



A Hymn of Praise

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By Minister Yvonne Davis-Robinson

Lord, you are my God; I will honor you and praise your name. You have done amazing things; you have faithfully carried out the plans you made long ago. Isaiah 25:1 (GNT)

As we prepared for the dawning of a new day, we also prepared for the inauguration of a newly, legally elected President and Vice President of our country and two newly, legally elected United States Senators representing the state of Georgia. Instantly, I was reminded of the words in the scripture above and Ephesians 5:19 (GNT): *Speak to one another with the words of psalms, hymns, and sacred songs; sing hymns and psalms to the Lord with praise in your hearts.*

I woke up that day praying and singing hymns of praise for what was about to happen. I thought about my great-grandmother, a Mulatto woman, who was born on a slave plantation in Henry County, Georgia. After the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, she traveled the Trail of Tears to Arkansas, but soon thereafter returned to Georgia. As a child and young adult, there were occasions when I witnessed the enforcement of the laws segregationists imposed on all African Americans in that and other southern states. On this day I imagined that, if she were still alive, she, too, would be lifting a praise prayer, and singing the hymn, “Amazing Grace.” Yes—God is truly amazing!

President Joseph Robinette Biden, Jr., ran for president three times before finally winning the election to this post days before he reached the age of 78. Amazing! He never gave up his desire to serve in this position despite previous defeats, public doubts, criticism, and past mistakes when legislating as a US Senator. He is a man of faith, who unabashedly shows his compassion for others and appeals relentlessly for unity.

*People with their minds set on you, you keep completely whole,
Steady on their feet, because they keep at it and don't quit. Depend on God and
keep at it because in the Lord God you have a sure thing.* Isaiah 26:3-4 (MSG)

Were it not for the resounding last-minute endorsement of James E. Clyburn, an African American Congressman from South Carolina, Mr. Biden would not have achieved this honor. It was the words of Congressman Clyburn, son of an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) minister and civil rights activists, an HBCU (Historically Black Universities and Colleges) graduate of South Carolina State University, and a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated, that helped Joseph Biden redeem his then-flailing presidential campaign.

The nomination of Joseph Biden to be the Democratic Presidential candidate led to the selection of our now newly, legally elected Vice President, Kamala Harris. She is a woman of many firsts: first Black and South Asian American woman to be elected to serve as the Assistant District Attorney of San Francisco and the Attorney General for the state of California. She is also the first graduate of HBCU

Howard University, and a loyal member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, the first African American Sorority in the world, to achieve this honor. Like Clyburn's parents, our Vice President's Indian mother insisted that she and her sister attend a Black church during childhood. Like Congressman Clyburn's, her mother was an active advocate for civil rights. God is truly amazing!

If that were not enough, the Reverend Raphael Warnock, the son of a minister, and the pastor of the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, has become the first African American person newly, and legally elected from that state as the eleventh African American to serve in the United States Senate. Warnock is a graduate of Morehouse College, the premier HBCU for African American men, and a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated, the first African American Fraternity in the world. God is truly amazing!

It was the Black church that served as the fortress of the Civil Rights Movement. The Black church was a secure place for our civil rights leaders to plan, train, and implement strategies that would help "the Negroes," as we were called back then, overcome racism, desegregation, and vicious unconstitutional acts that prevented Black folk from voting, earning a living wage, and having access to health care in local hospitals.

It was the Divine Nine (Black Greek sororities and fraternities), and HBCUs that launched the professional careers of Black artists, lawyers, doctors, judges, writers, entrepreneurs, educators, physicians, preachers, and politicians; including the first African American to serve as a Supreme Court Justice, Thurgood Marshall. Propelled to public prominence because of his work as a civil rights lawyer, he is also a Howard University graduate and another member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated. Kamala Harris is the first person to ever swear the oath to the Office of the Vice Presidency of the United States of America by placing her hand on a Bible —the Bible—that was read and owned by an African American—the Honorable Justice Marshall.

The history of African Americans, aka Black people, is based upon many firsts. The roles of faith, hope, and trust in God, have indeed brought us to this day—a day to celebrate many firsts. Launched from the pulpit where Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., his father, and his maternal grandfather also served as pastor, Warnock is the fulfillment of one of Dr. King's many dreams.

Dr. King was also a graduate of Morehouse College, and a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. He is the first African American man to have a national holiday—a "Day of Service"—named after him. Now, five days after what would have been his 92nd birthday, we see the dawning of a new presidential administration take the oath of office to serve and protect all people of this nation. God is truly amazing!

These accomplishments make me prouder than ever to sing the words of *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, the Negro National Anthem so named by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). This anthem was written by another civil rights advocate, James Weldon Johnson, the son of a Baptist pastor, and a man of many firsts. Mr. Johnson attended HBCU Clark Atlanta University and was a member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity. He epitomizes the educational acumen of HBCU graduates. He was the first African American lawyer to pass the Florida bar, the first African-American to serve as the Executive Secretary of the NAACP, and the first African American professor to be hired at New York University. He was a prolific author of poems, plays, and music.

I pray that you, like me, are enthralled by the inauguration of our President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. Perhaps you, too, will pray and sing a hymn or sacred song. Please consider the significance of the words Mr. Johnson wrote as a poem—the first verse of what is now the internationally recognized anthem, “*Lift Every Voice and Sing*:”

*Lift ev'ry voice and sing,
'Til 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 'til victory is won*

God is truly amazing! Yes, God, *You have done [and are still doing] amazing things*.