



Central Square Congregational Church, UCC

71 Central Square, Bridgewater MA 02324 – (508) 697-6016 – cscucc.org

*“We are a Christian community of people who are reaching out to our neighbors,
at home and abroad, sharing our faith and our resources.”*

*We are delighted to
have you in Worship today!*

*In our church, no matter who you are or where you
are on life's journey, you are welcome here!*

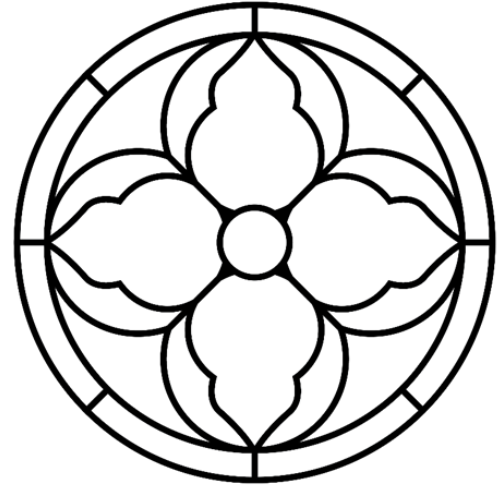
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CSCC Staff

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All the People!

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Sexton:

Rich Sullivan

**SPECIAL MUSICAL GUEST:
JAMES DARGAN, BARITONE**

SUNDAY, JANUARY 30, 2022

Prelude: *“For the Mountains Shall Depart”* by Felix Mendelssohn
Welcome & Announcements
Introit: *“Quoniam tu solus Sanctus”* by Jan Dismas Zelenka

Call to Worship

We gather our hearts together this morning in worship
to celebrate God’s generous care of us all.
When things get rough, God takes us by the hand
and leads us through the dark and fearful times in life.
So today we acknowledge and celebrate God’s compassion and
understanding. God’s goodness and mercy nurtures and blesses us, and it
enriches our souls.
As we worship this morning, we pray for restoration and refreshment.

Hebrew Bible Reading: Psalm 23

¹The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
²He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;
³he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake.
⁴Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are
with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me.
⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you
anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I
shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

Opening Prayer (based on Psalm 23 and Matthew 22:1-14)

Gracious God,
in love You open wide the doors and welcome us into Your presence—
saints and sinners alike.
You spread before us a feast of love and mercy for the body and soul.
We gather our hearts with joy to meet You in this time of worship,
to see Your goodness, to celebrate Your grace and mercy in our lives.
May Your Spirit inspire our praise and thanksgiving,
our prayers and petitions, as we worship together in Your presence.
In the name of Jesus Christ,
Amen.

Moment for All Ages: *“Our Journey with Heifer”* The Stotts Family

Musical Meditation: #533, Children of God

Hebrew Bible Reading: 1 Samuel 16.1-13

The Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.”² Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.” And the Lord said, “Take a heifer with you, and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’”³ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.”⁴ Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, “Do you come peaceably?”⁵ He said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is now before the Lord.”⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.”⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.”¹⁰ Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen any of these.”¹¹ Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.”¹² He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, “Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.”¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

Sermon: *“Psalm 23 & 1 Samuel: Some questions...”*
In your experiences of God, how would you describe God?
Are you a “good shepherd” to people you lead, mentor and guide?
How do you respond to God’s generous hospitality?

Musical Meditation: *“Laus Deo!”* Music by Del’Shawn Taylor,
text by John Greenleaf Whittier

(This is a world premiere, written especially for our church. Whittier was a Quaker poet and abolitionist from Massachusetts, and he wrote these words upon hearing the bells ringing and the cannons roaring in celebration of the passing of the 13th Amendment on January 31, 1865. He said that this poem “wrote itself, or rather sang itself, while the bells rang.” The title “Laus Deo” means “Praise Be to God.”)

Prayer for All People

The Lord’s Prayer (Please use the wording that is most meaningful for you.)

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

Benediction

Postlude: *“Mache dich, mein Herze, rein”* by Johann Sebastian Bach

*Do you need a meal, a call, spiritual care, or even just a prayer?
Contact the Office, a Deacon, or a member of our Care Team.*

To contact Rev. Beth, call the church
office at 508-697-6016 or email her at
csccpastor@hotmail.com.

CSCC Deacons

Deb Sorgman – debsorgman@gmail.com
Jae Stotts – jaestotts@gmail.com

CSCC Care Team

centralsquarecareteam@gmail.com

Carol Chaffee
Phoebe Hogg
Bev Mitchell
John Scott
Rev. Beth Stotts

Supporting Our Ministry

During this time, we encourage you to continue your support of CSCC, to the degree you are able. Offerings can be made in any of the following ways: * Checks can be mailed to the church (71 Central Square, Bridgewater, MA 02324) * Bill-pay through your bank can be set up for one-time or recurring payments * Payments can be made via the Paypal link at the top of our website home page (www.cscucc.org).

If you have any questions, you can email the Treasurer directly and confidentially at treasurer@cscucc.com or call the church office at 508-697-6016.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Wednesday, February 2, 2022 - Women's Guild Meeting at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom

Sunday, February 6, 2022 – Guest Preacher, The Rev. Greta MacRae

Sunday, February 13, 2022 - Annual Meeting at 11:00 a.m. (*this meeting will be held over Zoom. A link will be provided the week before.*)

COVID UPDATE

Dear Members and Friends of Central Square Church,

The number of COVID cases in our community during this Omicron flare up has surpassed the number of cases we endured a year ago, at the highest peak. Out of an abundance of caution, we are suspending in-person worship on Sunday mornings *until further notice*.

Worship, as always, will be live-streamed via [Facebook Live](#) and [YouTube](#) as well as on BTV throughout the week. You can also access worship from our website: www.cscucc.org

In the meantime, please reach out to the church office if you need anything; A meal, a prayer, someone to talk to... we're here for you. You can e-mail us at: office@cscucc.com or call us at 508-697-6016.

In Christ,
Rev. Beth, Staff, and the Deacons

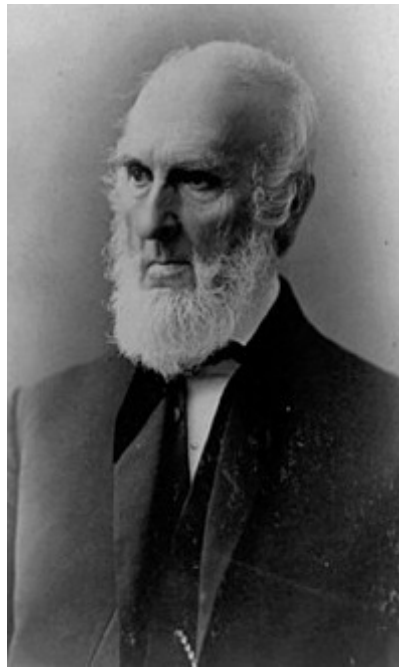


The purpose of our annual meeting, according to our Constitution, Article X, Church Meetings, Section 2: “The Annual Meeting of the Church shall be held on the second Sunday of February for the purpose of receiving/hearing reports of all Officers, Boards, Committees and Organizations and to transact any other business that may legally come before it.”

This is a celebration! Please come and let us celebrate together the people and ministry of Central Square Congregational Church, United Church of Christ!

Due to COVID concerns, the meeting will be held via Zoom. The Zoom meeting link will be emailed to all those on our email list on THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10. If you do not get emails from the church regularly, such as the Monday e-blast, please contact Deborah in the church office, and she’ll be happy to email it to you personally. The link will also be available on our website EVENTS page that morning (not before).

LAUS DEO!



MUSIC BY DEL'SHAWN TAYLOR

*Composed in 2022, commissioned by the Central Square Congregational Church
in Bridgewater, MA*

POETRY BY JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

*Written in response to hearing the bells and cannons proclaiming the passage of the
13th Amendment on January 31, 1865*

PREMIERED BY JAMES DARGAN, BARITONE, AND JULIA SCOTT CAREY, PIANO

*January 30, 2022
Central Square Congregational Church*

LAUS DEO!

By John Greenleaf Whittier

It is done!
Clang of bell and roar of gun
Send the tidings up and down.
How the belfries rock and reel!
How the great guns, peal on peal,
Fling the joy from town to town!

Ring, O bells!
Every stroke exulting tells
Of the burial hour of crime.
Loud and long, that all may hear,
Ring for every listening ear
Of Eternity and Time!

Let us kneel
God's own voice is in that peal,
And this spot is holy ground.
Lord, forgive us! What are we,
That our eyes this glory see,
That our ears have heard the sound!

For the Lord
On the whirlwind is abroad;
In the earthquake He has spoken;
He has smitten with His thunder
The iron walls asunder,
And the gates of brass are broken.

Loud and long
Lift the old exulting song;
Sing with Miriam by the sea,
He has cast the mighty down;
Horse and rider sink and drown;
"He hath triumphed gloriously!"

Did we dare,
In our agony of prayer,
Ask for more than He has done?
When was ever His right hand
Over any time or land
Stretched as now beneath the sun?

How they pale,
Ancient myth and song and tale,
In this wonder of our days,
When the cruel rod of war
Blossoms white with righteous law,
And the wrath of man is praise!

Blotted out
All within and all about
Shall a fresher life begin;
Freer breathe the universe
As it rolls its heavy curse
On the dead and buried sin!

It is done!
In the circuit of the sun
Shall the sound thereof go forth.
It shall bid the sad rejoice,
It shall give the dumb a voice,
It shall belt with joy the earth!

Ring and swing,
Bells of joy! On morning's wing
Send the song of praise abroad!
With a sound of broken chains
Tell the nations that He reigns,
Who alone is Lord and God!

**SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER AND THE
13TH AMENDMENT, WRITTEN BY JULIA SCOTT CAREY,
FOLLOWED BY AN INTERVIEW WITH COMPOSER DEL'SHAWN TAYLOR**

As poet John Greenleaf Whittier sat in the sacred stillness of the Amesbury Friends Meeting House, the silence inside the quaint New England building was a marked contrast from the joyous cacophony of the outside world, where bells pealed, cannons roared, and jubilant shouts erupted on the streets. Through the silent worship of that ordinary and yet monumental midweek meeting, Whittier (in keeping with the tenets of his Quaker faith) waited for his heart to open to the light and truth of God's word. As he sat, he heard more than the triumphant clamor of bells and cannons. In a poem he would put to paper that very day, a poem which he would later tell a friend "wrote itself, or rather sang itself, while the bells rang," Whittier described the sounds which resonated deep inside his soul that day — he heard the sound of broken chains; he heard the song that Miriam sang in the Old Testament when the Israelites escaped from bondage in Egypt; he heard God's own voice. "Laus Deo!" — or "Praise Be to God!" — Whittier wrote at the top of his poem. As his biographer Samuel T. Pickard would later state, Whittier "had given thirty years of his life to bring about this event, and his whole heart went out in praise to God, who had 'smitten with his thunder the iron walls asunder.'"

On January 31, 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution was passed by Congress. It would be signed by President Abraham Lincoln the following day, and ratified by the necessary twenty-seven states the following December. Declaring that "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction," the Amendment marked the formal end to two hundred and fifty years of what Lincoln had once called "a state of oppression and tyranny unequalled in the world" — the system of American slavery.

The Governor of Massachusetts at the time, John A. Andrew, issued an order stating that as soon as the news of Abraham Lincoln's signing of the Amendment was received via telegraph, "a salute of one hundred guns shall be fired on the Common," with the additional recommendation that "church bells throughout the State be rung at the same hour." It was these proscribed celebratory cannons and bells which inspired Whittier in his poem "Laus Deo!"

John Greenleaf Whittier, though a white man living in a free state and therefore not personally affected by slavery, was an ardent and devoted abolitionist, penning dozens of anti-slavery poems in the decades leading up to that triumphant day when the bells and cannons echoed across Boston Common. Though he did serve one term in the Massachusetts State Legislature, he worked primarily behind the scenes as a lobbyist and writer, becoming known as the "Laureate of the Liberty Party" (the Liberty Party was

a short-lived political party devoted to the anti-slavery cause in the years leading up to the Civil War). As he strongly preferred expressing himself through the written word rather than through oration, he was not one of the more public-facing members of the abolitionist movement.

Earlier in his career, though, Whittier did frequently travel to and speak at abolitionist meetings, and one run-in with a violent pro-slavery mob showed Whittier on a personal level how dangerous it truly was to fight against slavery. In 1835, while Whittier was visiting Concord, New Hampshire, a crowd of anti-abolitionists rioted, hurling stones and rotten eggs at him. Fortunately, all of the stones missed hitting him in the head, and he escaped thanks to the heroism of some local townspeople. However, he was haunted by the memory of the experience forever (even though he appeared relatively unshaken by the event in public interviews with the press), telling Samuel Pickard that he “could remember the sound of the stones that missed their aim and struck the wooden fences by his side, and that it made him realize how St. Paul felt when he was thrice stoned.” Whittier kept the coat he had worn that day (which could never successfully be cleansed of rotten eggs) through the end of the Civil War, as a tactile reminder of the fight he had undertaken. Years later, he encountered a man who confessed to having been one of the Concord rioters. Whittier asked the rioter what the mob’s plan had been if Whittier had not escaped, and the man admitted that the mob intended to forcibly paint Whittier’s face black as a mockery of his fight for racial justice, and that “tar and feathers were also in readiness.”

It was an extremely dangerous time to be an abolitionist, even in Boston, where the abolitionist movement had not yet achieved the prominence and acceptance that it would closer to the War. Just a few months after the Concord riot, Whittier’s friend, the well-known abolitionist journalist William Lloyd Garrison, was also brutally attacked by rioters, who dragged Garrison through the streets of Boston, nearly killing him. Garrison was placed in the Leverett Street Jail overnight for his own protection, where he was visited by Whittier. Whittier saw his own recent peril reflected in his colleague Garrison’s plight — “I could sympathize with him,” Whittier explained — not merely for the obvious reason that both Whittier and Garrison had faced a riotous mob, but for an even more specific reason: in the cases of both the Concord Riot and the Boston Riot, the mob’s original intended target was actually not Whittier or Garrison, but rather George Thompson, an extremely famous British abolitionist and orator who was visiting the United States at the time. When Whittier met up with Thompson after escaping from the Concord rioters and relayed the harrowing tale of his stoning (the stones having been intended for Thompson’s head), Thompson was stoically unperturbed — by the year 1835, Thompson was already well aware of what was involved in the fight for universal liberty. He knew he would have to have the courage to face violence, riots, and the occasional assassination attempt.

Whittier and Garrison remained close colleagues throughout the following three decades of the fight against slavery, their respective personalities and voices balancing each other’s. Garrison had announced his presence on the Boston abolitionist scene like a blazing trumpet, rending the cautious stagnation of city’s morality with an

uncompromisingly ferocious salutatory editorial in the first issue on his newspaper “The Liberator,” on January 1, 1831: “I am in earnest — I will not equivocate — I will not excuse — I will not retreat a single inch — AND I WILL BE HEARD!” Whittier read and contemplated Garrison’s words, as he was building up the courage to devote his own life to the anti-slavery cause. As told by Samuel Pickard, Whittier “counted the cost with Quaker coolness of judgment,” deciding to join Garrison and the other abolitionists “deliberately and after serious consideration.”

When the news of the 13th Amendment’s passage broke, Garrison published an editorial in the February 3, 1865 issue of “The Liberator,” under the heading “Laus Deo! — Hallelujah!” (I am not personally sure if Whittier was aware of or inspired by Garrison’s usage of the term “Laus Deo” when he chose the title for his own poem in response to the 13th Amendment, although it is certainly a possibility, since his poem was first published on February 9). In his editorial, Garrison referred to the Amendment as “the greatest and most important event in the history of congressional legislation. It is better than all the military and naval victories of the war...Henceforth, in deed and in truth, America is to be ‘the land of the FREE’ — ‘where breathes no castled lord nor cabined slave.’” (The latter phrase quoted by Garrison is taken from the poem “Connecticut” by Fitz-Greene Halleck.)

Garrison chose to cease publication of “The Liberator” after the 13th Amendment was ratified, selecting December 29, 1865 as the date of its final issue. In the final issue, Garrison reprinted his 1831 Salutatory editorial that had so roused Whittier’s conscience, side-by-side with a Valedictory editorial in which he bid farewell to his loyal readers. Even as he celebrated the nation’s accomplishments, though, he sounded an ominous warning about the future fight for true racial equity — “I see a mighty work of enlightenment and regeneration yet to be accomplished at the South, and many cruel wrongs done to the freedmen which are yet to be redressed; and I neither counsel others to turn away from the field of conflict, under the delusion that no more remains to be done, nor contemplate such a course in my own case.”

Indeed, in spite of the monumental achievement of the 13th Amendment, which Whittier celebrated in “Laus Deo,” the amendment was not a true ending nor a resolution to the fight for racial justice. It is so tempting to read only the part of the sentence which states “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall exist within the United States,” without pausing to reflect on the implications of that other part of the sentence, and its effect on the ensuing race relations in the United States — “except as a punishment for crime.”

In his groundbreaking, Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Slavery By Another Name*, author Douglas A. Blackmon outlined how the legalization of involuntary prison labor (which was ratified into the very fabric of emancipation in this country, through its inclusion in the 13th Amendment) became a part of the post-war economy of the Southern United States, leading to mass incarcerations specifically targeting Black formerly-enslaved people:

“With the southern economy in ruins, state officials limited to the barest resources, and county governments with even fewer, the concept of reintroducing the forced labor of blacks as a means of funding government services was viewed by whites as an inherently practical method of eliminating the cost of building prisons and returning blacks to their appropriate position in society. Forcing convicts to work as part of punishment for an ostensible crime was clearly legal too; the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, adopted in 1865 to formally abolish slavery, specifically permitted involuntary servitude as a punishment for ‘duly convicted’ criminals. Beginning in the late 1860s, and accelerating after the return of white political control in 1877, every southern state enacted an array of interlocking laws essentially intended to criminalize black life.”

Obviously, Whittier’s poem was an immediate celebratory response to the 13th Amendment’s passage, written before the Reconstruction Era had even begun, and therefore doesn’t delve into the nuances of the Amendment’s longer-term implications. However, I selected composer Del’Shawn Taylor to set Whittier’s words because I am familiar with Del’Shawn’s work and knew he would add his own personal perspective and depth to Whittier’s vision of triumph. Del’Shawn graciously agreed to answer a few questions about his compositional process, and our interview is included below:

Julia Scott Carey: Del’Shawn, it is such an honor to have the chance to premiere your setting of John Greenleaf Whittier’s words. Whittier’s poem “Laus Deo” is a praiseful celebration of the abolition of slavery in the United States by means of the 13th Amendment, and I recall that at the time you delivered the score to me, you said it was “good for your soul to set a text that was joyous and in celebration, rather than oppression.” I’m aware that at virtually the same you were composing this piece for me, though, you were also setting the words of a poet named James Soto, who was currently experiencing incarceration, whose poem “Why They Wanna Cage Us” proclaims in the middle of the text: “Abolish 13th Amendment — don’t try to cage us.” I’m guessing it must have been quite an interesting experience for you reconciling these two diametrically opposed perspectives on the same Amendment — but then again, it’s kind of the like the two diametrically opposed parts of the Amendment itself, proclaiming liberty throughout the land while also cementing in place the enforced labor system of the prison industrial complex. I’m curious if it was at all challenging for you, artistically or personally, to set these two texts at the same time?

Del’Shawn Taylor: Julia, the honor is all mine. Thank you for the opportunity to set Whittier’s jubilant poem. You are correct, I did state that it was “good for my soul to set a text that was joyous and in celebration, rather than oppression.” As a composer, I believe that I have an obligation to use music to first capture the attention of the world and then, through the marriage between music and the specific text, transform their way of thinking by sharing stories from the unheard or forgotten.

In response to your question, surprisingly, it was not challenging for me, artistically or personally, to set these two texts at the same time. The ease or lack of challenge was the result of, as you put, “the diametrically opposed parts of the Amendment” which are apparent when comparing Whittier’s and Soto’s poems. This allowed for me to sit in two camps of compositional themes rooted in historical perspective: hopeful jubilation, and “hope” realized. From Whittier’s perspective, the 13th amendment was the congressional ratification of the persistent hope and tears of African Americans and congressional support for abolitionists, who were sacrificing their privilege to persistently and perilously ensure that African Americans were treated equally. Soto’s perspective is a longitudinal report or realization of the hopeful jubilation of Whittier, his fellow abolitionist, and the newly “freed” African American slaves. The perspective you provided from Blackmon’s *Slavery By Another Name* highlights a part of American history that is not found in our history books. Before I dive into that, I want to highlight another important concept from this powerful book:

“Dispelling that confusion and ensuring the dominant position of whites in general – and Englishmen in particular – colonial legislatures, especially in Virginia, South Carolina, and later, Georgia, began in the 1650s to systematically define residents by color and lineage. The intentions were twofold: to create the legal structure necessary for building an economy with cheap slave labor as its foundation, secondly, to reconcile bondage with America’s revolutionary ideals of intrinsic human rights. Blacks could be excluded from the Enlightenment concepts that every man was granted by God individual freedom and a right to the pursuit of happiness because colonial laws codified a less-than-fully human status of any person carrying even a trace of Black or Indian blood. Instead of embracing the concept that regardless of color ‘All men are created equal,’ with no king or prince born to higher status than any other, colonial leaders extended a version of ‘royal’ status to all whites.”

Over two hundred years later, when the 13th Amendment was forged, this equality-opposed ideology, that was baked into the founding of our country, mutated and evolved into slavery by another name. This occurred first in the South, because as Blackmon writes:

“The Civil War settled definitively the question of the South’s continued existence as a part of the United States, but in 1865 there was no strategy for cleansing the South of the economic and intellectual addiction to slavery. The resistance to what should have been the obvious consequence of losing the Civil War — full emancipation of the slaves and shared political control between blacks and whites — was so virulent and effective that the tangible outcome of the military struggle between the North and the South remained uncertain even twenty-five years after the issuance of President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. The role of the African American in American society would not be clear for another one hundred years.”

After the Civil War, and through the loophole in the 13th Amendment that states that slavery shall be permitted “as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted,” in the South they criminalized Black livelihood in order to once again

exploit Black lives for Black labor to rebuild the south. As W.E.B. Du Bois put it, “[slaves] went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery.” Blackmon calls it, “slavery by another name.” From the last 1800’s to the present day, slavery continued to evolve to support the founding fathers’ supremacy-rooted ideology. It evolved from Jim Crow to the mass incarceration of Black men and women and other people of color. This is what James Soto highlights in his poem, “Why They Wanna Cage Us.” While conversations are occurring, until we can address the white supremacist ideology that our country was built upon, the initial jubilation felt among my ancestors and abolitionists like Whittier will never be fully realized, and the many will continue to ask, to sing, “Why do they want to criminalize us and our way of life?” “Why do they profile us?” “Why do they deny us jobs, homes, and opportunities?” “Why they wanna cage us?”

Julia: The first time I read this poem, it seemed like it was just calling out to be set to music (both because of the imagery in it, and because Whittier said the words “sang themselves” while the bells announcing the 13th Amendment rang). But Whittier’s own Quaker tradition largely eschewed organized singing, believing it to be a diversion from spontaneous worship, and the words came to him in the midst of a silent worship meeting. In spite of being birthed within a silent spirituality, though, it is a very noisy poem — there’s the literal noise of the cannons and the bells, and the metaphorical sounds of the broken chains and the voice of God. I’m curious about your own thought process as you went about adding sound to Whittier’s words. Did you intend to paint his imagery through music, especially the pealing of the bells? Were you in any way influenced by a faith tradition — Whittier’s or your own? What other musical styles impacted your work?

Del’Shawn: You know, it took me some time to transition from the Soto to Whittier, largely because when I started setting the “Laus Deo,” I was adamant that I wanted to use a bell-like motif throughout the composition. Once I abandoned this approach, I returned to my standard approach of letting the text inspire a melody and the melody inspire compositional development, and I was able to get to work.

Text painting is a tool that I use a lot in my music and most definitely intended to use it in this piece. As previously stated, I did want to emphasize the sound of bells throughout the composition. In the opening of the composition you can hear the sound of the bells calling attention to all who are near. That is also present in the interludes between the verses and the theme presented in the final measures of the accompaniment. As joy ran rampant at the announcement of the 13th Amendment, I imagined that there was a great deal of dance, so I wanted to use 6/8 to create the feeling of dancing and use the percussiveness of the piano to further that celebratory idea. With faith in mind, I wanted to be sure to infuse gospel in this composition. I waited to bring that out in the final verse and changed the meter to 4/4 to extend and emphasize the joy and praise. Nothing makes you dance, sing, and even shout like gospel music. There is no better time to do either of these three things than when celebrating one’s liberation or the liberation of those you hold dear.

Julia: Have you primarily set the words of living poets, or have you set other works by older poets such as Whittier? When you set the words of an older poet, to what extent does their world and their time period impact your compositional decisions and your approach to their words?

Del’Shawn: I have set the texts of a variety of poets from Paul Laurence Dunbar to Emily Dickinson. I set and adapted Dunbar’s “We Wear the Mask” for a commission from the Cincinnati Song Initiative and Dickinson’s “Because I Could Not Stop for Death” for a premiere with Babel, a brilliant Canadian choral ensemble led by Dr. Elaine Choi. I also write my own texts. For a commission from the Thompson Street Opera Company, I wrote the text for my monodrama based on Mamie Elizabeth Mobley, the mother of Emmett Till. I also have had the pleasure of collaborating with living librettists and poets like J.D. October and Parris Lewis. So far, the time period has not played a major role in my composition style concerning the art songs, choral, or chamber music that I have written. For me, it is about what melody sings from my soul as I recite the text over and over again. That being said, I am currently the composer for the musical adaptation of the award-winning book *Stars in the Sky*, which tells the stories of the first African Americans in aviation, specifically stewardesses. It will be workshopped in NYC later this year. For this musical, I am writing some of the texts and am working with a librettist. In this instance, the text has inspired some of the music as there are depictions of different decades and the music should match.

Julia: Do you see music (and your work in particular) as an instrument of social change? What message do you intend to share with the world through your compositions?

Del’Shawn: 100% yes. I started off my music career as a baritone and won a few national and international competitions, but it was during that time that I realized how many stories of people who looked like me were not being told in art song, in opera, in chamber music, etc. Understanding the power the composers and librettist have to tell stories, I ventured down this path to tell the stories of the unheard and unsung, with the outcome to unite my music with their voices to be artistic agents for social change.

More than half of my work is crafted to bring attention to stories that I believe once heard and learned from can be a catalyst for social change. “Why They Wanna Cage Us,” “We Wear the Mask,” and “How Much Longer” are three of my most favorite compositions that I have written so far, because they amplify voices of Black and brown people and spark the conversations that hold us to duty that James Baldwin talks about when he says:

“If we — and now I mean the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on, or create, the consciousness of the others — do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world.”

The message I want to share with the world through all my compositions is that in every chapter of our history, whether good or bad, there are stories that need to be told and stories that if we learn from, we can stop cycles of harm and achieve the world that we can truly be. If we continue to hide or erase these chapters, we erase the stories, we erase the love, we erase the laughter, we erase the joy, we erase the pain that was lived, we erase our humanity. When the music starts, we stop and we listen. That is why I compose, because when the music makes the audience stop and listen, it's the perfect opportunity to share these chapters and these stories. It allows for us to embrace our humanity and pull down the systems and ideologies that have perpetuated the success of the supreme and harm of the oppressed, allowing us to move forward together and build the society where we all are valued, where we all are seen as human beings.

SOURCES FOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

(Hyperlinks are included to all sources; for books that are not in the public domain, the links take you to free previews of the books, but the full texts are readily available)

- **JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER** - Laus Deo!, Anti-Slavery Poems
- **SAMUEL T. PICKARD** - The Life and Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier, Volume 1 and Volume 2 (the section about "Laus Deo" is in Volume 2, pp. 488-9; the section about the riots in Concord and Boston is in Volume 1, pp. 143-156)
- **13TH AMENDMENT**
- **WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON** - The Liberator (quoted issues are 2/3/1865 and 12/29/1865)
- **DOUGLAS A. BLACKMON** - Slavery By Another Name (quoted passages are on pp. 40, 42, and 53)
- **DEL'SHAWN TAYLOR AND JAMES SOTO** - Why They Wanna Cage Us
- **JAMES BALDWIN** - The Fire Next Time
- **W.E.B. DU BOIS** - Black Reconstruction in America