

***The Creation* James Weldon Johnson - 1871-1938**

And God stepped out on space,
And he looked around and said:
 I'm lonely—
 I'll make me a world.
And far as the eye of God could see
 Darkness covered everything,
 Blacker than a hundred midnights
 Down in a cypress swamp.
 Then God smiled,
 And the light broke,
And the darkness rolled up on one side,
And the light stood shining on the other,
 And God said: That's good!
Then God reached out and took the light in his hands,
 And God rolled the light around in his hands
 Until he made the sun;
And he set that sun a-blazing in the heavens.
And the light that was left from making the sun
 God gathered it up in a shining ball
 And flung it against the darkness,
Spangling the night with the moon and stars.
 Then down between
 The darkness and the light
 He hurled the world;
 And God said: That's good!
 Then God himself stepped down—
 And the sun was on his right hand,
 And the moon was on his left;
The stars were clustered about his head,
 And the earth was under his feet.
 And God walked, and where he trod
 His footsteps hollowed the valleys out
 And bulged the mountains up.
 Then he stopped and looked and saw
 That the earth was hot and barren.
So God stepped over to the edge of the world
 And he spat out the seven seas—
He batted his eyes, and the lightnings flashed—
He clapped his hands, and the thunders rolled—
 And the waters above the earth came down,
 The cooling waters came down.

Then the green grass sprouted,
And the little red flowers blossomed,
The pine tree pointed his finger to the sky,
And the oak spread out his arms,
The lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground,
And the rivers ran down to the sea;
And God smiled again,
And the rainbow appeared,
And curled itself around his shoulder.
Then God raised his arm and he waved his hand
Over the sea and over the land,
And he said: Bring forth! Bring forth!
And quicker than God could drop his hand,
Fishes and fowls
And beasts and birds
Swam the rivers and the seas,
Roamed the forests and the woods,
And split the air with their wings.
And God said: That's good!
Then God walked around,
And God looked around
On all that he had made.
He looked at his sun,
And he looked at his moon,
And he looked at his little stars;
He looked on his world
With all its living things,
And God said: I'm lonely still.
Then God sat down—
On the side of a hill where he could think;
By a deep, wide river he sat down;
With his head in his hands,
God thought and thought,
Till he thought: I'll make me a man!
Up from the bed of the river
God scooped the clay;
And by the bank of the river
He kneeled him down;
And there the great God Almighty
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,
Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night,
Who rounded the earth in the middle of his hand;
This great God,
Like a mammy bending over her baby,

Kneeled down in the dust
Toiling over a lump of clay
Till he shaped it in his own image;
Then into it he blew the breath of life,
And man became a living soul.
Amen. Amen.

***Lift Every Voice and Sing* by James Weldon Johnson - 1871-1938**

Lift every voice and sing,
Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the list'ning skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
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;
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.
Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chast'ning rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered.
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past,
Till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.
God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by Thy might,
Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand,
True to our God,
True to our native land.

On Being Brought from Africa to America by Phillis Wheatley

'Twas mercy brought me from my *Pagan* land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God, that there's a *Saviour* too:
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
"Their colour is a diabolic die."
Remember, *Christians, Negros*, black as *Cain*,
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

Still I Rise by Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

We Real Cool by Gwendolyn Brooks

The Pool Players.
Seven at the Golden Shovel.

We real cool. We
Left school. We

Lurk late. We
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We
Die soon.

The Bean Eaters by Gwendolyn Brooks

They eat beans mostly, this old yellow pair.
Dinner is a casual affair.
Plain chipware on a plain and creaking wood,
Tin flatware.

Two who are Mostly Good.
Two who have lived their day,
But keep on putting on their clothes
And putting things away.

And remembering ...
Remembering, with twinklings and twinges,
As they lean over the beans in their rented back room that is full of beads and receipts and
dolls and cloths, tobacco crumbs, vases and fringes.

Negro Hero: to suggest Dorie Miller by Gwendolyn Brooks

I had to kick their law into their teeth in order to save them. However I have heard that sometimes you have to deal Devilishly with drowning men in order to swim them to shore. Or they will haul themselves and you to the trash and the fish beneath. (When I think of this, I do not worry about a few Chipped teeth.)

It is good I gave glory, it is good I put gold on their name. Or there would have been spikes in the afterward hands. But let us speak only of my success and the pictures in the Caucasian dailies As well as the Negro weeklies. For I am a gem. (They are not concerned that it was hardly The Enemy my fight was against But them.)

It was a tall time. And of course my blood was Boiling about in my head and straining and howling and singing me on. Of course I was rolled on wheels of my boy itch to get at the gun. Of course all the delicate rehearsal shots of my childhood massed in mirage before me. Of course I was child And my first swallow of the liquor of battle bleeding black air dying and demon noise Made me wild.

It was kinder than that, though, and I showed like a banner my kindness. I loved. And a man will guard when he loves. Their white-gowned democracy was my fair lady. With her knife lying cold, straight, in the softness of her sweet-flowing sleeve. But for the sake of the dear smiling mouth and the stuttered promise I toyed with my life. I threw back! — I would not remember Entirely the knife.

Still—am I good enough to die for them, is my blood bright enough to be spilled, Was my constant back-question—are they clear On this? Or do I intrude even now? Am I clean enough to kill for them, do they wish me to kill For them or is my place while death licks his lips and strides to them In the galley still?

(In a southern city a white man said Indeed, I'd rather be dead; Indeed, I'd rather be shot in the head Or ridden to waste on the back of a flood Than saved by the drop of a black man's blood.)

Naturally, the important thing is, I helped to save them, them and a part of their democracy. Even if I had to kick their law into their teeth in order to do that for them. And I am feeling well and settled in myself because I believe it was a good job, Despite this possible horror: that they might prefer the Preservation of their law in all its sick dignity and their knives To the continuation of their creed And their lives.

World Peace

113.

Come Lord Jesus.

This peace is for the whole world-
Every man, woman, boy and girl.
We need to love one another-
And be the keepers of each other.

Only the Prince Of Peace,
Can bring lasting relief-
From the shadow of grief,
That hell has unleashed.

**"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes and there shall
be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there
be any more pain. For the former things are passed away."**

Revelation 21:4

Wish List

114.

I felt the warmth of the sun's rays-
And wished for better days.
I wish there was healing for every soul,
And that the world was made whole.
I wish there was a crusade of love,
And no more shedding of blood.
I wish there was sharing of bread,
And that every child would be fed.
I wish we did more for the poor,
And they didn't go without anymore.
I wish there was no more abuse,
And that every gang called a truce.
I wish there was hope and cheer,
And that no one lived in fear.
I wish happiness wasn't hard to find,
And that sight was given to the blind.
I wish there was a cure for cancer,
And that silent prayers were always answered.
I wish Black lives mattered to every cop,
And that every unarmed person had never been shot.
I wish there was justice in the land,
And that I was respected as a man.
I wish prayer was back in school,
And that society lived by The Golden Rule.
I wish this list didn't exist,
And that I didn't have to wish.

"Wishes from a dreamer."

Energy

23.

Energy has a code,
Like DNA-
My energy is bold,
So watch what you say.

Each day brings new tests,
I'm trying to pass them all-
Don't need the added stress,
Just a hand if I fall.

Some are just empty inside,
Known as the walking dead-
They transmit negative vibes,
And will never get ahead.

You are what you do most,
Do you attract joy or sorrow-
Proof of life is growth,
And brings hope for tomorrow.

"You only attract what's in you.
And whatever is in you, will surround you.
And will either carry you or drown you."

24.

Empty Words
Actions don't lie.

Your words sound good,
But actions are real-
Not treated as I should,
And now I must heal.

I have given you,
The best of me-
But now I'm through,
As you clearly see.

I've played the fool,
Way too long-
I'm not your tool,
So now I'm gone.

I'm better than this,
You lost a good thing-
Your lies I won't miss,
I need a real King.

"When she's had enough, the gig is up."

The Hill We Climb by Amanda Gorman

When day comes we ask ourselves,
where can we find light in this never-ending shade?

The loss we carry,
a sea we must wade.

We've braved the belly of the beast,
We've learned that quiet isn't always peace,
and the norms and notions
of what just is
isn't always just-ice.

And yet the dawn is ours
before we knew it.
Somehow we do it.

Somehow we've weathered and witnessed
a nation that isn't broken,
but simply unfinished.

We the successors of a country and a time
where a skinny Black girl
descended from slaves and raised by a single mother
can dream of becoming president
only to find herself reciting for one.

And yes we are far from polished.
Far from pristine.

But that doesn't mean we are
striving to form a union that is perfect.

We are striving to forge a union with purpose,
to compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and
conditions of man.

And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us,
but what stands before us.

We close the divide because we know, to put our future first,
we must first put our differences aside.

We lay down our arms
so we can reach out our arms
to one another.

We seek harm to none and harmony for all.
Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true,

that even as we grieved, we grew,
that even as we hurt, we hoped,
that even as we tired, we tried,
that we'll forever be tied together, victorious.
Not because we will never again know defeat,
but because we will never again sow division.

Scripture tells us to envision
that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree
and no one shall make them afraid.
If we're to live up to our own time,
then victory won't lie in the blade.
But in all the bridges we've made,
that is the promise to glade,
the hill we climb.
If only we dare.

It's because being American is more than a pride we inherit,
it's the past we step into
and how we repair it.

We've seen a force that would shatter our nation
rather than share it.

Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy.

And this effort very nearly succeeded.

But while democracy can be periodically delayed,
it can never be permanently defeated.

In this truth,

in this faith we trust.

For while we have our eyes on the future,
history has its eyes on us.

This is the era of just redemption
we feared at its inception.

We did not feel prepared to be the heirs
of such a terrifying hour
but within it we found the power
to author a new chapter.

To offer hope and laughter to ourselves.

So while once we asked,
how could we possibly prevail over catastrophe?

Now we assert,
How could catastrophe possibly prevail over us?
We will not march back to what was,
but move to what shall be.
A country that is bruised but whole,
benevolent but bold,
fierce and free.
We will not be turned around
or interrupted by intimidation,
because we know our inaction and inertia
will be the inheritance of the next generation.
Our blunders become their burdens.
But one thing is certain,
If we merge mercy with might,
and might with right,
then love becomes our legacy,
and change our children's birthright.
So let us leave behind a country
better than the one we were left with.
Every breath from my bronze-pounded chest,
we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one.
We will rise from the gold-limbed hills of the west.
We will rise from the windswept northeast,
where our forefathers first realized revolution.
We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the midwestern states.
We will rise from the sunbaked south.
We will rebuild, reconcile and recover.
And every known nook of our nation and
every corner called our country,
our people diverse and beautiful will emerge,
battered and beautiful.
When day comes we step out of the shade,
aflame and unafraid,
the new dawn blooms as we free it.
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it.
If only we're brave enough to be it.