



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## REV. DR. JOSEPH E. LOWERY: THE FIGHT FOR RACIAL EQUALITY

Achieving Social Justice

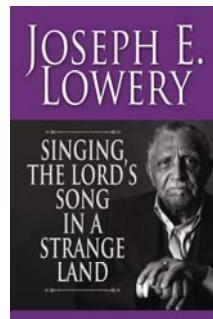
NASHVILLE, Tenn. – November 30, 2010 – Rev. Dr. Joseph E. Lowery has committed his life to the fight for racial equality, serving as a catalyst for great change in our nation. As an activist in the struggle for civil rights, Lowery endured cruel mistreatment and abuse, but he says he never let hatred creep into his thoughts. Instead he looked to his faith to carry him through, because, he says, he could not have made it through without his moral and religious roots.

On January 20, 2009, Dr. Lowery experienced fulfillment of his life's work, as he delivered the closing benediction at the inauguration of the first black U.S. president, which he deems the nation's response to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s historic "I Have a Dream" speech. And in August 2009, President Obama awarded Dr. Lowery the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Lowery's life as an activist began in college when he joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In the 1950s he lead efforts for the desegregation of buses and other public accommodations in Alabama, and in 1957, he joined the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, where he became one of King's most trusted advisors and later served as president from 1978-1998. For his leadership of the SCLC, the NAACP named Dr. Lowery the "dean" of the civil rights movement.

At age 89, Dr. Lowery has written his first book, telling a story that no one else has – telling it like it is. In ***Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land*** (Abingdon Press, February 2011), Dr. Lowery celebrates many milestones of civil rights movement, in which he played a significant role. The book also honors many great figures of the movement, such as MLK, Nelson Mandela and Rosa Parks, and tackles controversial issues, such as racial inequality, the KKK, the death penalty and more. Included:

- The Joy of a New Beginning: The Inaugural Benediction
- What a Family Reunion!: Coretta Scott King Funeral Message
- Rosa Parks Eulogy
- I Remember Martin
- The Essence and Quintessence of African Manhood: Nelson Mandela
- Good Crazy: Sermon at the Commemoration of Bloody Sunday
- The Death Penalty: Matter of Race and Place; Inequity and Iniquity



**Through his book, Dr. Lowery takes readers down Freedom Road, as he walked it – inspiring them to see that one person can make a difference and that social justice can be achieved.**

### About Abingdon Press

Abingdon Press is the publishing imprint for The United Methodist Publishing House. Abingdon Press has a distinguished record in religious publishing for a broad ecumenical audience and specializes in products for church leaders, as well as scholars and students engaged in theological education and the practice of ministry. Abingdon Press offers a wide array of quality academic, professional, reference, fiction and devotional titles published each year.

###

### Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land

By Joseph E. Lowery

Abingdon Press, February 2011

ISBN: 9781426713248 • Category: RELIGION/Social Issues/Racial Justice • Price: \$22.00 • Format: Jacketed Hardcover

## About the Author

### REV. DR. JOSEPH E. LOWERY

#### **Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land**

By Joseph E. Lowery

Abingdon Press, February 2011

ISBN: 9781426713248

Category: RELIGION/Social Issues/Racial Justice

Price: \$22.00

Format: Jacketed Hardcover



Joseph E. Lowery, a minister in the United Methodist Church, is an activist in the American civil rights movement. He served as the third president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference from 1978-1998, after Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King and his immediate successor, Rev. Dr. Ralph David Abernathy, and participated in most of the major activities of the African-American Civil Rights Movement of the '60s.

In addition to speaking at Coretta Scott King's funeral and giving the benediction at President Barack Obama's inauguration, Rev. Joseph E. Lowery is most recently noted for winning the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

His numerous other awards include: the NAACP award at its 1997 convention for, "dean of the civil rights movement," and Lifetime Achievement Award. He also received the Martin Luther King Jr. Center Peace Award and the National Urban League's Whitney M. Young, Jr. Lifetime Achievement Award in 2004. Ebony has named him one of the 15 greatest black preachers. Lowery has also received several honorary doctorates from colleges and universities. In addition, he was given the Fred L. Shuttlesworth Human Rights Award by the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.

On his 80th birthday in 2001, the city of Atlanta changed the name of Ashby Street to Joseph E. Lowery Boulevard, Atlanta Public Schools established the Joseph E. Lowery Lecture Series on Civic Engagement and Clark Atlanta University founded the Joseph E. Lowery Institute for Justice & Human Rights.

For more information or interviews contact:

Desireé Davis, Publicist

Abingdon Press

[ddavis@abingdonpress.com](mailto:ddavis@abingdonpress.com) • 615.749.6290

## **Q & A: Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land**

**By Joseph E. Lowery**

**Q: What do you hope readers will gain from *Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land*?**

**A:** From this book, readers will learn of the experiences we [African Americas] endured coming through the [Civil Rights] movement. The book ties faith and the movement together, because we [African Americans] could not have made it through without our moral and religious roots. Readers will be inspired to make a difference and will find hope that social justice can be achieved.

**Q: What does the phrase “singing the Lord’s song in a strange land” mean?**

**A:** When the children of Israel were held in captivity in Babylon, their captors asked them to sing the songs of Zion, but they declined. They would not sing the Lord’s song in a strange land, but we did. It was our key to survival. Our faith carried us through that strange land of inequality. Although life is a strange land, not as orderly as we might like, we must do His will, even in and under difficult circumstances.

**Psalm 137:1-4 (NLT):**

*Beside the rivers of Babylon,  
we sat and wept as we thought of Jerusalem.  
We put away our harps,  
hanging them on the branches of poplar trees.  
For our captors demanded a song from us.  
Our tormentors insisted on a joyful hymn.  
'Sing us one of those songs of Jerusalem.'  
But how can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a strange land?*

**Q: What inspired you to become an activist in the movement?**

**A:** I saw the inconsistencies where freedom and justice were served for one segment of citizens and denied to another - denied on the basis of color, and race.

**Q: What do you consider the most important feat for the plight of African Americans in your lifetime?**

**A:** The election of our first African American president. I used to tell African American children that they could be President someday but I doubted it would happen in my lifetime. The election of President Barak Obama represents a new beginning and a new America. However, while we do pray in the “joy of a new beginning”, we still do not live in a post-racial era. We must continue to press forward.

**Q: How can the forward momentum be sustained and further pursued?**

**A:** We must continue to witness for justice through our institutions and as individuals. We must continue to sing the Lord’s song when justice is denied.

**Q: What did it mean to you to be asked to speak at Obama's inauguration?**

**A:** It was a great honor to be asked to participate. As I stood on the capitol steps, I could hear Dr. King’s challenge 46 years earlier to America to come up to the lowland of race and color, to the higher ground of content of character... and here I was participating in the nation’s response to that summons. I used the opportunity as a challenge to America to share in the joy of a new beginning.

**Q: What advice would you give to someone wanting to make a difference today?**

**A:** To open their minds and hearts to the call to serve, to love and to walk in the light.

**Singing the Lord’s Song in a Strange Land**

By Joseph E. Lowery

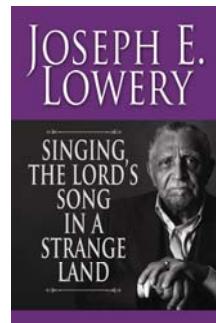
Abingdon Press, February 2011

ISBN: 9781426713248 • Category: RELIGION/Social Issues/Racial Justice • Price: \$22.00 • Format: Jacketed Hardcover

## EXCERPTS

### *Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land*

By Rev. Dr. Joseph E. Lowery



#### **The Economic Power of the Vote:**

#### **Address at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Annual Convention**

"Therefore, like the river, we must keep on rolling. There's nothing more important on our agenda today – if we deal with the essentials of political empowerment – than voter registration, voter education and voter participation. Don't let anybody fool you. It is important. It is significant. It is essential. And if you do not vote, you are not a good Christian. I am serious about that. I think folks who don't vote are flirting with hell. Because what you are doing is not using that which people fought, bled and died for and what God gave us. God moved in a mysterious way. God moved us from Selma to Montgomery." (page 20)

#### Affirmative Action -

"It's not good for America to exclude any of her people. And the two key words in affirmative action are inclusiveness and justice. It is not reverse discrimination. It is not preferential treatment. It is including those who have been traditionally excluded." (page 25)

#### **It's Time to Move another Mountain**

"It's time for the Nation to move another mountain. Long before Sept. 11, we were on course for disaster; with growing, widening disparities in income – class decisions are threatening our 'united' status. It is time to move from the mountain of insensitivity to the least of these; from the mountain of intolerance to those who are different; from the disparities between those who have more than they will ever need and those who never have as much as they always need; from the molehill of minimum age to mountain of livable wage. I am tired of minimum – minimum health care, minimum health, minimum car, minimum house, minimum hug, minimum kiss, minimum rest. Move from minimum to adequate, even from concept of equality to equity. In the community of faith we have begun to tolerate disparities. It's time to move from the hill of charity to the mountain of love – charity of love." (page 33)

#### **Boys to Men**

"We must choose spirituality over materialism. Boys get confused in their policies about weapons of mass destruction. Men will take their time, and let the inspectors do their work to make sure before they send our boys and young women in harms way. Men understand the real weapons of mass destruction are not over yonder, but they are right here. Forty three million people in this country without health insurance, that's a weapon of mass destruction. Millions of people living on minimum wage: that's a weapon of mass destruction. You may not like this one: we have half a million 'negroes' right here in Georgia not registered to vote. That's a weapon of mass self-destruction. Two-thirds who are registered to vote don't get off their rumps and go to the polls on election day. Staying home from the polls is a weapon of mass self destruction." (page 74)

**Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land**

By Joseph E. Lowery

Abingdon Press, February 2011

ISBN: 9781426713248 • Category: RELIGION/Social Issues/Racial Justice • Price: \$22.00 • Format: Jacketed Hardcover

**The Benediction**  
**Inauguration of President Barack Obama**  
January 20, 2009

**Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land**  
By Joseph E. Lowery  
Abingdon Press, February 2011  
ISBN: 9781426713248  
Category: RELIGION/Social Issues/Racial Justice  
Price: \$22.00  
Format: Jacketed Hardcover

*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.*

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

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; when yellow will be mellow; when the red man can get ahead, man; and when white will embrace what is right.

Let all those who do justice and love mercy say, Amen.

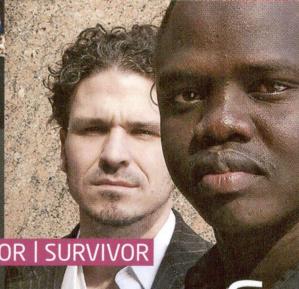
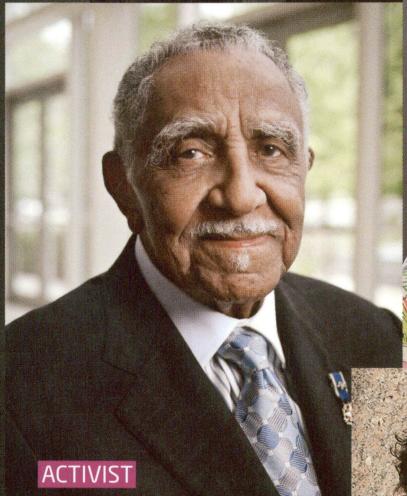
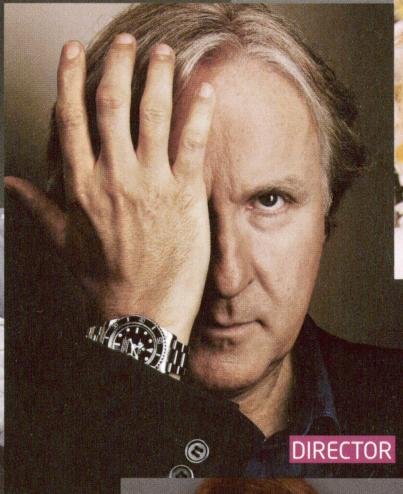
# SKY

DELTA

// NASHVILLE: 1 CITY 5 WAYS

// TALK SHOW WITH  
MARIA BELLO

// EXPLORING OSAKA



# Faces of Change

16 pioneers who have made an imprint on the world



## REV. DR. JOSEPH E. LOWERY

### // For fighting for racial equality.

While walking out of a shop near his home in Huntsville, Alabama, 11-year-old Joseph Echols Lowery was hit in the stomach by a white police officer with a baton, for getting in the way. "He said, 'Get back—don't you see a white man coming in the door?'" the Rev. Dr. Lowery, now 88, recalls. Although the encounter left Lowery infuriated and confused, it also planted the seed for a life committed to the fight for human rights. In college, Lowery joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and in the 1950s he spearheaded the desegregation of buses and other public accommodations in Alabama. In 1957, he joined Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph David Abernathy and others to form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and ultimately became one of King's most trusted advisers.

Lowery's involvement in the struggle for civil rights would put him in the line of fire more than once, but he says he has never let hatred creep into his thoughts. "Even the cop who punched me in the belly, I never hated," he says.

Through his years with the SCLC, which Lowery helmed from 1978 to 1998, he has been bestowed several high honors, including being named the "dean" of the civil rights movement by the NAACP. And in August 2009, President Barack Obama awarded to him the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Still, Lowery says none of his accolades tops January 20, 2009, when he delivered the closing benediction at the inauguration of the first black U.S. president. Lowery says he felt the event marked the "nation's response" to King's historic "I Have a Dream" speech: "That was a great moment and probably the biggest thrill of my life."

BY GIANNINA SMITH \* PHOTO BY HAROLD DANIELS