

Blessing

May love surround us,
May joy gladden us,
May peace lie deep within.
And may our lives,
And the lives of all
Those we touch, go well.

Edwin C. Lynn

Music Notes

Ella's Song

The lyrics of this song are based on the words of Ella Baker, a brilliant, Black hero of the civil rights Freedom Movement who inspired and guided emerging leaders. Ella Jo Baker was born on December 13, 1903, in Norfolk, Virginia. Growing up in North Carolina, she developed a sense for social justice early on, due in part to her grandmother's stories about life under slavery. Baker studied at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. As a student she challenged school policies that she thought were unfair. After graduating in 1927 as class valedictorian, she moved to New York City and began joining social activist organizations. Throughout her life as a civil rights and human rights activists she was active in the NAACP, SCLC, and SNCC.

Do You Hear?

Words by Emily L Thorn (1915 -), Music from William Caldwell's *Union Harmony*, 1837.

*Do you hear, oh my friend, in the place where you stand,
Through the sky, through the land, do you hear, do you hear?
In the heights on the plain in the vale, on the main,
In the sun, in the rain, do you hear, do you hear?*

*Through the roar, through the rush, through the throng, through the crush,
Do you hear in the hush of your soul, of your soul?
Hear the cry fear won't still hear the heart's call to will,
Hear a sigh's startling trill in your soul, in your soul?*

*From the place where you stand to the outermost strand,
Do you hear, oh my friend, do you hear, do you hear?
All the dreams, all the dares, all the sighs, all the prayers –
They are yours, mine and theirs – do you hear, do you hear?*

Let Justice Roll Down

Composer Aileen Vance writes, "Most of the words in this zipper-type song are paraphrased from the speeches and writings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The inspiration for it came to me as I was singing peace songs with a group of women on a street corner in San Francisco on January 18th, 2003, watching thousands & thousands of people march by. I was also very struck

by the work of “Poets Against the War,” who were marching in demonstrations world-wide. The previous day, I had read (by) a wonderful book called Martin’s Big Words, by Doreen Rappaport & Bryan Collier, published by Hyperion Books for Children. So these (words of the song) are some of Martin’s big words.

Lift Every Voice

Many people are surprised to learn that "Lift Every Voice and Sing" was first written as a poem. Created by James Weldon Johnson, it was performed for the first time by 500 school children in celebration of President Lincoln's Birthday on February 12, 1900 in Jacksonville, FL. The poem was set to music by Johnson's brother, John Rosamond Johnson, and soon adopted by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) as its official song. Today “Lift Every Voice and Sing” is one of the most cherished songs of the African American Civil Rights Movement and is often referred to as the Black National Anthem. –from Black Culture Connection

*Lift every voice and sing
Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the listening 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 chastening 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 has brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who has 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.*

Circle Round for Freedom

*Circle round for freedom, circle round for peace,
For all of us imprisoned, circle for release,
Circle for the planet, circle for each soul,
For the children of our children, keep the circle whole.*