



America Will Be!

TTBB choir, a cappella

OF EQUALITY—AS IF IT HARM'D ME,
GIVING OTHERS THE SAME CHANCES AND RIGHTS AS MYSELF—
AS IF IT WERE NOT INDISPENSABLE TO MY OWN RIGHTS THAT OTHERS POSSESS THE SAME.
— WALT WHITMAN, LEAVES OF GRASS, THOUGHTS (1867)

WHEN SHALL WE ARISE FROM THIS DEATH-LIKE APATHY?
— DAVID WALKER, APPEAL, ARTICLE IV (1829)

WE HAVE WAITED HERE LONG IN THE DUST:
WE ARE TIRED AND HUNGRY:
BUT THE TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION MUST APPEAR AT LAST.
— MARGARET FULLER, WOMAN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY (1843)

The Composer's Note

While continually searching for statements on America as it stood tinged with a hope for where it could be—in this case for a Cantus program titled “Before Us”—I read a lot of poetry from abolition through the civil rights movement to today. Langston Hughes’ poetry stuck out to me for its unyielding support of the black identity and fierce clarity around the black experience in America. That said, I felt I couldn’t accurately depict his vision in setting his texts since the vast majority is focused solely on the black experience, of which I still know so little. I decided that if I were ever to set something of Hughes’, it had to involve a universality to the message for anyone who was or is under the thumb of American injustice. “Let America Be America Again,” then, was a bit different given that he included phrases focused on multiple marginalized groups (“the poor white” and “red man” being a few of them). My intent with this was not to lessen his message to the black community, but to support his goal of American change with regard to *any* marginalized group.

Along these lines, while the Langston Hughes Estate gave permission for this edited version and libretto, it is important to state that unused parts of the poem are no less important. I made the choice to not include certain portions because, as mentioned above, I have limited knowledge of the black experience yet wanted to support Hughes’ overall vision for the poem. So that these unset stanzas are not forgotten while considering this work as it stands, I’ve included the full poem alongside Hughes’ biography on the final page.

Finally, the staging notes on the first page are only suggestions. These were borne out of a surprising number of audience members misunderstanding Hughes’ intent, sometimes celebrating the “American” fanfare feel and ignoring the difficult parts. It occurred to me that, while in the 21st Century, we collectively might be further along than when Hughes wrote this poem (1935), some still haven’t digested the realities of the black experience or even the concept of American oppression or marginalization. My hope is that this piece clarifies both for them.

The Text

Let America be America again.
Let it be the dream it used to be.
Let it be the pioneer on the plain
Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed—
Let it be the great strong land of love
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me)

O, let my land be a land where
Liberty is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,
But opportunity is real, and life is free,
Equality is in the air we breathe.

*(There's never been equality for me,
Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")*

Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?
And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?
I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,
I am the (black one) bearing slavery's scars.
I am the (native) driven from the land,
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek

I'm the one who dreamt our basic dream
In the Old World while still a serf of kings,

Who dreamt a dream so strong, so brave, so true,
That even yet its mighty daring sings
In every brick and stone, in every furrow turned
That's made America the land it has become.
O, I'm the man who sailed those early seas
In search of what I meant to be my home—
For I'm the one who left dark Ireland's shore,
And Poland's plain, and England's grassy lea,
And torn from Black Africa's strand I came
To build a "homeland of the free."

The free?

For all the dreams we've dreamed
And all the songs we've sung
And all the hopes we've held
And all the flags we've hung,

The millions who have nothing for our pay—
Except the dream that's almost dead today.

O, let America be America again—
The land that never has been yet—
And yet must be—
the land where every(one) is free.
The land that's mine—
the poor (one's), (native's), (black one's), ME—

O, yes, I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath—
America will be!

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America Will Be!

Text by
LANGSTON HUGHES

Music by
PAUL JOHN RUDOI

Stoic Fanfare (♩ = ca. 76)

mf

Tenor

Let A - mer-i-ca be A - mer-i-ca a - gain. Let it be the dream it used to

mf

Bass

Let A - mer-i-ca be A - mer-i-ca a - gain. Let it be the dream it used to

5

T

be. Let it be the pi - o - neer on the plain Seek - ing a

5

B

be. Let it be the pi - o - neer on the plain Seek - ing a

Straight out to audience, as if from a distance.

8

Solo

p

(A - mer-i - ca — nev - er was A -

8

T

home where he him - self is free. hmm...

8

B

home where he him - self is free. hmm...

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America Will Be!

2

Solo

mer - i - ca to me.)

T

Let A - mer - i - ca be the dream the

B

Let A - mer - i - ca be the dream the

sempre mf

T

dream - ers dreamed, Let it be the great strong land of love Where nev - er

B

dream - ers dreamed, Let it be the great strong land of love Where nev - er

T

kings con - nive nor ty - rants scheme That a - ny man be

B

kings con - nive nor ty - rants scheme That a - ny man be

Solo

(It nev - er was A - mer - i - ca

T

crushed by one a - bove. oo... oo

B

crushed by one a - bove oo (oo) oo

mp

Solo 21 8 to me.) *sempre mf*

T 21 8 O, let my land be a land where Li - ber - ty Is

B 21 *sempre mf* O, let my land be a land where Li - ber - ty Is

T 23 8 crowned with no false pa - tri - o - tic wreath, But op - por -

B 23 crowned with no false pa - tri - o - tic wreath, But op - por -

T 25 8 tu - ni - ty is real, and life is free, E - qua - li - ty is in the

B 25 tu - ni - ty is real, and life is free, E - qua - li - ty is in the

Solo 27 8 *mf* (There's nev - er been e - qua - li - ty for me, Nor

T 27 8 air we breathe. E - qua - li - ty is real, and life

B 27 air we breathe. E - qua - li - ty is real, and life

America Will Be!

4

29

Solo

free - dom in this "home - land of the free.")

29

T

— is free... *f* Say, *agitated p* Say, who are you that

29

B

— is free... *f* Say,

32

T

mum - bles in the dark? Say, And who are you — that draws your veil — a - cross the stars?

32

B

Say, who are you — that draws your veil — a - cross the stars?

rit. *mp* $\bullet = \text{ca. } 60$

36

Solo

I... I am the poor white, fooled and pushed a - part, I

36

T

f *mf* *mp* Say, Say, Who... Who...

36

B

f *mf* *mp* Say, Say, Who... Who...

America Will Be!

41

Solo

8

am the black man bear-ing slav-'ry's scars I am the red man dri-ven from the land,

41

T

8

Who...

41

B

Who...

44

Solo

8

I am the im - mi - grant clutch - ing the hope I seek... I

44

T

8

Who...

44

B

Who...

mf

46

Solo

8

dreamt our dream while still a serf of kings, Who

46

T

8

add 2* *mp*

I am the one who dreamt our bas - ic dream in the Old World while still a serf of kings, Who

46

B

8

add 3 *p*

Who are

* An individual vocalist adds at one of the following markers.

America Will Be!

6

49 dreamt a dream so strong, brave, so true, _____
 T
 8 dreamt a dream so strong, so true, _____
 B
 49 *mp*
 you? _____ add 4 so brave, so true, That e - ven yet its might-y dar - ing sings In eve - ry

In eve - ry fur - row turned That's made the _____ land it has be - come. *rit.* Tutti
 T
 52 *mf*
 in eve - ry fur - row turned That's made A - mer - i - ca the land it has be - come. O, —
 B
 52 *mf*
 brick and stone, _____ That's made A - mer - i - ca the land it has be - come. O, —

Even slower (♩ ca. 54)
 T
 55 *mp*
 I'm the man who sailed those ear - ly seas In search of what I meant to be my
 B
 55 *mp*
 I'm the man who sailed those ear - ly seas in search of what I meant to be my

58 add 5 *p* *mp*
 Solo Who are you? _____ And Po - land's plain, and
 For I'm the one who left dark Ire - land's shore, _____ and plain,
 T
 58 home... For I'm the one who left dark Ire - land's shore, And Po - land's plain, and
 For I'm the one who left dark Ire - land's shore, and En - gland's
 B
 58 home... For...

America Will Be!

T 61 *8* grass - y lea, And torn from Black A - fri - ca's strand I came to build a "home - land of the free." the

B 61 *8* Who are you? the free...

molto rit.

T 64 *f* *8* free... the free... The free? For

B 64 *f* *8* the free... the free... The free? For

a tempo

T 66 *8* all the dreams we've dreamed And all the songs we've sung, And all the hopes we've held And all the

B 66 *8* all the dreams we've dreamed And all the songs we've sung, And all the hopes we've held And all the

T 69 *8* flags we've hung, The mil - lions who have noth - ing for our pay Ex - cept the

B 69 *8* flags we've hung, The mil - lions who have noth - ing for our pay Ex - cept the

America Will Be!

8

71

T dream that's al - most dead to - day. O, let... A -

B dream that's al - most dead to - day. O, let... A -

Tempo I (♩ = ca. 76)

74

T mer-i - ca be A - mer-i - ca a - gain. the land that nev - er has been

B mer-i - ca be A - mer-i - ca a - gain. the land that nev - er has been

O, let the land that has been

molto accel.

77

T yet, and yet must be, the land where eve - ry man is

B yet, yet must be, land where eve - ry man is

♩ = ♩ (♩ = ca. 76)

80

T free The poor man's, ME. O,

B free The land that's mine... The red man's, ME. O, yes,

free The black man's, ME. O, yes,

America Will Be!

determined

mf

83 yes, I say it plain, A - mer - i - ca nev - er was A -

yes, I say it plain, A - mer - i - ca nev - er was A -

Broadly

85 mer - i - ca to me, And yet, I swear this

mer - i - ca to me, And yet, I swear this

a tempo

cresc. poco a poco

87 oath: A - mer-i - ca, A -

cresc. poco a poco

8 A - mer-i - ca, A - mer-i - ca, A - mer-i - ca, A - mer-i - ca, A - mer-i - ca, A - mer-i -

cresc. poco a poco

oath: A - mer-i - ca, A - mer-i - ca, A - mer-i - ca, A -

cresc. poco a poco

oath: A - mer-i - ca, A -

America Will Be!

10

90

T 1
mer-i - ca, will be! A - mer-i - ca, will

T 2
ca, A - mer-i - ca will be! A - mer-i - ca, A - mer-i - ca, A - mer-i - ca will

B 1
mer-i - ca, A - mer-i - ca will be! A - mer-i - ca A - mer-i - ca, A - mer-i - ca will

B 2
mer-i - ca, will be! A - mer-i - ca, will

93

T 1
be! A - mer-i - ca will be! A -

T 2
be A - mer-i - ca, A - mer-i - ca will be! A -

B 1
be! A - mer-i - ca will be! A -

B 2
be! A - mer-i - ca will be! A -

f

molto rit.

96

T 1
mer - i - ca, A - mer - i - ca Ah!

T 2
mer - i - ca, A - mer - i - ca will be! Ah!

B 1
mer - i - ca, A - mer - i - ca Ah!

B 2
mer - i - ca, A - mer - i - ca Ah!

solo mf

The Poet



Langston Hughes (1902?-1967) – American writer who was an important figure in the Harlem Renaissance and made the African American experience the subject of his writings, which ranged from poetry and plays to novels and newspaper columns.

Hughes documented African American literature and culture in works such as *A Pictorial History of the Negro in America* (1956) and the anthologies *The Poetry of the Negro* (1949) and *The Book of Negro Folklore* (1958; with Bontemps). He also wrote poetry until his death; *The Panther and the Lash*, published posthumously in 1967, reflected and engaged with the Black Power movement and, specifically, the Black Panther Party, which was founded the previous year.

The Full Poem

Let America be America again.
Let it be the dream it used to be.
Let it be the pioneer on the plain
Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed —
Let it be the great strong land of love
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me)

O, let my land be a land where
Liberty is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,
But opportunity is real, and life is free,
Equality is in the air we breathe.

(There's never been equality for me,
Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")

Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?
And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,
I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.
I am the red man driven from the land,
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek —
[And finding only the same old stupid plan
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

I am the young man, full of strength and hope,
Tangled in that ancient endless chain
Of profit, power, gain, of grab the land!
Of grab the gold! Of grab the ways of satisfying need!
Of work the men! Of take the pay!
Of owning everything for one's own greed!

I am the farmer, bondsman to the soil.
I am the worker sold to the machine.
I am the Negro, servant to you all.
I am the people, humble, hungry, mean —
Hungry yet today despite the dream.
Beaten yet today—O, Pioneers!

I am the man who never got ahead,
The poorest worker bartered through the years.

Yet] I'm the one who dreamt our basic dream
In the Old World while still a serf of kings,
Who dreamt a dream so strong, so brave, so true,
That even yet its mighty daring sings

In every brick and stone, in every furrow turned
That's made America the land it has become.

O, I'm the man who sailed those early seas
In search of what I meant to be my home—
For I'm the one who left dark Ireland's shore,
And Poland's plain, and England's grassy lea,
And torn from Black Africa's strand I came
To build a "homeland of the free."

The free?

[Who said the free? Not me?
Surely not me? The millions on relief today?
The millions shot down when we strike?
The millions who have nothing for our pay?]
For all the dreams we've dreamed
And all the songs we've sung
And all the hopes we've held
And all the flags we've hung,

The millions who have nothing for our pay —
Except the dream that's almost dead today.

O, let America be America again —
The land that never has been yet —
And yet must be— the land where every man is free.
The land that's mine—the poor man's, Indian's, Negro's,
ME —

[Who made America,
Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain,
Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain,
Must bring back our mighty dream again.

Sure, call me any ugly name you choose —
The steel of freedom does not stain.
From those who live like leeches on the people's lives,
We must take back our land again, America!]

O, yes, I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath —
America will be!

[Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death,
The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies,
We the people, must redeem
The land, the mines, the plants, the rivers.
The mountains and the endless plain —
All, all the stretch of these great green states —
And make America again!]

PAUL JOHN RUDOI

SELECTED WORKS

OUR TRANSCENDENTAL PASSION (PJR Music) **SATB, soli, and chamber ens.**
Passion-styled work around the Transcendentalist movement Length: 60'

Gamaya (Graphite Music Publishing) **SATB choir or equal voices and drum**
Concert round in ancient sanskrit Length: 3'

Thrice Is Sweet Music Sweet (PJR Music) **SATB, a cappella**
Traditional part-song about friendship Length: 4'

SERMON ON THE MOUNT (PJR Music) **SATBarB soli, choir, cello, and narrator**
Concert-length sacred music drama Length: 80'

The Wind's True Song (PJR Music) **SATB choir and piano**
Advanced work about the immigrant experience Length: 9'

Yonder Come Day (ECS Publishing) **SATB, TTBB, or SSAA choir and tambourine**
Narrative spiritual arrangement Length: 3.5'

Miniyama Nayo (Walton Publishing) **SATB choir, a cappella**
Nonsense work Length: 4'

SONG OF SKY AND SEA:
A Song of Realization (PJR Music) **SATB or TTBB divisi, a cappella**
Narrative cycle with four excerptible movements Length: 20'

If I Were a Dog (Graphite Music Publishing) **SAB, SSA, or TBarB and piano**
Work about pets and unconditional love Length: 3.5'

The Bay Psalms (PJR Music) **SSA, a cappella**
Excerptible set of 3 settings of The Bay Psalm Book Length: 8'

Hope and Quietly Wait (Morningstar) **SATB and piano or strings & harp**
Sacred work about acceptance of loss through dimensia Length: 5'



Paul John Rudoi is an award-winning composer, conductor, vocalist, and entrepreneur.

Deemed “indisputably unique, confident, and innovative” by the American Prize, Paul John Rudoi’s compositions are commissioned and sought after by ensembles worldwide including the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, Orphei Dränger, Cantus, and Spokane Kantorei.

As a professional tenor vocalist, Paul has performed and recorded a wide range of music in professional ensembles nationwide including Seraphic Fire, The Santa Fe Desert Chorale, True Concord, the Oregon Bach Festival, and Cantus.

Paul is also a fierce advocate for new music trends, resources, and issues. He is the co-founder of "Consortio," an online platform designed to help composers, conductors, and ensembles explore and facilitate consortium-based commissioning, ideally making commissioning music more readily

accessible for all. Visit consortio.io for more information.

Paul holds degrees from the Hartt School and the University of Oregon, and his teachers have included Dr. Sharon Paul, Robert Kyr, Dr. Craig Phillips, Libby Larsen, and Dr. Edward Bolkovac.

For more information or to purchase scores, please visit www.pauljohnrudoi.com.