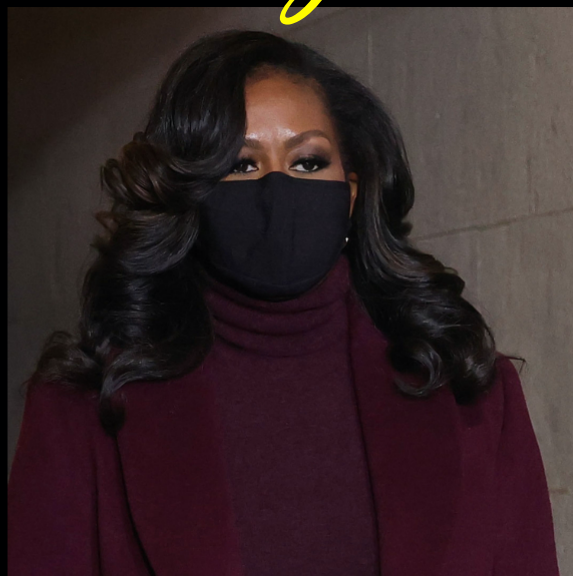


The Spire

March 2021

Women's History Month

Black Girl Magic



A WORD FROM OUR PASTOR AND TEACHER



Celebrating African American Women

As we transition from Black History Month to Women's History Month, it is indeed a joy to celebrate some of the phenomenal African American Women, who helped to raise us and guided our people through challenging times. We are so grateful for the women who persevered through oppression, both external and internal to achieve and excel. Their labor has not been in vain. We have been so blessed to have been surrounded by strong Black women. Women who have had to labor alongside their husbands or as single women to maintain their homes and their family's livelihoods. They have not only built families, but they have built businesses, and schools, and institutions. They have not only raised children, they have helped to politically raise a nation through their activism and strategizing. They have been lawmakers and lobbyists and diplomats. They have been architects, and authors and astronauts. They have not only reshaped the fabric of this nation, but they have redirected the course of human history.

African American women are some of the most multitalented creatures on the face of the globe. They are the only persons who can sit at the helm of a university as its president all day and come home and make a mean pot of greens and a slammin bowl of potato salad -- with some corn bread on the side. The word multitask was designed to describe the African American Queen. Sisters have always done it all because they have had to. If I were to start naming all of the

phenomenal African American women that I have known or heard of, paper and pen would not be sufficient to encompass them all. Just let me say that the Black women who I have known who have been lacking in industry and short on work ethic have been few and far between. The overwhelming number of African American mothers, sisters, aunts and daughters who I have known have been more than phenomenal. They have been extraordinarily committed, overwhelmingly qualified, dedicated beyond measure and faithfully hardworking. They have been the glue that has held their families together, their jobs together, and our communities together. The election of the last President of the United States was the result of the voting and the strategizing of African American women. This must not be forgotten.

Mt. Zion church is no small example of the leadership and hard work of African American women. Women have always been the backbone of the Black church, even when they could not hold office or stand in their pulpits. Women worked faithfully in spite of the oppression that they experienced within the church and without. They pushed forward until they were able to take the roles of leadership that they always deserved. Mt. Zion has had tremendous female leadership who used their culinary skills, their business acumen, their political power and their creativity to bring this church to the place where we are today.

Now, in the 21st century, the commitment of African American women to the cause of justice and equality has catapulted our nation and our world into a new place of opportunity and growth for all of us. We owe a great debt to those strong women who risked their lives to guarantee a better world for the generation that will come behind us.

During this season of Lent, let us not forget the women who followed Christ. The sisters, Mary and Martha, Mary Magdalene who Jesus saved from stoning, most of all, Mary the mother of our Savior. These women suffered and sacrificed to walk with the one who God sent to save us. Their faithfulness and the faithfulness of the Mighty African American women that we

celebrate during this month is without equal and beyond peer. We must uplift, honor and celebrate these mighty women of God, who have served and suffered, labored and languished, built and baked, written and raised our communities and our nation to a place more fully aligned with the divine plan of God for our lives. We honor these women today, this month and always.

In Gratitude and Remembrance,

Rev. Paul

In the know at Mt. Zion...

March 5 @7pm
CBL MASTERCLASS
GEORGE FRASER
via Zoom

March 28
PALM SUNDAY
Worship via Facebook and Zoom

The Spire is a monthly publication of
Mt. Zion Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
10723 Magnolia Drive
Cleveland, OH 44106
216.791.5760
www.mtzioncleveland.com

The deadline for articles and
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Happy 100th Birthday Geneva Green



Medical technology has prolonged life and found cures for many illnesses, not many people, however, are blessed to live to be 100 years of age. Needless to say, Mrs. Geneva Green never thought she would be so blessed. According to Deacon Susie Rivers, who helped plan her 100th birthday celebration surprise, Ms. Geneva couldn't wait to celebrate her birthday on February 27!

The cold, windy weather that blew the gold balloons showing 100, didn't stop the beauty of the special day, nor dampened the warmth of everyone's heart. Mt. Zion members lined their cars up at Hilltop Village along with five Euclid City police cars. The police began the surprise celebration by flashing the car lights along with a loud "Happy Birthday."



Even though Ms. Geneva wore a face mask, you could see that her eyes were smiling as she waved to all who drove by. Over her long life, Ms. Geneva has had many experiences. She raised her family and has a son who lives in California. She lost her husband several years ago. While well in her 90s and up until last year, Ms. Geneva would drive to church on Sunday and many Wednesdays for Bible study. She probably would still drive had Covid-19 not interrupted her life and that of the world.

Later in the day, Deacon Susie took the birthday girl to Cracker Barrel. The celebration continued as patrons surprised her with gifts and money when they learned it was her 100th birthday! Happy birthday Ms. Geneva. May God continue to bless you!



Celebrating Ash Wednesday in the Age of Technology

For the first time in Mt. Zion's history, the Ash Wednesday service to commemorate the sacred season of Lent, was held virtually. A letter from Rev. Paul included ashes for Mt. Zion members to use during the service. To begin the celebration of the sacred season of Lent, Rev. Dr. Rodney S. Sadler, Jr., Associate Professor of Bible and Director, Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation, at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, was the guest minister.

Dr. Sadler's sermon title was, "God Intended for Good." His powerful message which focused on the scripture passage Genesis 50:20: "Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today." Dr. Sadler shared that the dominate culture had told us a number of myths that were designed to separate us, subjugate us, second rate us, and denigrate us." One of the major myths told to the world was about Jesus and the Bible.

According to Dr. Sadler, there are five myths that have impacted Christians — irrespective of race, creed, or color. The first myth is concerning the Middle East. According to Dr. Sadler, Christians have been told that the events in the Bible took place in the Middle East. In fact, the events took place on the continent of Africa. Second, the myth

of "Blacks in the Bible." We are told, Dr. Sadler shared, that there are a handful of Blacks in the Bible. Actually, he purports, "we use the biblical evidence of the location of [black people in the Bible] to suggest their blackness; but with no evidence at all, assume everyone else in the biblical world is somehow white." Third, the myth that "Blackness" was a "thing" in the Bible. "Truth be told, such concepts as blackness and whiteness were not really pertinent in the Bible at all. In the Bible, people were not given such designations. These colored racial *assumptions really are a modern invention* and are not used. *The concept of race is absent in the biblical text.*" Fourth, the myth of normative Whiteness. The assumption of normative whiteness makes people of color seem to be *afterthoughts to God and outsiders to God's story*. And lastly, the myth of the curse of "blackness." "Indeed, when the Bible actually curses people, you might be surprised what you find. When Miriam speaks against the dark-skinned 'Cushite' wife that Moses married, Miriam is cursed by turning 'leprous,' as white as snow." This tells us two things; 1. Miriam must have been a browner color if her skin was changed to white; and 2. Whiteness was the curse, not blackness.

Dr. Sadler shared information that is rarely heard beyond the walls of academia. The service was enhanced with music from the Voices of Praise band and soprano soloist, Terri Harris.



Mt. Zion Members in the Spotlight

Peter Lawson Jones in New Film on HBO Max



Peter Lawson Jones is an attorney, business consultant, professional actor and master of ceremonies, dramatist and former elected official.

Jones, a member of SAG-AFTRA and Actor's Equity, has appeared in well over twenty films which include White Boy Rick, Alex Cross, The Assassin's Code, Starve. He currently plays the role of a landlord in Judas and the Black Messiah. Jones has also shown his acting chops on network television, namely, NBC's Chicago Fire and ABC's Detroit 1-8-7. He has also performed on stages throughout Northeast Ohio.

To see Jones at work, the highly acclaimed Judas and the Black Messiah is currently streaming. Check it out.

Brian Hall Talks Business in Code M Magazine

If you ever attended 9 a.m. worship at Mt. Zion — pre Covid —, then you might have seen Hall sitting in his usual row on the east side of the sanctuary, next to the window. If that doesn't click, then you might remember that he and his fiancée Jackie birthed Mt. Zion's "Adopt a Garden" project. Every summer, their beautiful flower bed can be seen as you walk into the front doors of Mt. Zion.



Hall was recently honored with the cover and a feature article in Code M magazine. During the week, Hall is the Executive Director of Commission on Economic Inclusion and Senior Vice President of the Greater Cleveland Partnership. Brad Bowling, Code M's writer, sat down with Hall to discuss "where Blacks are today, the current climate of diversity, equity and inclusion in corporate America, and what Blacks need to focus on in the future."

Hall, is a serial entrepreneur and has a wealth of knowledge to share. If you would like to read the article, go to https://issuu.com/codemmagazine/docs/2021_february_issue?

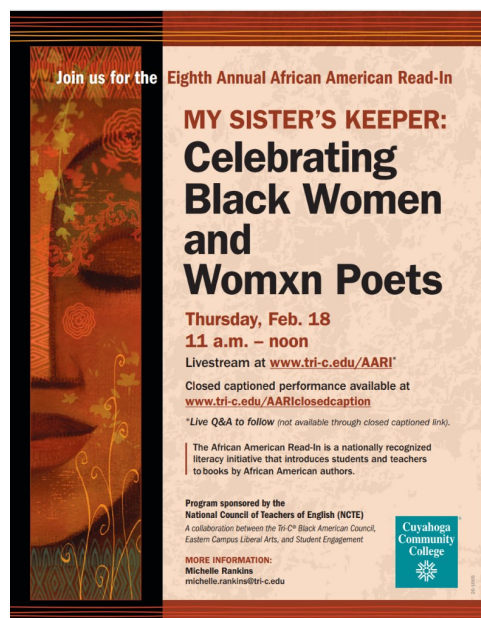
Michelle Rankins Speaks Poetry



I don't know where she finds time, or energy to do all that she does, however, Michelle Rankins is a very busy woman. Rankins is Associate Professor of English at Tri-C Community College. In addition to preparing for classes, grading papers, she is a poet and published author.

Last month, Rankins organized Tri-C's eighth annual African American Read-In. This year, the Read-In celebrated Black women and womxn poets. For your information, Womxn, according to dictionary.com, is an alternative spelling to avoid the suggestion of sexism perceived in the sequences m-a-n and m-e-n, and to be inclusive of trans and nonbinary women. Her colleagues lauded her for her work and dedication to bring poetry written by African Americans and writers of color to students.

Additionally, Rankins participated in a program sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English and the Library of Congress in a discussion about the importance of poetry with Rita Dove. Dove is the U.S. Poet Laureate and recipient of a Pulitzer Prize in poetry. If you are a lover of poetry, you can see this video by copying the link: <https://vimeo.com/516782937/7d941034a7>.



Women's History Month

Celebrating Black Girl Magic



There's really nothing more that can be said about our forever First Lady Michelle Obama - of course there's more that can be said, but not in this short article! This Ivy League graduate has excelled at being a mother, wife, sister, ambassador for America, and role model for girls all over the world. It goes without saying that she also excelled in the field of law when she was a practicing attorney.

Born and raised in a working class family on the southside of Chicago, First Lady Obama learned the importance of education, self-worth, and being a proud African American woman. In her best-selling book, *Becoming*, First Lady Obama gave the world a glimpse of her truth as she opened up about her life and her experience of being first lady for eight long, and sometimes stressful years.

Nevertheless, our forever First Lady can do no wrong and continues to walk in step along side our forever president, Barack Obama.



Kamala Harris made history on November 3, 2020 when she was elected the first female African American and Asian American Vice President of the United States. In an evenly split Senate of Democrats and Republicans, the 49th Vice President of the United States will have the tie breaking vote on legislation that could impact the nation for years to come.

This Howard University alumni might have the word "first" preceding female, African American and Asian American when her name is written or mentioned as Vice President, she however, has shattered many glass ceilings. In 2002, Harris became the first person of color to be elected as district attorney in the city of San Francisco. In 2011 Harris was elected as the first woman, African American and Asian American Attorney General in the state of California's history.

2020 will be a year many will never forget. In remembering, Harris's name will be surely be mentioned *first*.



She hasn't held court with Queen Elizabeth, she doesn't fly across the country to party with Hollywood stars, nor is her picture on a Wheaties cereal box. Stacy Abrams, however, is definitely a king and queen maker like no other.

This former Georgia gubernatorial candidate, who lost her bid by a very narrow margin, took her

energy, legal skills, charisma and brains to propell her nonprofit organization in a quest to encourage African Americans and people of color to believe in the power of their vote.

Fair Fight Action, is the organization she formed to address voter suppression. It was instrumental in getting a record turnout of African American voters in Georgia for the 2020 Presidential election and for the crucial Senate runoff election. With her strategy, the majority of African American Georgia citizens elected Biden to the presidency and two Democrats to the senate. The last time Georgia elected a Democratic presidential candidate was in 1992 when citizens voted to send Bill Clinton to the presidency over George Bush.

Many have asked her if she would consider running for president, she emphatically said, "Yes." In the meantime, her strident and unrelenting focus on voting equity will continue.

"Who is she?" "Where is she from?" "Have you ever heard of her?" "OMG, she is fabulous!" "Wow, that poem was so beautiful!" These were just some of the questions and comments made by people when they first set eyes on the ebony beauty standing in her beautiful braid masterpiece framed with a red headband



and cloaked in a yellow coat. What was better, seeing and hearing this new brilliant poet or seeing President and Mrs. Obama in their royalty? I know, seeing both! Needless to say, the 2021 Presidential Inauguration will go down in history as one of the best because of Amanda Gorman.

The 22 year old National Youth Poet Laureate, sent the proverbial Black Twitter into a frenzy. During and following the reading of her poem, 'The Hill I Climb,' the Los Angeles native and Harvard graduate's twitter account gained over 300,000 followers. The lyrical profound message of her words, punctuated with her hand motions, moved us to think about her poignant words, "When day comes we step out of the shade, aflame and unafraid, the new dawn blooms as we free it for there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it." Yes, Amanda, if only we're truly brave enough to see it.

Celebrating Toni Morrison



Toni Morrison looks and speaks like an old friend who you have known all of your life. There's just something about her that makes you think of family, of home, of you. Maybe it's because she poured out stories that were so genuine and close to the heart of her audience: African Americans.

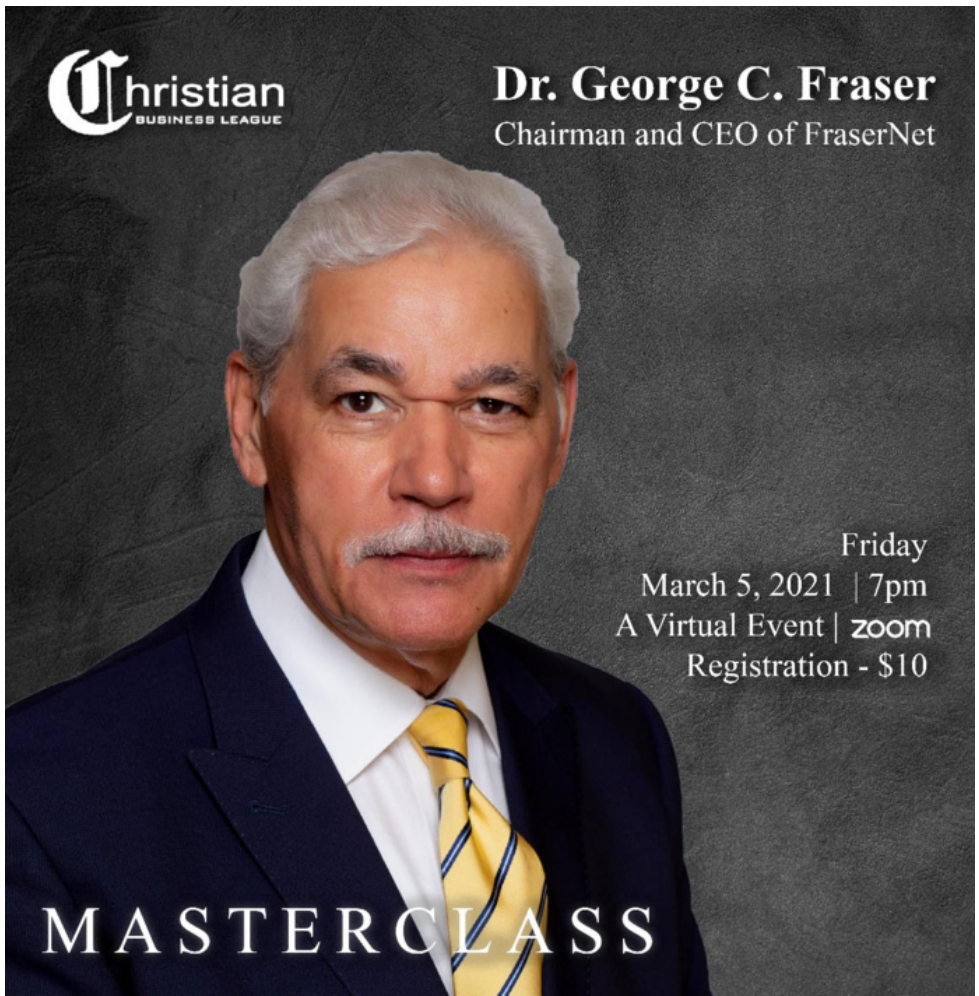
Members of Mt. Zion's Cultural Arts Ministry, led by Michelle Rankins, held "An Evening Celebrating Toni Morrison" on February 19, one day following the late author's 90th birthday. Morrison died on August 5, 2019 after a stunning literary and educational career. Her fans across the globe held different events in honor of her life.

Rev. Paul opened the evening sharing the history of Morrison's days at Howard University where she received her undergraduate degree. His story, coupled with pictures of her days at Howard, gave a glimpse of who she would become. Rankins and Lady Kim read from two of her books, *Home* and *The Song of Solomon*, respectively. A short video of Nikki Giovanni discussing her memories of Morrison and sharing a poem in her memory, was shown. Deacon Robert Lampley shared his memory of reading her books and enjoying the beauty of her writing style. He shared from her award winning book, *Beloved*.

The Cultural Arts Ministry will host a poetry night on April 16 at 7 p.m. via Zoom. All poets and lovers of poetry are welcome. Information will be in upcoming Weekly Updates. Please join us.



“Life is not a matter
of holding
good cards, but
sometimes
playing a poor
hand well.”
George Fraser



Christian
BUSINESS LEAGUE

Dr. George C. Fraser
Chairman and CEO of FraserNet

Friday
March 5, 2021 | 7pm
A Virtual Event | **zoom**
Registration - \$10

MASTERCLASS



GRIEF SHARE®
You are not alone

Mt. Zion Parakaleo Ministry presents:
GriefShare

Grieving the loss of someone close to you?
Find comfort and support with *GriefShare*.

A 13-week seminar/support group
March 4 – June 3, 2021
Thursdays, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. EST
held virtually via Zoom

Cost: \$15, scholarships are available
Materials will be sent via mail
directly to participants.

For more information and to register for the spring
2021 class, please go to:
<https://www.griefshare.org/groups/132016>

Hold the dates:
July 11-18, 2021

The United Church of Christ
General Synod
A Virtual Experience



MARCH

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 DAY OF SABBATH FOR REV. PAUL <i>Rev. Mel McCray</i>	2 7:30am Care Shep. 6pm FA via Zoom	3 7am Prayer Call 10am Bible Study 2pm Staff Meeting 7pm Bible Study	4 5:30pm FA via Zoom 7pm Leadership Team	5 7am Prayer Call 6:30pm Sisters in the Spirit via Zoom 7pm CBL MASTERCLASS GEORGE FRASER via Zoom <i>Crystal Lewis</i>	6 11:00am Deacon Board 1pm Bd of Christian Stew. <i>Marshall York, Jr.</i>
7 7am Worship Prayer Call 11am Facebook Live WORSHIP COMMUNION SUNDAY 12:30pm Children's Church School via Zoom <i>Camille Scott</i>	8	9 7:30am Care Shep. 6pm FA via Zoom <i>Rev. Persida Rivera-Mendez</i> <i>Lisa L. Pointer</i>	10 7am Prayer Call 10am Bible Study 2pm Staff Meeting 7pm Bible Study	11 5:30pm FA via Zoom <i>Joyce Cyrus</i>	12 7am Prayer Call	13 10am Sacred Conversations 11am Mission & Outreach
14 7am Worship Prayer Call 11am Facebook Live WORSHIP 12:30pm Children's Church School via Zoom	15 <i>Jocelyn Booker</i> <i>Charles Booth</i>	16 7:30am Care Shep. 6pm FA via Zoom	17 7am Prayer Call 10am Bible Study 2pm Staff Meeting 7pm Bible Study	18 5:30pm FA via Zoom	19 7am Prayer Call <i>Roberta Smith</i>	20 10am New Membr. Orient. <i>Traci Easley Williams</i>
21 7am Worship Prayer Call 11am Facebook Live WORSHIP 12:30pm Children's Church School via Zoom	22	23 7:30am Care Shep. 6pm FA via Zoom <i>Sharon Holt</i>	24 7am Prayer Call 10am Bible Study 2pm Staff Meeting 7pm Bible Study <i>Herman Durr</i>	25 5:30pm FA via Zoom	26 7am Prayer Call 7pm Covenant Couples <i>Wanda Birch</i> <i>Rose Hardy</i>	27 2:00pm Trustee Board
28 7am Worship Prayer Call 11am Facebook Live PALM SUNDAY 12:30pm Children's Church School via Zoom <i>Cleo Warren</i>	29	30 <i>Tara Corethers-Broadnax</i>	31 7am Prayer Call 10am Bible Study 2pm Staff Meeting 7pm Bible Study			

The Hill We Climb
The Presidential Inaugural Poem
Amanda Gorman, National Youth Poet Laureate

When day comes we ask ourselves,
where can we find light in this never-
ending shade?

The loss we carry,
a sea we must wade
We've braved the belly of the beast

We've learned that quiet isn't always
peace

And the norms and notions
of what just is

Isn't always just-ice
And yet the dawn is ours
before we knew it

Somehow we do it
Somehow we've weathered and
witnessed
a nation that isn't broken
but simply unfinished

We the successors of a country and
a time

Where a skinny Black girl
descended from slaves and raised
by a single mother

can dream of becoming president
only to find herself reciting for one
And yes we are far from polished
far from pristine

but that doesn't mean we are
striving to form a union that is
perfect

We are striving to forge a union with
purpose

To compose a country committed to
all cultures, colors, characters and
conditions of man

And so we lift our gazes not to what
stands between us

but what stands before us
We close the divide because we
know, to put our future first,
we must first put our differences
aside

We lay down our arms
so we can reach out our arms
to one another

We seek harm to none and harmony
for all

Let the globe, if nothing else, say
this is true:

That even as we grieved, we grew

That even as we hurt, we hoped

That even as we tired, we tried

That we'll forever be tied together,
victorious

Not because we will never again know
defeat

but because we will never again sow
division

Scripture tells us to envision

that everyone shall sit under their own
vine and fig tree

And no one shall make them afraid

If we're to live up to our own time

Then victory won't lie in the blade

But in all the bridges we've made

That is the promise to glade

The hill we climb

If only we dare

It's because being American is more

than a pride we inherit,

it's the past we step into

and how we repair it

We've seen a force that would shatter
our nation rather than share it

Would we destroy our country if it

meant delaying democracy

And this effort very nearly succeeded

But while democracy can be

periodically delayed

it can never be permanently defeated

In this truth

in this faith we trust

For while we have our eyes on the
future

history has its eyes on us

This is the era of just redemption

We feared at its inception

We did not feel prepared to be the
heirs

of such a terrifying hour

but within it we found the power

to author a new chapter

To offer hope and laughter to ourselves

So while once we asked,

how could we possibly prevail over

catastrophe?

Now we assert

How could catastrophe possibly prevail
over us?

We will not march back to what was
but move to what shall be

A country that is bruised but whole,
benevolent but bold,

fierce and free

We will not be turned around
or interrupted by intimidation
because we know our inaction and
inertia

will be the inheritance of the next
generation

Our blunders become their burdens

But one thing is certain:

If we merge mercy with might,

and might with right,

then love becomes our legacy

and change our children's birthright

So let us leave behind a country

better than the one we were left with

Every breath from my bronze-
pounded chest,

we will raise this wounded world into
a wondrous one

We will rise from the gold-limbed hills
of the west,

we will rise from the windswept
northeast

where our forefathers first realized
revolution

We will rise from the lake-rimmed
cities of the midwestern states,

we will rise from the sunbaked south

We will rebuild, reconcile and recover

and every known nook of our nation
and

every corner called our country,

our people diverse and beautiful will
emerge,

battered and beautiful

When day comes we step out of the
shade,

aflame and unafraid

The new dawn blooms as we free it

For there is always light,

if only we're brave enough to see it

If only we're brave enough to be it.