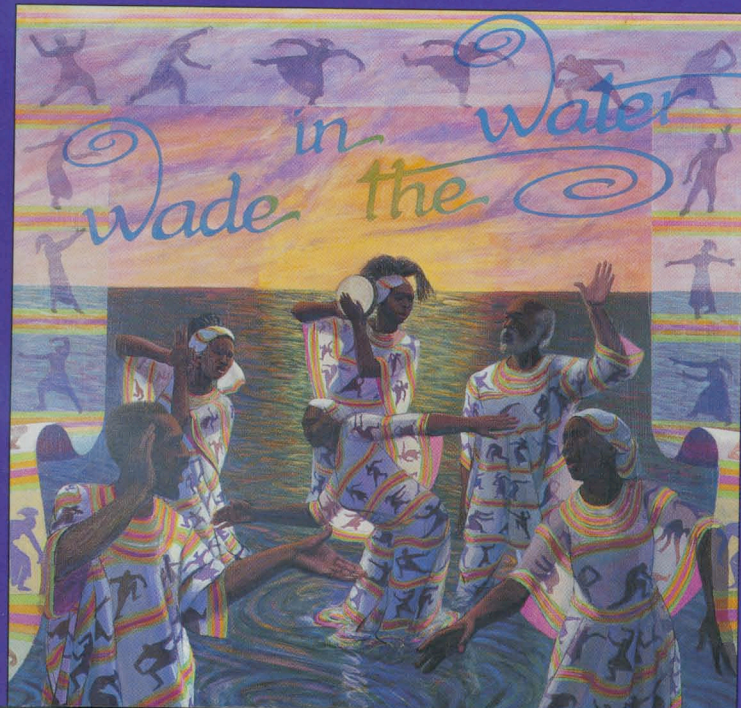


AFRICAN AMERICAN CONGREGATIONAL SINGING



Smithsonian
Folkways

Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings
Center for Folklife Programs & Cultural Studies
955 L'Enfant Plaza, Suite 2600
Smithsonian Institution
Washington DC 20560

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AFRICAN AMERICAN CONGREGATIONAL SINGING: NINETEENTH-CENTURY ROOTS

Conceived and compiled by Bernice Johnson Reagon

Annotated by Bernice Johnson Reagon and Lisa Pertillar Brevard

Recorded 1989 and 1992, produced in collaboration with National Public Radio

1. Sign of the Judgement **The McIntosh County Shouters** 2:34
2. Lay Down Body **The McIntosh County Shouters** 2:59
3. Lay Down Body **The Seniorlites** 1:29
4. Run, Mary, Run, You Got a Right to the Tree of Life **The Seniorlites** 2:30
5. One Morning Soon **The Rev. C.J. Johnson** 0:43
6. I Wanna Go Where Jesus Is **The Rev. C.J. Johnson and Family** 4:55
7. You Better Run to the City of Refuge **The Rev. C.J. Johnson and Family** 3:09
8. I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say **The United Southern Prayer Band of Baltimore, Washington, and Virginia** 5:48
9. Give Me Jesus **The United Southern Prayer Band of Baltimore, Washington, and Virginia** 3:55
10. I Am a Soldier in the Army of the Lord **The United Southern Prayer Band of Baltimore, Washington, and Virginia** 5:59
11. Am I a Soldier of the Cross? **The Richard Allen Singers with Theodore King** 6:12
12. Early, My God, without Delay **The Richard Allen Singers** 3:57
13. Come and Go to That Land **Congregational song** 2:53
14. Glory, Glory Hallelujah, Since I Laid My Burden Down **The Blue Spring Missionary Baptist Association Delegation, Southwest Georgia** 4:07
15. A Charge to Keep I Have **The Blue Spring Missionary Baptist Association Delegation, Southwest Georgia** 4:27
16. Traditional Prayer with moans **The Blue Spring Missionary Baptist Association Delegation, Southwest Georgia** 9:45
17. Sit Down Servant **The Blue Spring Missionary Baptist Association Delegation, Southwest Georgia** 2:04

African American congregational singing styles are rooted in the nineteenth century but continue to be created as a vital part of community worship services throughout the United States. This recording of ring shouts, lined hymns, and call- and- response devotional songs honors these beginnings and demonstrates the vitality of this tradition.



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NINETEENTH-CENTURY AFRICAN AMERICAN CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

by Bernice Johnson Reagon and Lisa Pertillar Brevard

Something unique happens when African American congregations sing together. What sets African American congregational-style singing apart is the way in which the involvement in singing seems to announce the existence of a united community. The singing actually creates an extended space for the group—a way of transforming territory beyond the physical reach of the gathered congregants. One walks into the sound of African American congregational singing before actually reaching the group.

The best vantage point from which to experience the congregational chorus is from the inside. Surrounding every song leader is the answering chorus. The song leader is important: whether starting the song, setting up the lyrics for each new statement of a refrain, or actually performing a solo-like statement of a verse, his or her tal-

ent and leadership ability can make or break a performance. However, it is the sound of the group in song that really creates an unforgettable music picture. The survival of nineteenth-century African American congregational singing and worship practices provides a rich opportunity to look at the nature of oral transmission within a literate society. It also reveals the crucial role that traditional culture plays in stabilizing a community as it moves aggressively upward within the mainstream larger society.

The song repertoire and how it is passed on illuminate the pedagogy intrinsic to African American traditional culture. There is never a rehearsal; you learn while you sing. Some songs are structured in such a way that one can quickly pick up the response to a call. The more advanced lined hymns, however, are subtle and complex. It

takes years of participating in the creation of these performances before a young convert is able to work his or her way through a "lined" or "meter" hymn. Within this type of learning through participation and observation, the rhythm and flow take place within communities that participate in contemporary community life and at the same time struggle to find ways to continue some of their oldest traditions.

During the first fifty years of this century, most traditionally-oriented congregations reluctantly made room for the organized gospel choir as a part of the worship experience. The ordered, formalized rehearsal and song performance by a selected group (bringing along with it a different set of song-delivery and performance aesthetics) sometimes created tension with the unrehearsed congregational style. In most cases, however, both styles now coexist in worship services that open with prayer or devotional meetings and testimonial services, followed by the entrance of the choir, and then the sermon by the minister. With these adjust-

ments, the gospel choir has moved to just under the sermons (the peak event of Baptist services), with congregational prayers and song services set up as the opening of the worship day.

This recording is a rare compilation of nineteenth-century-style congregational singing that, even as we near the close of the twentieth century, continues to be created as a vital part of worship services within African American communities throughout the nation. These performances are all a part of documentation projects conducted by the Smithsonian over the past three decades and recordings completed by National Public Radio production teams in the development of the landmark *Wade in the Water* radio series coproduced by the Smithsonian Institution and National Public Radio.

Six different congregations are represented on this recording. The "ring shout" as singing and sacred dance is alive in performances by the McIntosh County Shouters, a group led by Lawrence McKiver from Georgia. The South Carolina "shout" tradition of the

islands off the coast of Charleston is presented by the Seniorlites from Johns Island, South Carolina. From Atlanta, Georgia we have the voice of the late Dr. C.J. (Claude Joseph) Johnson, solo and backed by members of his family. Another South Carolina tradition is represented by the United Southern Prayer Band of Baltimore, Washington, and Virginia. These elder songmasters migrated to Washington, D.C., during the 1930s and 1940s and have kept older styles of singing alive in prayer bands that still hold monthly, all-night meetings. Also included, from Alabama, is a congregational song recorded during the Demopolis, Alabama, devotion service of a quartet anniversary. The Richard Allen Singers, from Washington, D.C., is a group of Methodist singers that was formed initially as a Smithsonian-sponsored workshop to perform songs from the 1801 Richard Allen hymnbook. Finally, a delegation from the Blue Spring Missionary Baptist Association is heard in a complete unit of a traditional Baptist pre-sermon devotional service from southwest Geor-

gia, including a church song, lined hymn, prayer, and ending with a another church song.

These recordings demonstrate how African American congregational songs are structured to be boundless, to continue as long as there is spirit to carry the performance, limited only by the ability of the group to express itself as a sound force.

The Songs and the Singers

McIntosh County Shouters

The McIntosh County Shouters are from a tightly-knit folk community centered in Bolden, Georgia. They perform the “ring shout.” The shout has survived in continuous practice since slavery times in the Bolden community, east of Eulonia in McIntosh County on the coast of Georgia. The livelihoods of the members of the group are linked to the coast and the sea. Most of the women work in a crab-packing plant, and the men are shrimp fishermen.

Historian Sterling Stuckey wrote of the widespread presence of the ring shout at the time of emancipation, which suggested the power of African culture in America as late as the mid-nineteenth century, since the shout was preeminently a religious ceremony, the most important one engaged in by a people who were, overwhelmingly, deeply religious.

Church leaders, White and Black, made every effort to

uproot the ring shout and cast it out of Christian churches. Their intense struggle, which lasted to the close of the nineteenth century, at times erupted in violence. The shout continued to exert a powerful influence in Black life well into the twentieth century, changing its form and possibly some of its content in the process.

A counter-clockwise dance often done to the rhythms of handclapping or of other improvised percussive sounds as chanting or singing take place, the ring shout was the principal ancestral ritual of the slave era, the single most important one to come out of Africa to inform the culture of Blacks in North America. (Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America*)

The McIntosh Shouters in their presentation include all the elements of the shout tradition: a lead singer, called the

“songster,” is seated next to the “sticker,” who beats a broom handle on the wood floor for rhythm. Behind these two are the “basers,” who answer the call with a response and maintain the rhythm with handclapping. To complete the tradition, women act as the “shouters” and move in a counter-clockwise ring with a shuffling movement. McIntosh Shouters members are: leaders (songsters) Lawrence McKiver and Judy Reed; sticker, Andrew Palmer; basers and shouters, Catherine Campbell, Odessa Young, Thelma Ellison, Vertie McKiver, Oneitha Ellison, and Elizabeth Temple.

“Sign of the Judgement” and “Lay Down Body,” led by Lawrence McKiver of the McIntosh Shouters, McIntosh County, Georgia, utilize “call-and-response” and cross rhythms created by handclaps and “sticking.” The rhythmic “breaks” (quick silences), derived from West African drumming and dance accompaniment traditions, usually signal a change in body movement and intensify the experience.

1. Sign of the Judgement McIntosh County Shouters

Caller:

I see a sign...

Response 1:

Yeah...

Caller:

I see a sign

Response 2:

Yeah...

Caller:

I see a sign...

Response 3:

Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! Lord, time's drawing nigh.

Other lines:

Sinner come out the corner...

Loose horse in the valley...

King Jesus gonna ride him...

Sinner run to the Rock...

Rock cried out...

No hiding place...

It's Judgement Day...

Two tall angels...

No hiding place...

Can't hide myself...

Two tall angels...
On the chariot wheel...
They talking 'bout the judgement...
Look over yonder...
Dark clouds rising...
The sun won't shine...
That's the sign of the judgement...

2. Lay Down Body

McIntosh County Shouters

Caller:

Lay down body,
Lay down a little while.

Other lines:

This old body, ooh, is tired
Lay down body; this old body...
Old soul and body, is so tired
Old soul and body, need restin'
You oughta lay down body; get your rest
You don't worry; lay down body
Lay down body; you don't worry
My Lord'll wake you, oh, when He calls.
Soul and body
Tombstone's moving, grave is a birthing
Soul is rising; oh, body; weary body

You'll be happy, a happy end; happy
end
Sing oh, hallelujah.
You'll be happy; problems be over
Oh, body! This old body is so tired.
Lay down body; lay down body.
I know you're tired. Soul need restin'.
You'll be happy.
Oh, body. Lay down body
Lay a little while; you need restin'
You need resting, you don't worry
God's gonna wake you, oh, when He
call
You'll, be happy, a happy end!
Say hallelujah!
Old weary body.
Oh, you don't worry
My God'll wake you, oh, when He calls
Tombstone moving, grave is a bursting
Soul is rising. You'll be happy;
Sing in the end.
Oh, hallelujah! I'm so glad.
My problems over. My problems over!
I made it home! I made it home!
I made it home at last!

Seniorlites of Johns Island, South Carolina

In 1983 a group of elders who lived in a senior citizens residential development began to sing together the songs they had enjoyed all their lives. They called themselves the Seniorlites of Johns Island, South Carolina. Their songs and style of singing survived slavery and have been passed from generation to generation through a system of old-style meetinghouse services unique to this region of the country. The Seniorlites sing *a cappella*, accompanied only by handclapping and footstomping. The vocal style, the multilayered rhythms, and shout (sacred dance) they create during the singing of each song evidence the survival of strong African aesthetics in their sacred worship practices.

At regular Tuesday and Thursday meeting night gatherings, in the tradition of the "old time meetings," the Seniorlites begin by praying for the spirit to move that meeting's leader to step forward and guide them as they pray, sing, and testify. Most members of the

group — Viola Jenkins, Clement Legare, Mary Lee Richards, Maggie Russell, Laura Rivers, Florence Simmons, and Fannie Walker — proudly state that they are all over sixty-five years of age. The youngest member, Maggie McGill, is only in her early fifties. Together, they represent a variety of Christian denominations: African Methodist Episcopal (AME), Baptist, United Methodist, and Presbyterian.

The Seniorlites' version of "Lay Down Body" differs from the McIntosh interpretation in melodic variations and in the intensity of the opening call by the leader of the phrase "Lay down body!" It also begins with a slower pace which is quickened in the shout part of the song. The song moves at a pace and rhythm rocked between the call of the leader and the response of the group; then they begin to clap in a triplicate off-beat rhythm; finally they add the shout, where they move their feet in a one-two stamp against the floor.

3. Lay Down Body

Seniorlites

Caller:

Lay down, body!

Response:

Lay down a little while...

Oh body

Lay down a little while...

Caller:

I know you're weary!

Response:

Lay down a little while...

Oh body

Lay down a little while...

Other lines:

Lay down here Mother! Oh body...

I know you're weary! Oh body...

I know you're tired! Oh body...

Lay down here father! Oh body...

Lay down here, sister! Oh body...

4. Run, Mary, Run, You Got a Right to the Tree of Life

Seniorlites

"Run, Mary, Run, You Got a Right to the Tree of Life" is a song the singers associate with the stories of their ancestors who found the courage to strike out for freedom from the shackles of the slave plantations. When someone struck out for freedom, along or by way of the network called "The Underground Railroad," everybody prayed that they would make it!

Caller:

Run, Mary, run! Whoa, run, Martha, run!

Whoa, tell Mary run, I say...

Response:

You got a right to the tree of life.

Other lines:

Little Mary, you've got a right...

You've got a right, you've got a right...

The Hebrew children got a right...

With all them sorrows, you've got a right...

You've got a right, you've got a right!...
I've come to tell you, you got a right...
The cross is heavy, but you got a right...
Ups and downs, but you got a right...
Children gone but you got a right...
You got a right, you got a right...
Oh, weepin' Mary!...

Reverend Dr. C.J. Johnson (1913-1991)

Dr. Claude Joseph Johnson, pastor, composer, church founder, and recording artist, was born in Douglasville, Georgia, in 1913. His father, William Johnson, was a well-known teacher and leader of shape-note singing, and his grandmother, Sarah Johnson, was a famous singer of lining-out hymns and spirituals. When Claude Joseph was three, the Johnson family moved to Atlanta, where he was raised by his grandmother, Sarah Johnson. Dr. Johnson's life as a song leader and pastor began at an early age—as a five-year-old he led his first song in church, "The Prodigal Son." By the time he was ten he had preached his first sermon and

was ordained as a minister in the Missionary Baptist Church denomination. In 1939 he began a twenty-year pursuit of formal education, ending with a doctorate in religion. In 1965 Rev. Johnson began to make commercial recordings of his music, mostly on the Savoy label. His recording of his composition, "I Wanna Go Where Jesus Is," received a gold record in 1970. Dr. Johnson is a 1987 recipient of a National Heritage Fellowship, awarded annually to the nation's most distinguished traditional artists by the National Endowment for the Arts. He is also the founding pastor of the St. Joseph Missionary Baptist Church.

Rev. Johnson was a song master of three of the strongest Baptist choral traditions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the lined hymn, shape-note singing, and spirituals. In this collection of recorded performances, he sings "One Morning Soon," as the single lead line of a congregational song. He learned this style of singing and the repertoire of tunes from his grandmother. "One Morning

Soon” was one of her songs. Reverend Johnson said she would start up the song and strut down the aisles of Mt. Moriah Baptist Church in Atlanta doing what Dr. Johnson called the “Rock Daniel.”

5. **One Morning Soon**

Rev. C.J. Johnson

One morning soon,
One morning soon,
One morning soon,
I heard the angel singing.

Other lines:

They was all around my head...
They were singing so sweet...

Dr. Johnson, a Baptist minister, was a gifted songwriter who used the congregational style and many of the stock tunes for his compositions. His songs like “I Wanna Go Where Jesus Is” are a part of the congregational repertoire within traditional Baptist churches throughout the South. He wrote this song after he had been abused and

thrown off a bus as a child in Atlanta, Georgia. Johnson said:

I was on a bus going to work, and a White man asked me to move out of my seat. I was already in the back, and I refused. When he tried to physically move me, I bit him. I was thrown off the bus by the driver, and he continued to ride. As I walked to work all the way across town, I felt like I wanted to leave this place, I did not want to stay in a place like this. As soon as I got to work, I wrote this song, “I Wanna Go Where Jesus is.”

Rev. Johnson is joined by his wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Johnson, and their children — The Reverend Richard J. Johnson, minister at Little Rock Baptist Church in Atlanta; Martha Johnson; and Joann Wheat, pianist and musical director at St. Joseph’s Missionary Baptist Church in Atlanta.

6. **I Wanna Go Where Jesus Is**

Rev. C.J. Johnson and Family

I wanna go, where Jesus is
I wanna go, where Jesus is
I wanna go, where Jesus is
That why, I wanna go; that’s the reason,
I wanna go

Other lines:

Well, it ain’t no dying...
Ain’t no crying...
Ain’t no trouble...
Devil don’t rise over there...
Ain’t no sickness over there...
Hearse don’t roll over there...

“You Better Run to the City of Refuge” is a composition in the traditional preaching ballad style that was also the source for the signature style of the legendary Golden Gate Quartet of Tidewater, Virginia, during the 1930s. This form accommodates very dense text with a swinging chorus, and Johnson uses it well in this song.

7. **You Better Run to the City of Refuge**

Rev. C.J. Johnson and Family

Chorus:

You better run, run, run
You better run, better run, better run
You better run to the city of refuge, you
better run

Verse:

Oh, God called Moses on the mountain-
top
And He placed his Torah in Moses
heart
And He stamped the commandments in
Moses mind
And said, “Moses, don’t you leave My
children behind.”

If you don’t believe that I’m singing it
right
You can take up the Bible and read it
tonight
You can read in Genesis and you’ll
understand
That Methuselah he was the oldest man
He lived nine hundred and sixty-nine

And then he died and gone to heaven
in good due time.

There was a man of the Pharisees
Old Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews
Nicodemus, he came to Jesus and came
by night
He said, "I want to be born into Thy
heavenly sight"
Christ spoke to Nicodemus as a friend,
He said, "You want to get to heaven,
you must be born again"
Well, old Nicodemus didn't understand
How a man could be born when he was
so old.

Yeah, you read about Samson from his
birth,
He was the strongest man that ever
lived on this earth
Samson went down and he wandered
about
And the secret of his strength was never
found out
'Til Delilah came to him on her knees,
She said, "Please tell me where your
strength might be"

She talked so sweet and she talked so
fair
'Til Samson said "You can shave my hair,
You can shave my head just as clean as
my hand,
And my strength will become just like a
natural man."

United Southern Prayer Band of Baltimore, Washington, and Virginia

The United Southern Prayer Band of
Baltimore, Washington, and Virginia
was formed on December 8, 1940, in
Baltimore, Maryland, at the Little Mt.
Hebron Baptist Church at 12 S.
Schroeder Street. The inspiration for
the band came from Deacon Samuel
Dorsey and Deacon Daniel Jones. They
talked to Brother J.D. Westbrook, Broth-
er Wade Westbrook, Brother Warren
Hood, Brother Belgum, Sister Henrietta
Dorsey, Sister Martha Jones, and Sister
Pearl Woodard. After a series of meet-
ings they decided to serve the Lord and
elect officers to that first Baltimore
prayer band, which is today called "The
Mother Prayer Band."

Seven years later a second prayer
band was formed in Washington, D.C.
Today there are more than 100 persons
participating in the nine prayer bands
of the union: Baltimore has four prayer
bands; Washington, D.C., has three;
Philadelphia, one; and Richmond, Vir-
ginia, one. Although church member-
ship is a requirement, the United
Southern Prayer Band is autonomous
and not accountable to any minister or
church. Each member band is also
autonomous and has its own set of offi-
cers. Ten general officers serve the
entire united membership.

The worship tradition of the United
Southern Prayer Band is rooted in prac-
tices from the Rockhill and Chester
regions of South Carolina. The mem-
bers wanted to continue those practices
as they journeyed north and relocated
in the urban centers of Baltimore,
Washington, D.C., and Virginia. The
singing style is rich, with wonderful
tunes and a harmony system unique to
this region of South Carolina. They sing
unaccompanied, except for handclap-
ping and footpatting, and the reper-

toire is formed of songs that have sur-
vived from slavery or newer songs that
have been created in the same tradi-
tion.

Like many Baptist and a few rural
Methodist congregations that practice
the congregational style of singing, this
congregation has a strong tradition of
singing hymns as a part of their worship
services. The tradition of lined hymn
singing was developed in European
churches, transported to the United
States, and then to congregations of
African Americans. The practice of lin-
ing hymns began during the 1500s
among the Presbyterians in Scotland as
a way to enable their illiterate congrega-
tions to participate in the singing dur-
ing the church services. The tradition
was brought to the New World, and it
spread throughout new communities of
converted Christians, including those
forming on slave plantations.

This body of hymn singing is impor-
tant because of the tradition of a leader
"lining" or intoning the text before the
congregation sings the song, or, as
described most often in the African

American context, before the hymn is “raised.” The practice of “raising” a hymn or any song is another way of acknowledging the relationship between the song leader and group. The song leader does not really function as a traditional soloist. The song leader starts the song, “raises it.” If it is to go anywhere, the opening line has to be joined by the group. Thus the interdependency required in all successful group efforts is a quality that one experiences with every congregational song performance.

The singing, praying, and testifying at times seem inseparable and have become a natural expression that eloquently flows together. The United Southern Prayer Band describes the experience as “one that will touch your soul”—an experience that has given them the basis for their motto, “Come go with us. We’ll do you good.”

“I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say,” performed as a lined hymn, opens slowly with their distinct choral melody and harmonic sound and moves gently into a surging, swinging beat, triggered by

handclaps and the sound of their feet keeping time. “Give Me Jesus” and “I Am a Soldier in the Army of the Lord” use the call-and-response pattern, where the leader gives out the line that sets up each new cycle of the song. Both of these songs are in the unison chorus form, well-loved in African American traditional church services. This kind of chorus song is sung together except at the beginning of each cycle, where the song leader changes one line and then the entire congregation comes in to take the chorus on a new, and hopefully higher, round.

8. I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

United Southern Prayer Band of Baltimore, Washington, and Virginia

I heard the voice of Jesus say, “Come
unto Me and rest,
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down thy
head upon my breast.”
I came to Jesus as I was, weary, worn,
and sad
I found in Him a resting place, and He
has made me glad.

9. Give Me Jesus

United Southern Prayer Band of Baltimore, Washington, and Virginia

Give me Jesus, give me Jesus, oh, Lord,
That’s all I want, give me Jesus. [repeat]

Other lines:

Room done got dark, give me Jesus...
That is all I want, give me Jesus...
In my dying hour...
When my doctor walk away...
And in that midnight hour...

10. I am a Soldier in the Army of the Lord

United Southern Prayer Band of Baltimore, Washington, and Virginia

Caller:

I say Lordy, Lordy

Response:

In the army of the Lord
I say Lordy, Lordy, in the army.

Other lines:

On the battlefield...
Oh, my load done got heavy...

Oh, Lord, I need you...
Help me fight this battle...
There’s a new judgement building...
Don’t see my Lord a-coming...
He’s coming to judge the world...
Come and go with me...
On my journey home...
Oh, motherless child...
Fighting for my rights...
Load done got heavy.

The Richard Allen Singers

In 1988, the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of American History opened an exhibition entitled “Everyday Life in Revolutionary America.” One of the areas of the exhibition covered the founding of the African Methodist Episcopal Church mother church, called Mother Bethel in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This church was founded by Rev. Richard Allen, who was a part of the 1792 protest of the treatment of African American worshippers at the St. George Methodist Episcopal Church. In founding a new church,

Richard Allen published, in 1801, a songbook titled *A Collection of Spirituals and Hymns Selected From Various Authors*. This was the first hymnal published for specific use by a Black congregation. The Smithsonian asked Evelyn Simpson Curenton to conduct a singing research project with the elders of Mother Bethel. They would try to identify a basic approach to reconstructing performances of the hymns in an older congregational style than was represented in the tunes used in the twentieth-century hymnbooks. The group that came out of her workshop took the name the Richard Allen Singers, and they performed their prepared repertoire for the Smithsonian public programs and 1988 celebrations of the African Methodist Episcopal Church denomination. The singers on these two selections are: Edwina White, Rebecca Powell, Grozelia Stepney, Curly King, Theodore King, Theresa Davis, Juanita Rollins, Evelyn Simpson Curenton, and Bernice Johnson Reagon.

The group performs two hymns,

one in the lined hymn tradition and one that follows an old favored hymn tune of the Mother Bethel congregation.

11. **Am I a Soldier of the Cross?**

Isaac Watts hymn (raised by Theodore King) Richard Allen Singers

Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb?

And shall I fear to own His cause, or blush to speak His name?

Must I be carried to the skies on flow'ry beds of ease,

When others fought to win the prize, and sailed thro' bloody seas?

Sure I must fight if I would reign, increase my courage, Lord

I'll bear the toil, endure the pain, supported by Thy word.

12. **Early, My God, without Delay**

Richard Allen Singers (led by Rebecca Powell)

Early, my God, without delay, I haste to seek Thy face,

My thirsty spirit fains away without Thy cheering grace.

So pilgrims on the scorching sand, beneath a burning sky,

Long for a cooling stream at hand, and they must drink or die;

Thus, 'til my last expiring day, I'll bless my God and King;

Thus I will lift my hands to pray, and tune my lips to sing.

Devotion Service, Demopolis, Alabama

On December 12th and 13th, 1992, in Demopolis, Alabama, the 18th anniversary of the Gospel Harmonettes opened with a devotion service. The congregational song "Come and Go to That Land" was particularly strong because the room was filled with regional quar-

ter singers who enriched the devotion with their singing.

13. **Come and Go to That Land**

Congregational song

Come and go to that land, come and go to that land,

Oh, come and go to that land, where I'm bound, where I'm bound,

Oh, come and go to that land, come and go to that land,

Come and go to that land, where I'm bound.

Other lines:

I have a mother in that land... where I'm bound...

Don't you wanna go to that land... where I'm bound?

I have a father in that land... where I'm bound...

The Blue Spring Missionary Baptist Association

Throughout southwest Georgia, there are Baptist congregations that continue to practice a rich choral song tradition. An understanding of this song culture is impossible without an appreciation of the worship tradition that creates and sustains it. The small rural Baptist churches of this community share with Black churches generally a range of service types: regular Sunday services, usually twice a month; revival meeting season, with a homecoming Sunday; pastor and choir anniversaries; union and association meetings; usher boards and other church organizations' anniversaries and regular weekly or monthly meetings; women's and men's days; funerals; weddings; and communion services. Most of these meetings are also worship services and generally open with a devotion service composed of one or two cycles of opening song, lined hymn, prayer, and closing song. The opening and closing songs of the cycle are call-and-response in their form; they have a beat and move with a clear, mod-

erate swing to the rhythm, or they are the unison chorus songs that change one line or a phrase or word every song cycle. The specific songs, the tunes, and the general song forms are well known by most of the participating members of the congregation.

The Delegation from the Blue Spring Missionary Baptist Association represents a church community of ten member churches located in southwest Georgia in Dougherty and Worth Counties. The Association began in July 1895, when several pastors from Dougherty and Worth counties met to form a Southwest Georgia Association. By September 1895, eleven churches met at the Blue Spring Baptist Church and united in one organization, The Blue Spring Missionary Baptist Association. The 1989 Delegation to the Smithsonian was led by Rev. Eunice Jackson, with members the late Deacon Freddie Smith, Deacon Jesse Holliman, Sister Mary Wright, Sister Elizabeth Washington, Sister Mary Hadley, Sister Eddene Johnson, Sister Rosa Lee Young, Sister Beatrice Johnson, and Deacon Richard Diggs.

14. Glory, Glory, Hallelujah, Since I Laid My Burden Down

Blue Spring Missionary Baptist Association Delegation, Southwest Georgia

Glory, glory, hallelujah, since I laid my burden down. [repeat twice]

Other lines:

Friends don't treat me like they used to...

Burden down, Lord, burden down...
I'm going home to live with Jesus...

15. A Charge to Keep I Have

Blue Spring Missionary Baptist Association Delegation, Southwest Georgia

Although this song is called a "Dr. Watts" song, it is in fact a hymn by Charles Wesley rather than Isaac Watts. Many older African Americans refer to the entire lined hymn tradition as "Dr. Watts" singing.

A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify,

Who gave His Son my soul to save, and fit it for the sky.

To serve the present age, my calling to fulfill,

O may it all my pow'rs engage, to do my Master's will.

16. Traditional Prayer with moans

Blue Spring Missionary Baptist Association Delegation, Southwest Georgia
(led by Deacon Richard Diggs)

The prayer in the devotion service begins with the Lord's Prayer, sometimes called the "Our Father" and moves into a personal prayer, based on stock traditional poetic prayer lines familiar to most congregations that practice this tradition. The prayer is both open and private. It is in public in this case, a song service at the Smithsonian Institution, and is covered with moans from the congregation that provide a kind of inside space for the prayer and intensifies the energy within the worship service.

17. Set Down Servant

Blue Spring Missionary Baptist Association Delegation, Southwest Georgia

Set down servant, set down
Set down servant, set down
Set down servant, set down
Set down and rest a little while.

Other lines:

I know you tired...
You come from a long ways...
Well you running a long time...
Going to live with Jesus...

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Selected Listening

If you want to hear more African American sacred music, here are a few suggestions:

1. Contemporary Gospel

If you have a local or regional radio station that plays gospel music, listen to it to learn which contemporary artists you particularly like. Then visit record stores in your community to find out

which ones carry the best selection of African American sacred music, contemporary and historical. If you have an opportunity to travel to other cities, check out the gospel and sacred music sections of stores there.

2. Historical Recordings

Visit your local and regional record stores to find out which ones carry more traditional recordings of all kinds of music. Look for recordings of African American spirituals (sometimes found in the Classical or Vocal sections of the store). Check the Jazz and Folk Music sections for recordings by the artists you have heard on this recording. Many historical recordings are being reissued on CD. You might want to write to get on the mailing lists for the following catalogues:

Fantasy, Inc. This company is reissuing wonderful recordings from the Specialty Records archive: Tenth and Parker, Berkeley, CA 04710.

Malaco Music. This company now owns the Savoy Records catalogue. P.O. Box 9287, Jackson, MS 39286.

New World Records, 701 Seventh Ave., New York, NY 10030.

Roots and Rhythm, 6921 Stockton Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530.

Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings, 414 Hungerford Drive, Suite 444, Rockville, MD 20850. For orders phone 301/443-2314. (The Folkways cassettes below are not available at record stores but may be ordered directly from Smithsonian/Folkways.)

Selected Recordings of Traditional African American Music:

Reverend Gary Davis, *Pure Religion and Bad Company*. Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings SF 40035. CD and cassette.

Been In the Storm So Long: Spirituals, Folk Tales, and Children's Games from Johns Island, South Carolina. Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings SF 40031. CD and cassette.

Music from the South, volumes 6, 7, 9. Folkways 2655, 2656, 2658. Cassette only, available by mail order from Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings, above.

Negro Folk Music of Alabama, volumes 2, 3, 4, 5. Folkways 4418, 4471, 4472, 4473. Cassette only, available by mail order from Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings, above.

Bernice Johnson Reagon, *River of Life — Harmony: One*. Flying Fish, CD (70411) and cassette (90411).

Bernice Reagon, *Songs of the South*. Folkways 2457. Cassette only, available by mail order from Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings, above.

Doc Reed and Vera Hall, *Spirituals*. Folkways 2038. Cassette only, available by mail order from Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings, above.

Wiregrass Sacred Harp Singers, *The Colored Sacred Harp*. New World Records 80433-2

Civil Rights Movement

Freedom Songs:

Sing For Freedom, The Story of the Civil Rights Movement through its Songs. Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings SF 40031. CD and cassette.

Voices of the Civil Rights Movement: Black American Freedom Songs 1960-1966. Smithsonian Collection of Recordings 2033.

Credits:

Tracks 1-2, recorded at the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife, June 28-July 7, 1990.

Tracks 3-10 and 14-17 recorded at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of American History, February 1989. Engineer, John Tyler.

Tracks 11-12 recorded at Masterwork Studio. Mike Zook, engineer, Bernice Johnson Reagon, producer.

Track 13 recorded December 13, 1992, National Public Radio *Wade in the Water* Production Team. Producer Judi Moore Latta; engineers Parris Morgan and Margo Kelly.

Mastered by: Airshow Inc., Springfield, Virginia, David Glasser engineer.

Produced by: Bernice Johnson Reagon and Toshi Reagon.

Production supervised by Anthony Seeger and Matt Walters.

Cover painting by Al Smith.

Cover design by Joan Wolbier.

Design and layout by Carol Hardy.

Wade in the Water: A series on National Public Radio and four recordings on Smithsonian/ Folkways Recordings:

Volume I:

African American Spirituals: The Concert Tradition

Volume II:

**African American Congregational Singing:
Nineteenth-Century Roots**

Volume III:

African American Gospel: The Pioneering Composers

Volume IV:

African American Community Gospel



Smithsonian/Folkways

Folkways Records was founded by Moses Asch and Marian Distler in 1947 to document music, spoken word, instruction, and sounds from around the world. In the ensuing decades, New York City-based Folkways became one of the largest independent record labels in the world, reaching a total of nearly 2,200 albums that were always kept in print.

The Smithsonian Institution acquired Folkways from the Asch estate in 1987 to ensure that the sounds and genius of the artists would be preserved for future generations. All Folkways recordings are now available on high-quality audio cassettes, each packed in a special box along with the original LP liner notes.

Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings was formed to continue the Folkways tradition of releasing significant recordings with high-quality documentation. It produces new titles, reissues of historic recordings from Folkways and other record labels, and in collaboration with other companies also produces instructional videotapes, recordings to accompa-

ny published books, and a variety of other educational projects.

The Smithsonian/Folkways, Folkways, Cook, and Paredon record labels are administered by the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife Programs and Cultural Studies. They are one of the means through which the Center supports the work of traditional artists and expresses its commitment to cultural diversity, education, and increased understanding.

You can find Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings at your local record store. Smithsonian/Folkways, Folkways, Cook, and Paredon recordings are all available through Smithsonian/Folkways Mail Order, 414 Hungerford Drive, Suite 444, Rockville, MD 20850. Phone 301/443-2314; fax 301/443-1819 (Visa and MasterCard accepted).

For a free catalogue, write: The Whole Folkways Catalogue, Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings, 955 L'Enfant Plaza Suite 2600, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560, phone 202/287-3262, or fax 202/287-3699.