for use by the chorus.

The song was taught to the children and sung very effectively at the celebration and the Johnson Brothers went on with their work.

KEPT ALIVE BY CHILDREN

After they had moved away from Jacksonville permanently, both the song and the occasion passed out of their minds. But, the school children of Jacksonville kept singing the song.

Some of them went to other schools and kept singing it. Some even became school teachers and taught it to their pupils.

Within twenty years, the song was being sung in schools and churches and on special occasions throughout the country.

Later it was adopted by the NAACP.

The Johnson brothers in traveling around the country, regularly found printed and typewritten copies of the words pasted in the back of hymnals and song books, used in Sunday schools and YMCA's. That is the method by which it gets its widest circulation.

James spoke before a summer labor school at Bryn Mawr (PA) College some years ago and was surprised to hear it fervently sung by white students there and to see it mimeographed in their folio of songs.

In later years, the Johnson brothers marveled at the results that followed what was considered an incidental effort originally made with no intention other than to meet the needs of a particular moment.

From 1900 - 1906, the Johnson brothers were the top - ranking U.S. song writers. Along with Bob Cole, they wrote "The Maiden With the Dreamy Eyes," for Anna Held.

For Lillian Russell, they composed, "The Maid of Timbuctoo"; for Marie Cahill, "Congo Love Song"; for Bud Williams, "My Castle On the River Nile." Most popular of all their songs was "Didn't We Ramble?"

LIBERTY SHIP

The seventh Liberty Ship named for an outstanding black American, the S. S. James Weldon Johnson was launched at the Wilmington yards of the California Shipbuilding Corp. in December, 1943.

The vessel paid tribute to the noted poet, novelist, lawyer and diplomat who was killed in an automobile - train collision near his summer home at Dark Harbor, ME., on June 26, 1938.

Mr. Johnson also achieved note as a song - writer and a professor of literature at Fisk and New York Universities, received B.A. and M.A. degrees from Atlanta University and graduate study at Columbia University.

APPOINTED CONSUL

His career began as a teacher in the Jacksonville public school. In 1901 he went to NYC and with his brother, J. Rosamond Johnson, and Bob Cole, collaborated in the successful writing of popular songs and light operas.

Later he was appointed U.S. Consul, first to Venezuela and later to Nicaragua.

In 1910, he married Grace Nail and two years later his first book, the fictional "Autobiography of an Ex - Colored Man," appeared anonymously.

He edited a book of American poetry and two spirituals; and also wrote the English libretto for the opera "Goyescas."

OTHER SHIPS

Other Liberty ships named: the Harriett Tubman, the S.S. Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Frederick Douglass, John Merrick and Robert L. Vann.

HE WROTE THE SONG THAT MAKES THE WORLD SINGS

JAMES WELDON JOHNSON

The Navy named a Navy vessel, the Destroyer - Escort Leonard Roy Harmon, in honor of a messman who received the Navy Cross posthumously for heroic conduct at Guadalcanal. The John H. Murphy Sr. Liberty Vessel was named for the AFRO founder who established the newspaper in Baltimore 90 years ago.

CONSTANCE HELOISE MOORE
Feb. 12, 1945-June 27, 1965

A BALTIMORE TRADITION

Concert Sunday recalls a beautiful girl's dream

The 5 p.m. concert Sunday, Feb. 21 at Sharon Baptist Church, features the Cathedral Choir of St. Johns AME Church with Herbert E. Brown director and Mrs. Jacqueline Hardy, organist.

The third Sunday in February event every year recalls the memory of a beautiful girl, Miss Constance Heloise Moore, who had a dream of learning in college how to care for the handicapped.

The daughter of Sharon pastor, Dr. and Mrs. James L. Moore, Connie died in 1965 before her dream could come true. Now - the concert which has continued for 16 years has become a Baltimore tradition.

When hundreds of patrons wend their way to the church Sunday evening, they will not only recall Connie who was a Morgan State College student but also the purpose of the occasion — scholarships for worthy students who had the same dream.

Awards have been given each year at MSU commencement and at Connie's father's church each August. Special scholarships are given to high school graduates and college students in instrumental and vocal music who will use some time and talent in the church.

The Constance Moore Memorial Scholarship Fund is incorporated. Dr. James L. Moore is executive director; Mrs. Esther P. Brooks, secretary; Mrs. Elaine B. Page, chairman and members

Mrs. Katherine Carter, Mrs. Beatrice Creigler, Mrs. Betty J. Foy, Dr. Darrell M. Gray, Mrs. Bernice Hooker,

Also, Mrs. Frances P. Johnson, Mr. Eddie H. Moore, Mr. Elihu Moore, Mrs. Ruth J. Pratt, Mrs. Ethel Quarles and Dr. Alfred C. D. Vaughn.

HERE'S BLACK HISTORY THAT HAS LASTED 2,000 YEARS

Eastertime pilgrims still travel to Europe to kiss the feet of Black Madonnas and pray

Each year as soon as the Easter season dawns, thousands of pilgrims travel to Europe and the Holy Land to worship and perhaps become healed at the feet of the Black Madonnas.

The Black Madonna in Alt Olting, Bavaria, was brought from Palestine over 1,000 years ago. Catholics hold it in highest esteem and hundreds of thousands of Pilgrims bow before it the year around. Wonderful healings of all kinds are reported.

The Black Virgin of Nuria, Spain, called the Queen of the Pyrenees, the second oldest Black Madonna in Europe, is said to have wrought many miracles.

The Polish Review, NY, May 11, 1958 had the cover page photograph of the Madonna of Ostra Brama in Wilno with this prayer below it:

Holy Virgin! Who bright Czenstochowa defendest
And in Ostra - Brama shinest! Thou who shelterest
The faithful folk and castle town of Nowogrodek!
As by miracle, to me a child my health restored
When my weeping mother to Thy protection brought me
Dead eyelids I did raise and straightaway went afoot
To Thy shrine's threshold, there to thank God for life renewed
So by miracle, Thou will return us to the bosom of our Father's country. Pam Tadeusz by
Adam Mickiewicz

History records evidence that the first statues of the Virgin Mary were black with African features just as they were in Egypt which furnished the original models to be copied by the Jews, the Greeks and the Romans.

Christianity is the work of many civilizations and black people contributed, among other things, what we know as the worship of the Virgin Mary.

MADONNA OF OSTRA BRAMA IN WILNO

THIS PAINTING of a Black Madonna was done in oils by famed Baltimore artist Robert O. Torrence for the altar of the Saint Francis Xavier Catholic Church.

THE BLACK VIRGIN OF NURIA, SPAIN

Thousands of Christian pilgrims are on the way now and through Easter to worship at her Shrine, one of the oldest in all Europe.

MSU scholar traces history of blacks in Maryland:

Slave revolts, civil war, secret societies, also played a role in State's history

By Stefan Goodwin, Ph.D.

In Talbot County, barely 50 miles from where Harriet Green (later Tubman) first dwelled, there also lived a young boy called Freddy Bailey. Slave children had serious work to do and it was at the age of nine that Freddy was first brought to live in Baltimore, in the Southeastern quarter known as Fells Point.

It was only after his escape to freedom in 1837 that he took his better-known name of Frederick Douglass. Douglass became on of America's most famous abolitionists and a prolific author and editor.

During the Civil War, he served as an dvisor to President Lincoln on the black troops in the Union army.

It would have forced many blacks back into slavery and would have prohibited any release of blacks from slavery. During that time, blacks ran most of the barbershops of the City of Baltimore and they appealed to their customers to sign petitions they posted in their shops.

Whole masses of blacks attended weekly meetings for the purpose of being kept abreast of all political developments affecting their interest.

Also, in this connection, there was an ecumenical day of fasting and prayer observed at Bethel A.M.E. Church Feb. 5, 1860.

A black Baltimorian of means, by the name of Hackett, even challenged Jacobs to a debate which occurred March 17, 1860.

It was this same Hackett, born a slave, but successful enough to purchase his freedom prior to his 25th birthday and eventually th proprietor of a livry stable employing blacks and whites, who founded the Protective Association for Keeping Maryland Blacks informed of what was happening to their vested interests in Annapolis, the capital.

Working together, the forces aligned against the Jacobs Bill, won the day and in 1860, it was rejected in the state-wise referendum by a margin of three to one.

The Census of 1860 showed Maryland had almost the same number of free blacks and enslaved blacks, 83,942 of the former and 87,189 of the latter.

There had been a phenomenal increase in the relative proportion of free blacks in the population since the early decades of the century. The 1860 Census showed Baltimore still was the largest black city of the country and it showed Baltimore's free blacks outnumbered slaves 27,690 to 2,218 or more than 10 to one.

Despite the best efforts of the racists and slaveowners, slavry was rapidly declining in Maryland, and especially in Baltimore, even prior to the Civil War.

During the Civil War, 8,718 black soldiers served from Maryland and of these, 354 were killed in action and more than a thousand died from service-related wounds or illnesses.

A few of these soldiers were serving as substitutes for men of means, both black and white, who could afford to pay for such a substitute.

Those blacks who did serve encountered much discrimination in the Union Army, less pay, worse equipment, lower rank and status.

This pained them, insulted them and sometimes daunted their spirit, but still, they served.

Maryland's blacks were divided into six regiments of the Infantry of U.S. Colored Troops: the Fourth, the Seventh, the gninth, th 19th, the 0th nd the 9th.

The 19th and 30th Regiments were made up mostly of men from li parts of the State.

The 4th and 39th, however, were made up mostly of volunteers from the Baltimore area. These soldiers served valiantly in such places as Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina.

It is estimated approximately 600 blacks from Maryland served in the Union Navy.

When the nation's capital was threatened during the war, gmaryland was part of the battleground. The largest prisoner of war emp was in Maryland and one of the war's bloodiest battles, Antietam (1862), was fought in Maryland, just down the road from Harper's Ferry.

During the War, there was a loot of bblack migrration in som parts of the country, and the Afro-American population of Maryland (and of Baltimore in particular), sharply increased.

On Oct. 29, 1864, before the War was over, Maryland adopted a new State Constitution which went into effect on Nov. 1, 1864.

This Constitution was quite unique in that it abolished slavery, making Maryland the first border state to do so. Hence, on Nov. 1 of that year, 63 guns boomed at Fort Henry and from other emplacements in Baltimore, church bells tolled, and flags waved from ships in the harbor and from houses and public edifices.

The day was regarded by many blacks as one of Thanksgiving. In theory, it was the end of slavery in Maryland but the struggle for freedom, respect, education, jobs, housing, health, public accommodation and political self-determination is a continuing struggle, some 11 percent years later.

In the best American tradition, Black History Month is a clarion call to freedom. It is a time not only to reminisce nd learn from th pasibut a time to reflect on th present and even to dream of a better future. The future Baltimore I dream of will be different in so many ways. Racial-discrimination will no longer lock blacks out of jobs from professor and politician to carpenter and longshoreman.

People will be, as concerned and knowledgeable about life in Nigeria, Mali, Algeria and Haiti as about life in Israel, Canada, Argentina and Greece.

One will locate a restaurant serving Senegalese or Jamaican food almost as easily as one serving German or Korean food. The lack of freedom in South Africa and Uganda will move us to prompt action as surely as the lack of freedom in Poland.

The museums will be outstanding repositories of African nd Afro-American art as they are for European and Oriental art. The Symphony will have more than two black regulars.

The Baltimore I dream of is one where Charm and Pride will no longer be just slogans, but instead beacons in calm waters to all the people, irregardless of race, creed and color.

Great moments in black journalism

AFRO'S Bill Worthy was 1st newsman to visit Red China

Bill William Worthy

Editor's note: William Worthy, a former correspondent of the Baltimore AFRO-AMERICAN, was the first U.S. newsman in 1956 at to defy the U.S. travel ban on China.

A year or two after returning from China, while I was lecturing for a day at Texas Southern University, a black faculty member came up at the end of a seminar and identified himself to me as an economics professor.

In a voice audible to everyone, and with a broad "I know all about you" grin on his face, he said:

"You know, Mr. Worthy, when you were in China, I was working on the CIA's China desk in Washington. Every morning, we used to receive a top-secret report of your movements in China the day before."

Presumably, CIA operatives still function inside China - possibly in the two payrolls role that Krushchev once joked about with CIA Director Allan Dulles.

"Oh, I know you," Khrushchev once kidded when they were introduced at a Washington reception.

"We read the same reports from the same agents. Why don't we get together and pay only one fellows just one combined salary?"

So I can't help but wonder if the more proficient of them got wind of Dr. Kissinger's presence in Peking and filed hourly reports to the top-level computers in Washington.

The speculation isn't entirely far-fetched. After all, however politically primitive, U.S. spies are efficient in fact-finding, and Lyndon Johnson did suspect that the CIA tapped his White House phones.

The day after Mr. Richard Nixon announced his Peking travel plans, NBC News contacted Chinese authorities about the possibility of satellite television coverage.

How different this journalistic initiative from the time when I was there. In the 1950s, the mass media consistently played foolsie with the Washington mythmakers about the non-existence or the "imminent collapse" of the People's Republic of China.

Ditto revoluntionary Cuba not long afterwards.

The gospel according to Secretary Dulles was that any journalistic visits would "lend respectability" to what he decreed to be a tottering, outlawed regime.

Under this stern edict, CBS News, which in its 1955 "Report to Stockholders" had cited me for having made the first broadcast from Moscow in eight cold-war years, adamantly refused to let me take along to China any of their cameras or tap recorders.

This was to protect the network from any official charge of "collusion" in my going. But the understanding was that, if I could borrow someone else's equipment and ship back film and tapes, they would be used on the air.

They were, despite bone-crushing pressures from Foster Dulles.

Twice from Peking and once from Shanghai I also was able to broadcast for CBS. The first voicecast was, of course, a journalistic scoop, and the cablegram from the New York news desk several hours later expressed delight.

The signal to Oakland had been clear, the content satisfactory. But there was one problem. Not being attuned to the State Department "non-recognition" nonsense, I had used "Peking" in the old Kuomintang name for China's capital.

Thus the punch line suggestion. In future voicecasts the news desk would prefer "Pepping," pronounced B-A-P-I-N-G."

If acted upon, the suggestion would have been totally self-defeating, and I hadn't the slightest intention of heeding it. Justifiably, the Chinese would have been offended, and studios for future broadcasts would not have been made available.

Knowing that David Chipp, the Reuters correspondent in Peking, would be both amused by and scornful of this typical American childishness, I would let him read the cable.

"I'll tell you what you should do, Bill," he said, "On your next broadcast, when you reach the return cue say: 'This is Bill Worthy in Peiping. Now back to CBS News in New Amsterdam.'"

To be fair, the bad case of media jitters was not wholly self-induced. From Foggy Bottom, Mr. Dulles was behaving like the nation's foreign assignment editor.

Read his incredible answers to hostile press conference questions, from late 1956 through the spring of 1957, including that gem that freedom of the press covers only the right to publish the news and not the right to gather it.

His Deputy Under Secretary, Robert Murphy, was on the long-distance telephone to CBS Chairman William Paley right after my first broadcast from Peking while Assistant Secretary of State Walter Robertson was trying to twist the arms of the AFRO-AMERICAN and Look magazine editors.

The demands: no more broadcasts out of the non-existent land, and immediate cables to me and to Look reporter-photographer team, ordering us out of China forthwith.

By exposing all these improper pressures, as I did in subsequent testimony before the Senate Constitutional Rights Subcommittee, I hoped to head off repeat performances at any time in the future and to show the public the media's built-in conflicts of interest - at least on the easily seared management and ownership levels.

Within the journalistic fraternity passions ran high. Ed Murrow dissented openly from the CBS position and critiqued the courts' decisions in my unsuccessful suit to regain my passport. For the first time in his broadcasting career, Eric Sevareid had one of his commentaries completely censored by the news director.

(The New York Post promptly published the text! Conservative Arthur Krock suggested a Pulitzer Prize, while Walter Lippmann and Scottie Reston one of the few who were privy in advance to my going, raked Mr. Dulles over First Amendment coals. On the same day that a Washington Post editorial upheld a newsman's right to go anywhere, a New York Times editorial criticized the trip.

On Christmas Eve, 1956, the day on which I entered China miraculously ducking Mr. Dulles' army of China-Watchers in Hong Kong with Kissinger-style secrecy, Times correspondent Anthony Lewis was driving home for the holidays from our Nieman year at HARVARD.

When he and his wife heard the news on their car radio, they headed for the nearest Western Union office and, with just Peking as an address, fired off a cablegram of felicitation. In the midst of Washington's fuming, Tony, Nieman Curator Louis Lyons and another of my fellow Niemans, Hale Campion of the San Francisco Chronicle, were at Logan airport on my return in a much appreciated gesture of support.

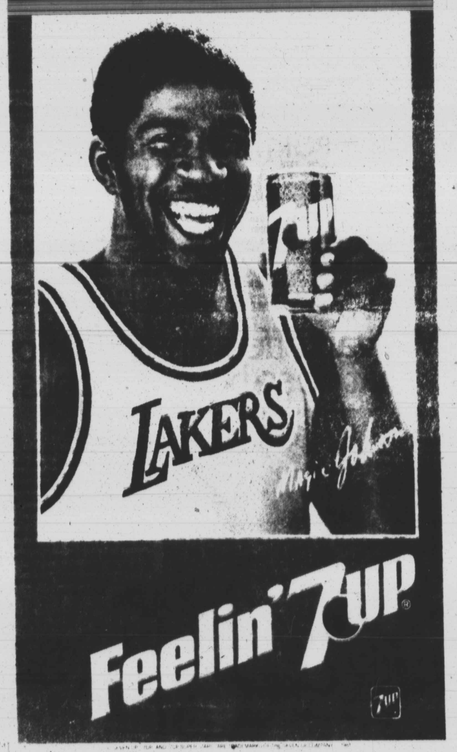
Harvard also was under some heat. At a Nieman seminar during my absence, a New York editor and a network vice president almost came to blows when the word "chicken" was thrown into the heated discussion.

On the way home from China I first perceived the depth of Washington's pathology. In Moscow, CBS correspondent Daniel Schorr was pestered for days by Ambassador Bohlen. Clearly acting on insistent State Department instructions, he obsessively reminded Dan that he wanted to inspect my passport to ascertain if, perish the thought, the Chinese had stamped their entry visa onto those sacred pages.

In Budapest, I stopped at the U.S. Legation to pick up a registered letter and a check from James Wechsler of the New York Post. With disbelief at the crudity, I read on the Post envelope the handwritten notation: "Opened in error by B. T. Wallen."

Bill Worthy (left) with late Chinese Premier, Chou-En-Lai

UofB Civil Rights Lecture Series
presents
"THE CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE"
Guest Speaker—Ms. Ebolia P. McMillan
President of the Baltimore Branch of the N.A.A.C.P.
Wed. February 24 12:00-1:30 p.m.
Free Admission - Langsdale Library Auditorium
Maryland Avenue at Orchel Street
Sponsored by the UofB Chapter of the N.A.A.C.P.

AMOCO
QUILLENS AMOCO
Where Quality and Service are our most important product featuring
Atlas Quality parts and accessories
• ENGINE ANALYZER • TUNE UPS
• BRAKE SERVICE • FRONT END ALIGNMENTS • TOWING SERVICE
• TIRES • BATTERIES • ACCESSORIES
1101 W. North Ave. Baltimore, Md. 21217 728-8110
1100 E. Coldspring La. Baltimore, Md. 21212 532-8533

In honor of Black History Month
The Seven-Up Company salutes the achievements of Black Americans.