

Fourth of July 2020

**Song: "America, The Beautiful" - Katherine Lee Bates**

**1.**

***O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain,  
For purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain!  
America! America! God shed His grace on thee,  
And crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea!***

**2.**

***O beautiful for heroes proved In liberating strife,  
Who more than self their country loved, and mercy more than life!  
America! America! May God thy gold refine  
Till all success be nobleness, and ev'ry gain divine!***

**3.**

***O Beautiful for patriot dream that sees beyond the years  
Thine alabaster cities gleam, undimmed by human tears!  
America! America! God shed His grace on thee,  
And crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea!***

### **OPENING PRAYER**

Almighty God: We humbly beseech thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of thy favor and glad to do thy will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in you to fail; all which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*- Adapted from the Book of Common Prayer*

## **MIRANDA**

As Christians who are Americans, we gather this day to thank God for the gift of our freedom; to honor those whose vision, wisdom and sacrifice secured these 'unalienable Rights' for us and every generation; and to confess that while we believe that all are created equal, we have not always allowed others to enjoy that freedom or those rights. We ask God's forgiveness and call upon God's unconditional love and boundless mercy to grant that we may be given the strength and courage to live more fully into our faith and beliefs. Amen.

Let us now remember our history, that our past may inform our future.

*1. Excerpts from the Declaration of Independence, signed July 4, 1776.*

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

.... We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

2. *Chief Seattle, in response to a government official's offer to purchase the remaining Seattle land, 1845.*

Our good father in Washington--for I presume he is now our father as well as yours--our great and good father, I say, sends us word that if we do as he desires he will protect us. His brave warriors will be to us a bristling wall of strength, and his wonderful ships of war will fill our harbors, so that our ancient enemies far to the northward will cease to frighten our women, children, and old men. Then in reality he will be our father and we his children. But can that ever be? Your God is not our God! Your God loves your people and hates mine! He folds his strong protecting arms lovingly about the paleface and leads him by the hand as a father leads an infant son. But, He has forsaken His Red children, if they really are His. Our God, the Great Spirit, seems also to have forsaken us. Your God makes your people [grow] stronger every day. Soon they will fill all the land. Our people are ebbing away like a rapidly receding tide that will never return. The white man's God cannot love our people or He would protect them. They seem to be orphans who can look nowhere for help. How then can we be brothers? How can your God become our God and renew our prosperity and awaken in us dreams of returning greatness?

### **POEM: America, I Sing Back**

*Allison Adele Hedge Coke, b. 1958, Native American*

America, I sing back. Sing back what sung you in.  
Sing back the moment you cherished breath.  
Sing you home into yourself and back to reason.

Oh, before America began to sing, I sung her to sleep,  
held her cradleboard, wept her into day.  
My song gave her creation, prepared her delivery,  
held her severed cord beautifully beaded.

My song helped her stand, held her hand for first steps,  
nourished her very being, fed her, placed her three sisters strong.  
My song comforted her as she battled my reason  
broke my long held footing sure, as any child might do.

Lo, as she pushed herself away, forced me to remove myself,  
as I cried this country, my song grew roses in each tear's fall.

My blood veined rivers, painted pipestone quarries  
circled canyons, while she made herself maiden fine.

Oh, but here I am, here I am, here, I remain high on each and every peak,  
carefully rumbling her great underbelly, prepared to pour forth singing—  
and sing again I will, as I have always done.

Never silenced unless in the company of strangers, singing  
the stoic face, polite repose, polite, while dancing deep inside, polite  
Mother of her world. Sister of myself.

When my song sings aloud again. When I call her back to cradle.  
Call her to peer into waters, to behold herself in dark and light,

day and night, call her to sing along, call her to mature, to envision—

Then, she will make herself over. My song will make it so

When she grows far past her self-considered purpose,  
I will sing her back, sing her back. I will sing. Oh, I will—I do.

America, I sing back. Sing back what sung you in.

### *3. Sojourner Truth, 1851*

That little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him. If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them.

### *4. African-American orator Frederick Douglass, 1852*

This, for the purpose of this celebration, is the 4th of July. It is the birthday of your National Independence, and of your political freedom. This, to you, is what the Passover was to the emancipated people of God. It carries your minds back to the clay, and to the act of your great deliverance; and to the signs, and to the wonders, associated with that act that day. ... I am

not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought life and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn.

**POEM: I, Too**

*Langston Hughes, African-American, 1902 - 1967*

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.

*5. Women's rights activist Amelia Bloomer, 1854*

We see no reason why it should be considered disreputable for a woman to be usefully employed... [Women] eat, they drink, they sleep, they dress, they dance and at last die, without having accomplished the great purposes of their creation. Can woman be content with this aimless,

frivolous life?...While all other things both animals and vegetable perform their allotted parts in the universe of being, shall woman, a being created in God's own image, endowed with reason and intellect, capable of the highest attainments and destined to an immortal existence, alone be an idler, a drone, and pervert the noble faculties of her being from the great purposes for which they were given? It will not always be thus; the public mind is undergoing a rapid change in its opinion of woman and is beginning to regard her sphere, rights and duties in altogether a different light from that which she has been viewed in the past ages. Woman herself is doing much to rend asunder the dark veil of error and prejudice which has so long blinded the world in regard to her true position; and we feel assured that, when a more thorough education is given to her and she is recognized as an intelligent being capable of self-government, and in all rights, responsibilities and duties man's equal, we shall have a generation of women who will blush over the ignorance and folly of the present day.

*7. Cuban activist and writer Jose Marti, Our America, 1891*

One must have faith in the best in men and distrust the worst. One must allow the best to be shown so that it reveals and prevails over the worst. Nations should have a pillory for whoever stirs up useless hate, and another for whoever fails to tell them the truth in time.

*8. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1932*

This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.

*9. Martin Luther King, Jr., from his Letter from the Birmingham Jail, 1963*

I have not said to my people: "Get rid of your discontent." Rather, I have tried to say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channeled into the creative outlet of nonviolent direct action. And now this approach is being termed extremist. But though I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist, as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label.

Was not Jesus an extremist for love: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Was not Amos an extremist for justice: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream." Was not Paul an extremist for the Christian gospel: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Was not Martin Luther an extremist: "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God." And John Bunyan: "I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience." And Abraham Lincoln: "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." And Thomas Jefferson: "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal . . ."

So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love?

### **POEM: Revenge (excerpts)**

Elisa Chavez (b. 1989), American of Latina descent

oh yeah: there will be signs, and rainbow-colored drum circles,  
and folks arguing ideology until even I want to punch them  
but I won't, because they're my family,  
in that blood-of-the-covenant sense.  
If you've never loved someone like that  
you cannot outwaltz us, we have all the good dancers anyway.

I'll confess I don't know if I'm alive right now;  
I haven't heard my heart beat in days,  
I keep holding my breath for the moment the plane goes down  
and I have to save enough oxygen to get my friends through.  
But I finally found the argument against suicide and it's us.  
We're the effigies that haunt America's nights harder  
the longer they spend burning us,  
we are scaring the [crap] out of people by spreading,  
by refusing to die: what are we but a fire?  
We know everything we do is so the kids after us  
will be able to follow something towards safety;  
what can I call us but lighthouse,

of course I'm terrified. Of course I'm a shroud.  
And of course it's not fair but rest assured,  
anxious America, you brought your fists to a glitter fight.

This is a taco truck rally and all you have is cole slaw.  
You cannot deport our minds; we won't  
hold funerals for our potential. We have always been  
what makes America great.

## PRAYERS

### **SONG: "This is my song"**

This is my song, O God of all the nations,  
a song of peace for lands afar and mine;  
this is my home, the country where my heart is;  
here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine:  
but other hearts in other lands are beating  
with hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.

My country's skies are bluer than the ocean,  
and sunlight beams on cloverleaf and pine;  
but other lands have sunlight too, and clover,  
and skies are everywhere as blue as mine:  
O hear my song, thou God of all the nations,  
a song of peace for their land and for mine.