

# DREAMS OF A NEW DAY

SONGS BY BLACK  
COMPOSERS

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SONG TEXTS



*Song lyrics may differ slightly from original poems, reproduced here. Lines from the original poems that are not sung are included in brackets.*

## **I DREAM A WORLD** *Langston Hughes*

I dream a world where man  
No other man will scorn,  
Where love will bless the earth  
And peace its paths adorn  
I dream a world where all  
Will know sweet freedom's way,  
Where greed no longer saps the soul  
Nor avarice blights our day.  
A world I dream where black or white,  
Whatever race you be,  
Will share the bounties of the earth  
And every man is free,  
Where wretchedness will hang its head  
And joy, like a pearl,  
Attends the needs of all mankind —  
Of such I dream, my world!

# FIVE SONGS OF LAURENCE HOPE

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*Adela Florence Nicolson*

## WORTH WHILE

I asked of my desolate shipwrecked soul  
“Wouldst thou rather never have met  
The one whom thou lovedst beyond control  
And whom thou adorest yet?”

Back from the senses, the heart, the brain,  
Came the answer swiftly thrown,  
“What matter the price? we would pay  
it again,  
We have had, we have loved, we have known!”

## THE JUNGLE FLOWER

Ah, the cool silence of shaded hours,  
The scent and colour of jungle flowers!

Thou art one of the jungle flowers, strange  
and fierce and fair,  
Palest amber, perfect lines, and scented with  
champa flower.

Lie back and frame thy face in the gloom of  
thy loosened hair;

Sweet thou art and loved — ay, loved —  
for an hour.

But thought flies far, ah, far, to another breast,  
Whose whiteness breaks to the rose of a twin  
pink flower,

Where wind the azure veins that my  
lips caressed

When Fate was gentle to me for a  
too-brief hour.

There is my spirit's home and my soul's abode,  
The rest are only inns on the traveller's road.

## KASHMIRI SONG

Pale hands I loved beside the Shalimar,  
Where are you now? Who lies beneath  
your spell?  
Whom do you lead on Rapture's roadway, far,  
Before you agonise them in farewell?

Oh, pale dispensers of my Joys and Pains,  
Holding the doors of Heaven and of Hell,  
How the hot blood rushed wildly through  
the veins

Beneath your touch, until you  
waved farewell.

Pale hands, pink tipped, like Lotus buds  
that float

On those cool waters where we used  
to dwell,

I would have rather felt you round my throat,  
Crushing out life, than waving me farewell!

## AMONG THE FUCHSIAS

Call me not to a secret place  
When daylight dies away,  
Tempt me not with thine eager face  
And words thou shouldst not say.  
Entice me not with a child of thine,  
Ah, God, if such might be,  
For surely a man is half divine  
Who adds another link to the line  
Whose last link none may see.

Call me not to the Lotus lake  
That drooping fuchsias hide,  
What if my latent youth awakes  
And will not be denied?  
Ah, tempt me not for I am not strong  
(Thy mouth is a budded kiss)  
My days are empty, my nights are long.  
Ah, why is a thing so sweet so wrong  
As thy temptation is?

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## TILL I WAKE

When I am dying, lean over me tenderly, softly,  
Stoop, as the yellow roses droop in the  
wind from the South.

So I may, when I wake, if there be an  
Awakening,

Keep, what lulled me to sleep, the touch  
of your lips on my mouth.

## **AMAZING GRACE** *H. Leslie Adams*

Amazing Grace you fill my heart with song,  
A song of love that lasts the whole day long!  
Amazing Grace, surround me  
with the strength of your caress,  
Renew my trust that I'm forever blessed!  
Amazing Truth speak to me with your voice,  
Uniting all within that says, "Rejoice!"  
Amazing Truth unfold the joy that only you  
can bring,  
The joy that comes when I begin to sing!  
Abiding hope, abiding faith  
Abiding strength that comes to me.  
Abiding life, abiding love,  
Abiding song of eternity!  
Amazing Grace, surround me  
with the strength of your caress,  
Renew my trust that I'm forever blessed!  
Amazing Grace you fill my heart with song,  
A song of love that lasts the whole day long!  
A song of peace that frees my heart and lifts  
me high above,  
Amazing Grace, you fill me with your love!

# THREE DREAM PORTRAITS

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*Langston Hughes*

## MINSTREL MAN

Because my mouth  
Is wide with laughter  
And my throat  
Is deep with song,  
You do not think  
I suffer after  
I have held my pain  
So long?

Because my mouth  
Is wide with laughter,  
You do not hear  
My inner cry?  
Because my feet  
Are gay with dancing,  
You do not know  
I die?

## DREAM VARIATION

To fling my arms wide  
In some place of the sun,  
To whirl and to dance  
Till the white day is done.  
Then rest at cool evening  
Beneath a tall tree  
While night comes on gently,  
Dark like me —  
That is my dream!

To fling my arms wide  
In the face of the sun,  
Dance! Whirl! Whirl!  
Till the quick day is done.  
Rest at pale evening...  
A tall, slim tree...  
Night coming tenderly  
Black like me.



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## I, TOO

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
When company comes,  
But I laugh,  
And eat well,  
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,  
I'll be at the table  
When company comes.  
Nobody'll dare  
Say to me,  
"Eat in the kitchen,"  
Then.

Besides,  
They'll see how beautiful I am  
And be ashamed —

[I, too, am America.]

## **RIDING TO TOWN** *Paul Laurence Dunbar*

When labor is light and the morning is fair,  
I find it a pleasure beyond all compare  
To hitch up my nag and go hurrying down  
And take Katie May for a ride into town;  
For bumpety-bump goes the wagon,  
But tra-la-la-la our lay.  
There's joy in a song as we rattle along  
In the light of the glorious day.

A coach would be fine, but a spring  
wagon's good;  
My jeans are a match for Kate's gingham  
and hood;  
The hills take us up and the vales take  
us down,  
But what matters that? we are riding to town,  
And bumpety-bump goes the wagon,  
But tra-la-la-la sing we.  
[There's never a care may live in the air  
That is filled with the breath of our glee.

And after we've started, there's naught  
can repress  
The thrill of our hearts in their wild happiness;  
The heavens may smile or the heavens  
may frown,  
And it's all one to us when we're riding  
to town.  
For bumpety-bump goes the wagon,  
But tra-la-la-la we shout,  
For our hearts they are clear and there's  
nothing to fear,  
And we've never a pain nor a doubt.]

The wagon is weak and the roadway is rough,  
And tho' it is long it is not long enough,  
For mid all my ecstasies this is the crown  
To sit beside Katie and ride into town,  
When bumpety-bump goes the wagon,  
But tra-la-la-la our song;  
And if I had my way, I'd be willing to pay  
If the road could be made twice as long.

# TWO BLACK CHURCHES

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## **BALLAD OF BIRMINGHAM** *Dudley Randall*

“Mother dear, may I go downtown  
Instead of out to play,  
And march the streets of Birmingham  
In a Freedom March today?”

“No, baby, no, you may not go,  
For the dogs are fierce and wild,  
And clubs and hoses, guns and jails  
Aren’t good for a little child.”

“But, mother, I won’t be alone.  
Other children will go with me,  
And march the streets of Birmingham  
To make our country free.”

“No, baby, no, you may not go,  
For I fear those guns will fire.  
But you may go to church instead  
And sing in the children’s choir.”

She has combed and brushed her  
night-dark hair,  
And bathed rose petal sweet,  
And drawn white gloves on her small  
brown hands,  
And white shoes on her feet.

The mother smiled to know her child  
Was in the sacred place,  
But that smile was the last smile  
To come upon her face.

For when she heard the explosion,  
Her eyes grew wet and wild.  
She raced through the streets of Birmingham  
Calling for her child.

She clawed through bits of glass and brick,  
Then lifted out a shoe.  
“O, here’s the shoe my baby wore,  
But, baby, where are you?”

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## **THE RAIN** *Marcus Amaker*

When the reality  
of racism returns,  
all joy treads water  
in oceans of buried  
emotion.

Charleston  
is doing  
everything it can  
to only swim  
in a colorless liquid  
of calm sea  
and blind faith.

But the Lowcountry  
is a terrain  
of ancient tears,  
suffocating through  
floods of  
segregation.

When a murderer's gunshots  
made waves  
at Emanuel AME Church  
we closed our eyes,  
held our breath  
and went under.

And we are still  
trying not to  
taste the salt  
of our surrounding blues  
or face the rising tide  
of black pain.

# MORTAL STORM

*Langston Hughes*

## A HOUSE IN TAOS

[Rain]

Thunder of the Rain God:  
And we three  
Smitten by beauty.

Thunder of the Rain God:  
And we three  
Wearry, weary.

Thunder of the Rain God:  
And you, she, and I  
Waiting for nothingness.

Do you understand the stillness  
Of this house  
In Taos  
Under the thunder of the Rain God?

[Sun]

That there should be a barren garden  
About this house in Taos  
Is not so strange,  
But that there should be three barren hearts  
In this one house in Taos —  
Who carries ugly things to show the sun?

[Moon]

Did you ask for the beaten brass of the moon?  
We can buy lovely things with money,  
You, she, and I,  
Yet you seek,  
As though you could keep,  
This unbought loveliness of moon.

[Wind]

Touch our bodies, wind.  
Our bodies are separate, individual things.  
Touch our bodies, wind,  
But blow quickly  
Through the red, white, yellow skins  
Of our bodies  
To the terrible snarl,  
Not mine,  
Not yours,  
Not hers,  
But all one snarl of souls.  
Blow quickly, wind,  
Before we run back  
Into the windlessness —  
With our bodies —  
Into the windlessness  
Of our house in Taos.

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## LITTLE SONG

Lonely people  
In the lonely night  
Grab a lonely dream  
And hold it tight.

Lonely people  
In the lonely day  
Work to salt  
Their dream away.

## JAIME

He sits on a hill  
And beats a drum  
For the great earth spirits  
That never come.

He sits on a hill  
Looking out to sea  
Toward a mirage-land  
That will never be.

## FAITHFUL ONE

Though I go drunken to her door,  
I'm ever so sure she'll let me in.  
Though I wander and stray and wound her sore,  
she'll open the latch when I come again.  
No matter what I do or say,  
she waits for me at the end of the day.

## GENIUS CHILD

This is a song for the genius child.  
Sing it softly, for the song is wild.  
Sing it softly as ever you can —  
Lest the song get out of hand.

Nobody loves a genius child.

Can you love an eagle,  
Tame or wild?

Wild or tame,  
Can you love a monster  
Of frightening name?

Nobody loves a genius child.

Kill him — and let his soul run wild!

## **BIRMINGHAM SUNDAY** *Richard Fariña*

Come round by my side and I'll sing you  
a song.  
I'll sing it so softly, it'll do no one wrong.  
On Birmingham Sunday the blood ran  
like wine,  
And the choir kept singing of Freedom.  
That cold autumn morning no eyes saw  
the sun,  
And Addie Mae Collins, her number was one.  
At an old Baptist church there was no need  
to run.  
And the choir kept singing of Freedom,  
The clouds they were dark and the autumn  
wind blew,  
And Denise McNair brought the number  
to two.  
The falcon of death was a creature they knew,  
And the choir kept singing of Freedom,  
The church it was crowded, and no one  
could see  
That Cynthia Wesley's dark number was three.  
Her prayers and her feelings would shame  
you and me.

And the choir kept singing of Freedom.  
Young Carol Robertson entered the door  
And the number her killers had given  
was four.  
She asked for a blessing but asked for  
no more,  
And the choir kept singing of Freedom.  
On Birmingham Sunday a noise shook  
the ground.  
And people all over the earth turned around.  
For no one recalled a more cowardly sound.  
And the choir kept singing of Freedom.  
The men in the forest they once asked of me,  
How many black berries grew in the Blue Sea?  
I asked them right back with a tear in my eye,  
How many dark ships in the forest?  
The Sunday has come, the Sunday has gone.  
And I can't do much more than to sing you  
a song.  
I'll sing it so softly, it'll do no one wrong.  
And the choir keeps singing of Freedom.

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