

**Small Talk – July 26 2021**  
**By Michael Small**

When I allow myself to deeply immerse my whole self into music – something moves at the center of my self. Music, be it folk, world, jazz, blues, rock, classical, or the emerging forms of music, they all touch my soul. Music is a slave that “heals the sin-sick soul”.<sup>1</sup> *When you're weary / Feeling small / When tears are in your eyes / I'll dry them all / I'm on your side / Oh, when times get rough / And friends just can't be found / Like a bridge over troubled water / I will lay me down / Like a bridge over troubled water / will lay me down.*<sup>2</sup> Music speaks to the heart, it is not about logically moving through a process to solve an issue or on-going problem. The rhythms and vibrations of music speak deeply to us, I think, even at a cellular level. Tears of healing, warmth, and love if allowed, will fall from our eyes.

Last night was one of those times that I, and others, could immerse ourselves in great music at the Gazebo Concert with Ryan Pels and Friends. The spontaneous musicians were in their glory and the crowd was loving it. It was obvious that these musicians had been working and singing together through the times of Covid. Their music was relational, connecting community with memory and hope. Their music was inspirational, funny, and moving. There were times when I just sat back and closed my eyes, letting the lyrics move over me with waves of joy. It was a community building experience, and it was apparent that all left with a song(s) in their hearts! **(Too my very greatest regret, the audio once again failed on the video recording – apologies for this colossal failure)**

Often referred to as "The Black National Anthem," Lift Every Voice and Sing was a hymn written as a poem by NAACP leader James Weldon Johnson in 1900. His brother, John Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954), composed the music for the lyrics in 1921. A choir of 500 schoolchildren at the segregated Stanton School, where James Weldon Johnson was principal, first performed the song in public in Jacksonville, Florida to celebrate President Abraham Lincoln's birthday. Derrick Johnson, NAACP President and CEO writes of this song “It spoke to the history of the journey of African-Americans and for many Africans in the diaspora [who] struggled through to get to a place of hope.”<sup>3</sup>

I invite you to read, perhaps even sing this song that speaks to the soul of every earthling!

*Lift every voice and sing  
Till earth and heaven ring  
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty  
Let our rejoicing rise  
High as the listening skies  
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea*

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<sup>1</sup> From “*Balm in Gilead*”

<sup>2</sup> From “*Bridge Over Troubled Water*” Simon and Garfunkel

<sup>3</sup> <https://naACP.org/find-resources/history-explained/lift-every-voice-and-sing>

*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 till victory is won*

*Stony the road we trod  
Bitter the chastening rod  
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died  
Yet with a steady beat  
Have not our weary feet  
Come to the place for which our people sighed?  
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered  
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered  
Out from the gloomy past  
Till now we stand at last  
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast*

*God of our weary years  
God of our silent tears  
God who has brought us thus far on the way  
God who by your might Led us into the light  
Keep us forever in the path, we pray  
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met you  
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, forget you  
Shadowed beneath your hand  
May we forever stand  
True to our God  
True to our native land  
Our native land*

Singing is good for the soul. We can be united in song. May all of our voices soar "Till earth and heaven ring!"

In the spirit and agape love of Jesus, Michael

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