



AFRICAN AMERICAN SENATORS



Hiram Revels
1870-1871
Rep. Mississippi



Blanche Bruce
1875-1881
Rep. Mississippi



Edward Brooke III
1967-1969
Rep. Massachusetts



Carol Moseley Braun
1993-1999
Rep. Illinois

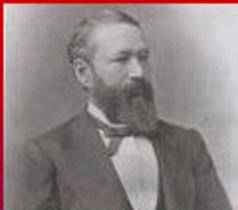


Barack Obama
2005-2008
Rep. Illinois



Roland Burris
2009-Present
Rep. Illinois

AFRICAN AMERICAN GOVERNORS



Pinckney Pinchback
Louisiana
Dec. 1872-Jan. 1873



Douglas Wilder
Virginia
1990-1994



Deval Patrick
Massachusetts
2007-Present



David Patterson
New York
2008-Present

PRAYER FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS DAY

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Tuesday, November 2, 2010 (Can also be celebrated the Sunday before Election Day, including mid-term elections)

Recommendation: Keep before your congregation a place (a room, wall of honor, class showcase, yearly day of recognition, etc.)

that is a tribute to those who carry the mantle of governance: those long gone to whom we owe so much, and those who currently serve.

Bernice Johnson Reagon, Lectionary Team Cultural Resource Commentator

I. Etymology Notes

“Govern” is from the Old French *governer*, from the Latin *gubernare*, meaning “to direct, rule, guide,” originally from the Greek *kybernan*, “to steer,” as in steer or pilot a ship.¹

As early as I can remember, I was aware that one of the central processes of order and getting things done was organizing so that there was clarity around who the leader(s) or administrator(s) would be. As a preacher’s daughter, church was a constant in our lives. As a child I witnessed a communal process with different people carrying out different functions to help there be a church. In school student clubs there was always a president, secretary, and treasurer; sometimes these offices were filled by volunteers and sometimes they were elected. There were two currents I observed and experienced in these structures as soon as the leadership team was in place and began to meet and make plans: sometimes the body of the organization receded into the background, and at other times it was brought to attention at the regularly scheduled meetings. More rarely, there were those who often volunteered out of interest in the body, who hovered just under the leadership unit, with the intent of being on call to assist in any way they could to do the work of keeping the organization and its purpose strong.

Darrin Frisby reminded me of one of his first awarenesses of good governance structures:

As far back as I can remember, rules of order were established in every group and organization I was a part of. That included Tree house clubs, the cub scouts, social clubs (i.e., Jack and Jill) in and out of school, fraternities, etc. We always managed to elect, select, or appoint leaders. Sometimes they even appointed themselves. Someone had to be in charge to keep order I guess. Robert’s Rule’s of Order was one of the first books presented to me in elementary school as a guide for decorum and leadership.²

Our scripture lesson reminded me of the importance of staying in touch with those who hold offices to make sure an organization or city or state or country moves in the interest of the body-whole. It is important to communicate with those in governance and more important to seek ways of supporting and strengthening them as they go about the task of governance.

II. Prayer and Government Officials

On the Sunday before local and national elections, congregations are called together to understand how the practice of prayer and meditation can charge the environs with the

energy of hope and support for those who carry the heavy load of leadership. They indeed need our prayers.

A. Prayer Songs and Poems

Standing in the Need of Prayer

It's me, it's me, it's me Oh Lord
Standing in the need of prayer
It's me, it's me, it's me Oh Lord
Standing in the need of prayer

Not my sister, not my brother but it's me Oh Lord...

Not my mother, not my father, but it's me Oh Lord...³

In James Melvin Washington's book, Conversations with God: Two Centuries of Prayers by African Americans, in the first decade of the twentieth century in her prayer poem, Clara Ann Thomson reaches out to God for the nation and its rulers. Her prayer is that the sacred teachings and message of the Savior not be lost and that those in leadership would stay knee bent in prayer before Jehovah.

Out of the Deep: A Prayer

O Let thy voice this nation hear,
And may its rulers live in fear
Of Thy just wrath, and may we see
Religion in its purity
Throughout this favored land prevail;
Let not the Savior's teachings fail
The purpose they to men were sent
That men of wickedness repent.

Jehovah, let not patience cease
To be a virtue. Let men's knees
In prayer before Thy throne be bent
Let man Thee worship 'neath his tent
Or in the forest's cooling shade
And none shall dare make him afraid

...Thou Righteous Lord, Thy spirit send
America, Do Thou defend
The helpless, yea, the poor and weak,
The destitute, the just, the meek,
From persecution's cruel lash
The unjust Judge do Thou abash,
Confound, debase, expose, ungown,
And from his honored seat bring down.⁴

And again from Washington's collection comes this prayer as World War I ends. It expresses a hope for freedom and world democracy with equality for all...

Cleave Us A Way, O Lord

Dear Lord we come to Thee,
In quest of Liberty
Thy mercy lend.
We know no better way
Than serve, obey and pray,
Almighty Friend.
May World Democracy
Include equality
For every one,
Father, all wise and just
Do as Thou wilt with us
In Thee, alone, we trust
Thy will be done.⁵

As I began to turn my mind to the preparation of this unit, I had to face that my first response to government officials is to urge all citizens to keep a close and critical eye on those who hold leadership positions. Romans 13:1-7 scripture is a challenge for me. So to get to it, I had to first go a ways in my mind to the role of governance in the health of any organized entity. In this age of President Barack Obama, I am reminded of the Civil Rights Movement struggle that brought many more official representatives of our more diverse citizenry into national leadership than ever before. People suffered to place African Americans in positions as government officials. They suffered because of unfair policies, a culture of hate, fear, and a second-class citizenship which were created, buttressed, or sanctioned by white government officials.

B. Prayer by One Fighting to Make Room for Black Government Officials

Coretta Scott King wrote of the role of prayer in her life and the life of her husband, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.:

For my husband, Martin Luther King, Jr., prayer was a daily source of courage and strength that gave him the ability to carry on in even the darkest hours of our struggle. I remember one very difficult day when he came home bone-weary from the stress that came with his leadership of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. In the middle of that night, he was awakened by a threatening and abusive phone call, one of many we received throughout the movement. On this particular occasion, however, Martin had had enough.

After the call, he got up from bed and made himself some coffee. He began to worry about his family, and all of the burdens that came with our movement weighed heavily on his soul. With his head in his hands, Martin bowed over the kitchen table and prayed aloud to God:

"Lord, I am taking a stand for what I believe is right. The people are looking to me for leadership, and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left. I have nothing left. I have come to the point where I can't face it alone."

Later he told me, "At that moment, I experienced the presence of the Divine as I had never experienced Him before. It seemed as though I could hear a voice saying: 'Stand up for righteousness; stand up for truth; and God will be at our side forever.'" When Martin stood up from the table, he was imbued with a new sense of confidence, and he was ready to face anything.⁶

In the lyrics of the spiritual, "Go Down, Moses," the story of God calls of Moses to leadership, and Moses' surrender to the call is recorded.

Go Down, Moses

1. When Israel was in Egypt's Land,
Let my people go,
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,
Let my people go.

Chorus

Go down, Moses,
Way down in Egypt's Land.
Tell ol' Pharaoh,
Let my people go.

2. Thus saith the Lord, bold Moses said,
If not, I'll smite your first-born dead,
3. No more shall they in bondage toil,
Let them come out with Egypt's spoil,
4. The Lord told Moses what to do,
To lead the Hebrew children through,
5. O come along Moses, you'll not get lost,
Stretch out your rod and come across,
6. As Israel stood by the waterside,
At God's command it did divide,
7. When they reached the other shore,
They sang a song of triumph o'er,

8. Pharaoh said he'd go across,
But Pharaoh and his host were lost,
9. Jordan shall stand up like a wall,
And the walls of Jericho shall fall,
10. Your foes shall not before you stand,
And you'll possess fair Canaan's land,
11. O let us all from bondage flee,
And let us all in Christ be free,
12. We need not always weep and mourn,
and wear these slavery chains forlorn.⁷

C. Prayer for the Highest Ranking Government Official

In the benediction to the Inauguration of our 44th President, Barack Obama, Reverend Joseph Lowery, Civil Rights activist, colleague of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and past president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, created a prayer that pulled from the oral and written archives of African American tradition. Beginning with the text to “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” he selected the third verse, which is a prayer:

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, thou who has brought us thus far along the way, thou who has by thy 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 thee, lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget thee. Shadowed beneath thy hand may we forever stand -- true to thee, O God, and true to our native land.⁸

On this cold January day when our nation elected its first African American President, Reverend Lowery offered thanks...

We truly give thanks for the glorious experience we've shared this day.

He prayed for the new President as servant, for his family, and for his administration, which was faced with great challenges:

We pray now, O Lord, for your blessing upon thy servant, Barack Obama, the 44th president of these United States, his family, and his administration. He has come to this high office at a low moment in the national and, indeed, the global fiscal climate.

The prayer was not just for the USA, but for all nations and that we would hold faith...

But because we know you got the whole world in your hand, we pray for not only our nation, but for the community of nations. Our faith does not shrink, though pressed by the flood of mortal ills.

For we know that, Lord, you're able and you're willing to work through faithful leadership to restore stability, mend our brokenness, heal our wounds, and deliver us from the exploitation of the poor or the least of these and from favoritism toward the rich, the elite of these.

We thank you for the empowering of thy servant, our 44th president, to inspire our nation to believe that, yes, we can work together to achieve a more perfect union. And while we have sown the seeds of greed -- the wind of greed and corruption, and even as we reap the whirlwind of social and economic disruption, we seek forgiveness and we come in a spirit of unity and solidarity to commit our support to our president by our willingness to make sacrifices, to respect your creation, to turn to each other and not on each other.

And now, Lord, in the complex arena of human relations, help us to make choices on the side of love, not hate; on the side of inclusion, not exclusion; tolerance, not intolerance.

And as we leave this mountaintop, help us to hold on to the spirit of fellowship and the oneness of our family. Let us take that power back to our homes, our workplaces, our churches, our temples, our mosques, or wherever we seek your will.

Bless President Barack, First Lady Michelle. Look over our little, angelic Sasha and Malia.

We go now to walk together, children, pledging that we won't get weary in the difficult days ahead. We know you will not leave us alone, with your hands of power and your heart of love.

Help us then, now, Lord, to work for that day when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, when tanks will be beaten into tractors, when every man and every woman shall sit under his or her own vine and fig tree, and none shall be afraid; when justice will roll down like waters and righteousness as a mighty stream.

Reverend Lowery ended with a series of images that were part of the core of African American descriptive analysis during a more blatant, out-front, dangerous, and intense time of race and color-biased cultural, political, and economic processes:

Lord, in the memory of all the saints who from their labors rest, and in the joy of a new beginning, we ask you to help us work for that day when black will not be asked to get back, when brown can stick around -- (laughter) -- when yellow will

be mellow -- (laughter) -- when the red man can get ahead, man -- (laughter) -- and when white will embrace what is right.

Reverend Lowery ends his prayer with the traditional “Amen” in a call and response mode:

Let all those who do justice and love mercy say amen.

AUDIENCE: Amen!

REV. LOWERY: Say amen --

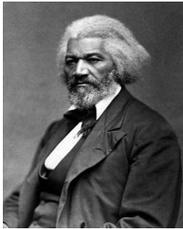
AUDIENCE: Amen!

REV. LOWERY: -- and amen.

*AUDIENCE: Amen! (Cheers, applause.)*⁹

III. Calling the Roll: Celebrating Our Government Officials, Past and Present

Frederick Douglass



Frederick Douglass was one of the foremost leaders of the abolitionist movement, which fought to end slavery within the United States in the decades prior to the Civil War. A brilliant speaker and ordained clergy, Douglass was asked by the American Anti-Slavery Society to engage in a tour of lectures, and so became recognized as one of America's first great black speakers. He won world fame when his autobiography was publicized in 1845. Two years later he began publishing an anti-slavery paper called the *North Star*.

Douglass served as an adviser to President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War and fought for the adoption of Constitutional amendments that guaranteed voting rights and other civil liberties for blacks. He served as a U.S. Representative to Haiti. Douglass provided a powerful voice for human rights during this period of American history and is revered today for his contributions against racial injustice.¹⁰

Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.



Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. served as Harlem's Congressman from 1945 until 1971. His legislative and personal efforts drove the desegregation of public schools, of the military, even of the U.S. Capitol itself. During his chairmanship of the Education and Labor Committee, bills which he oversaw significantly expanded opportunities for all Americans in access to higher education, introduced the minimum wage, and formed the cornerstone of the Great Society antipoverty efforts.¹¹

Ronald V. Dellums



Ronald V. Dellums was a member of the House of Representatives representing California. He was born in Oakland, California, on November 24, 1935. He served two years in the United States Marine Corps, active duty, 1954-1956; was a psychiatric social worker, California Department of Mental Hygiene, 1962-1964;

program director, member, Berkeley City Council, 1967-1970; elected as Democratic Congressman to the Ninety-second and to the thirteen succeeding Congresses (January 3, 1971-February 6, 1998). He served as chairman of the Committee on the District of Columbia (Ninety-sixth through One Hundred Second Congresses), the Committee on Armed Services (One Hundred Third Congress). In total he served from January 3, 1971 until his resignation on February 6, 1998. Since 2007, he has served as mayor of Oakland, California.¹²

Eleanor Holmes Norton



Eleanor Holmes Norton is now in her tenth term as Congresswoman for the District of Columbia. She is chair of the House Subcommittee on Economic Development, Emergency Management, and Public Buildings. Named by President Jimmy Carter as the first woman to chair the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, she came to Congress as a national figure who had been a civil rights and feminist leader, tenured professor of law, and board member of three Fortune 500 companies. During the Civil Rights Movement, Ms. Norton was a member of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, joining thousands in a struggle against racial segregation in America.

The Congresswoman's work for full congressional voting representation and for full democracy for the people of the District of Columbia continues as part of her lifelong struggle for universal human rights. Congresswoman Norton has used her background in International law to become a leader in the House in important posts. Currently, she is working to move the D.C. House Voting Rights Act forward. Even without a vote, Norton's success in writing bills and getting them enacted has made her one of the most effective members of the House in producing legislation. She has a full vote in House committees and she won a vote on the House Floor in the Committee of the Whole for the first time in the city's history. She serves on three rather than the usual two committees--the Committee on Homeland Security, the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, and the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.¹³

Barbara Lee



Barbara Lee was first elected to represent California's 9th Congressional District in 1998 in a special election to fill the seat of retiring Congressman Ron Dellums. A member of the powerful House Appropriations Committee, Congresswoman Lee serves on the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, the State and Foreign Operations and the Financial Services Subcommittees. Additionally, she serves on the Foreign Affairs Committee on the subcommittees on Western Hemisphere and Africa and Global Health. Congresswoman Lee was sworn in as the Chairwoman of

the Congressional Black Caucus on January 6, 2009. Lee's accomplishments in promoting effective bipartisan legislation to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS and bring treatment to the infected have earned her international recognition as a leader in the fight against global HIV/AIDS. Congresswoman Lee's willingness to stand on principle earned her international acclaim when she was the only member of Congress to vote against giving President George W. Bush a blank check to wage war after the September 11th attacks. In addition to being one of Congress's most vocal opponents to the war in Iraq, Congresswoman Lee has been a leader in promoting policies that foster international peace, security, and human rights.

In 2006, she successfully blocked funds from being used to establish permanent military bases in Iraq. She sponsored legislation disavowing the doctrine of preemptive war and has been a leader in the bipartisan effort in Congress to end the ongoing genocide in Darfur, Sudan, including the passage of legislation she authored to allow divestment by the United States from companies doing business in the region.

Her resolution affirming the goal of cutting the poverty rate in half within ten years was passed by Congress in 2008.¹⁴

IV. More Songs for This Lectionary Moment

The main theme of today's scripture is righteousness. The righteous are above all servants of God; righteousness is a characteristic of those who honor governments as ordained of God. There are songs that keep before us the importance of being followers of that which is right and of the God who calls us to be righteous.

Where He Leads Me I Will Follow

I can hear my Savior calling,
I can hear my Savior calling,
I can hear my Savior calling,
"Take thy cross and follow, follow Me."

Refrain

Where He leads me I will follow,
Where He leads me I will follow,
Where He leads me I will follow,
I'll go with Him, with Him all the way.

Other lines:

I'll go with Him through the garden...
I'll go with Him through the judgment...
He will give me grace and glory...¹⁵

I Want Jesus to Walk with Me

Walk with me Lord; walk with me
Walk with me Lord; walk with me

While I'm on this tedious journey Lord
Walk with me dear Lord walk with me

Hold my hand Lord; please hold my hand...
Don't leave me alone Lord, don't leave me alone...
Be my friend Lord, be my friend...

Guide my feet while I run this way
Oh I don't want to run this race in vain

Hold my hand...
Stand by me...
I'm your child...¹⁶

Lead Me, Guide Me

I am weak and I need thy strength and power
to help me over my weakest hour
Lead me through the darkness thy face to see
Lead me, oh Lord, lead me

Chorus
Lead me, guide me, along the way,
For if You lead me I cannot stray.
Lord, let me walk each day with Thee.
Lead me, oh Lord, lead me.

Verse 2
Help me tread in the paths of righteousness,
Be my aid when Satan and sin oppress.
I am putting all my trust in Thee:
Lead me, oh Lord, lead me.

Verse 3
I am lost if You take your hand from me,
I am blind without Thy light to see.
Lord, just always let me thy servant be,
Lead me, oh Lord, lead me.¹⁷

I Will Trust in the Lord

I will trust in the Lord (3x)
'til I die.
I'm gonna treat everybody right (3x)
'til I die.
I'm gonna stay on the battlefield (3x)
'til I die.

Who's going down in the grave with me? (3x)
When I die?
I will trust in the Lord (3x)
'til I die.¹⁸

Notes

1. "Govern." Online Etymology Dictionary. Online location: <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=govern&searchmode=none> accessed 1 March 2010
2. Frisby, Darrin. "Personal interview with Bernice Johnson Reagon." February 2010.
3. "Standing in the Need of Prayer." Negro Spiritual.
4. Clara Ann Thomson quoted in Washington: James Melvin. Conversations with God: Two Centuries of Prayers by African Americans. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994. pp. 117-122.
5. Ibid., p. 131.
6. King, Coretta Scott. Standing in the Need of Prayer: A Celebration of Black Prayer. New York, NY: Free Press, Simon & Schuster, 2003.
7. "Go Down, Moses." Negro Spiritual.
8. Johnson, James Weldon. "Lift Every Voice and Sing." African American Heritage Hymnal. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2001. #540.
9. "Reverend Joseph Lowery, Benediction Prayer, Inauguration of President Barack Obama, January 20, 2010." Belief Net. Online location: <http://blog.beliefnet.com/stevenwaldman/2009/01/rev-lowery-inauguration-benedi.html> accessed 1 March 2010
10. Thomas, Sandra. A Biography of the Life of Frederick Douglass. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester. Rochester. Online location: <http://www.history.rochester.edu/class/douglass/home.html> accessed 1 March 2010
11. "Adam Clayton Powell, Jr." Black Americans in Congress. Online location: <http://baic.house.gov/member-profiles/profile.html?intID=33> accessed 1 July 2010
12. "Ronald V. Dellums." Black Americans in Congress. Online location: <http://baic.house.gov/member-profiles/profile.html?intID=38> accessed 1 March 2010
13. "Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton." Official congressional website. Online location: http://www.norton.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=189&Itemid=94 accessed 1 March 2010
14. "Congresswoman Barbara Lee." Official congressional website. Online location: <http://www.lee.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=2§iontree=2> accessed 1 March 2010
15. Blandy, E.W. "Where He Leads Me I Will Follow." African American Heritage Hymnal. #550
16. "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me." African American Heritage Hymnal. #563
17. Akers, Doris M. "Lead Me, Guide Me." African American Heritage Hymnal. #474
18. "I Will Trust in the Lord." African American Heritage Hymnal. #391