

# Black History Poem For Church

## A PLACE IN THE COUNTRY

BY TOI DERRICOTTE

We like the houses here.  
We circle the lake turning  
into dark cleavages, dense-packed gleamings.  
We could live here, we say.  
We're smiling, but thinking  
of the houses at the last resort:  
The real estate agent looked surprised  
when she saw Bruce's face; then flipped  
quickly through the glossy pictures—  
I'm sure you won't like this one;  
I can tell it's not your kind.  
Our house in Essex Fells  
took a year to sell and sold  
to a black family. A friend explained,  
once a house is owned  
by black people, they're the only ones  
they'll show it to. Do we want to live  
some place with a view  
overlooking the politics?  
When we pass  
an exit named "Negro Mountain,"  
Bruce smiles and jerks the wheel  
as if we almost missed our turn.  
Why must everything we want  
come by stealth? Why is every road  
in this bright country furnished  
with its history of hatred? Yet  
we keep smiling, driven  
by a desire beyond the logic  
of if we can afford it,  
and whether we would love  
or hate it if we did buy.

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Black history poem for church serves as a powerful medium to reflect on the rich heritage, struggles, and triumphs of the African American community. In the sacred space of a church, these poems not only celebrate the artistic expression of Black culture but also serve as a testament to faith, resilience, and the fight for justice and equality. Through the lens of

spirituality and community, Black history poems resonate with congregational themes of hope, love, and perseverance. This article explores the significance of Black history poems within church settings, the historical context behind them, notable poets and their works, and ways to incorporate these pieces into church services.

## **The Significance of Black History Poems in Church**

Black history poems in church serve multiple purposes:

1. **Cultural Affirmation:** They acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of African Americans throughout history.
2. **Spiritual Reflection:** Many poems address themes of faith, hope, and redemption, aligning perfectly with the messages often shared in church sermons.
3. **Community Building:** Reciting and sharing these poems fosters a sense of unity and collective identity among congregants.
4. **Education:** They provide an opportunity to educate others about the struggles and achievements of African Americans, promoting awareness and understanding.
5. **Emotional Healing:** For many, these poems are a source of comfort and healing, addressing pain and triumph in a way that resonates deeply.

## **The Historical Context of Black Poetry in Worship**

### **Roots in African Tradition**

The tradition of poetry in African American culture can be traced back to African oral traditions, where storytelling was an important aspect of community life. This oral history not only preserved cultural identity but also served as a means of resistance against oppression.

1. **Spirituals:** These songs, developed by enslaved Africans, often contained coded messages about freedom and hope. They were an essential part of religious life and laid the groundwork for later poetic expressions.
2. **Call and Response:** This interactive style, prevalent in African traditions, found its way into Black church services, allowing for communal engagement and emotional expression.

# The Impact of the Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s saw a resurgence in the use of poetry as a form of protest and spiritual upliftment. Poets like Maya Angelou and Langston Hughes used their work to articulate the struggles for civil rights, often infusing their poetry with religious imagery and themes.

- Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise": A powerful declaration of resilience and strength, this poem is often recited in church settings to inspire hope.
- Langston Hughes' "Let America Be America Again": This poem's call for equality and justice resonates with many congregations focused on social justice.

## Notable Black Poets and Their Works

Several poets stand out for their contributions to both literature and the spiritual life of the African American community. Their works are often featured in church services, inspiring congregations to reflect on their history and faith.

### Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou's work transcends traditional boundaries, addressing themes of identity, resilience, and the quest for justice. Her poems are often included in church services for their powerful messages of hope.

- "Still I Rise": An anthem of empowerment, this poem encourages individuals to rise above adversity.
- "Phenomenal Woman": Celebrating womanhood, this poem serves as a reminder of the strength found in faith and self-acceptance.

### Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes, a leading figure of the Harlem Renaissance, infused his poetry with jazz rhythms and spiritual themes.

- "The Negro Speaks of Rivers": This poem connects the African American experience with the deep cultural roots in history and spirituality.
- "Mother to Son": A metaphor-filled poem that conveys the importance of perseverance and determination in the face of hardships.

## Gwendolyn Brooks

As the first African American to win the Pulitzer Prize, Gwendolyn Brooks's poetry often reflects the struggles of urban Black life while maintaining a connection to spirituality.

- "We Real Cool": This poem reflects on youth and choices, providing a platform for discussions in church about guidance and faith.
- "The Bean Eaters": A subtle reflection on aging and the simplicity of life, it emphasizes the value of community and connection.

## Incorporating Black History Poems into Church Services

Integrating Black history poems into church services can enhance the worship experience and foster a deeper understanding of community and faith.

### Ways to Include Poetry

1. Poetry Readings: Designate a time during the service for selected readings of Black history poems.
2. Sermon Illustrations: Incorporate lines from poems into sermon messages to reinforce key themes.
3. Themed Services: Organize services that focus on Black history, inviting guest speakers or poets to share their work.
4. Community Engagement: Host poetry nights or workshops where congregants can write and share their own poetry reflecting on their heritage and faith.
5. Music Integration: Pair poems with music, allowing for a multi-sensory worship experience that enhances the emotional impact.

## Creating a Black History Poem for Church

Writing a Black history poem for church can be a meaningful way to express faith, culture, and history. Here are steps to guide the creation of such a poem:

1. Choose a Theme: Consider themes relevant to both Black history and faith, such as resilience, hope, community, or justice.
2. Reflect on Personal Experiences: Draw from personal or communal experiences to create a deeper connection with the audience.
3. Incorporate Spiritual Elements: Use biblical references or spiritual metaphors to weave faith into the poem.
4. Use Vivid Imagery: Employ strong imagery to evoke emotions and create a

lasting impact.

5. Revise and Edit: Share the poem with trusted members of the community for feedback, refining it to resonate with your audience.

## **Conclusion**

Black history poem for church serves as a bridge between culture and spirituality, offering a powerful way to honor the past while nurturing hope for the future. Through the works of celebrated poets and the integration of poetry into church services, congregations can foster a deeper understanding of the African American experience. By embracing this rich tradition, churches can cultivate a sense of community, promote healing, and inspire congregants to reflect on their faith and history. As we continue to celebrate and uplift Black voices through poetry, we enrich our collective spiritual journey and foster a deeper connection to our shared humanity.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What themes are commonly explored in black history poems for church settings?**

Common themes include resilience, faith, justice, community, and the celebration of cultural heritage.

### **How can black history poems be integrated into church services?**

They can be used during sermons, recited by congregants, included in bulletins, or featured in special events like Black History Month celebrations.

### **Are there notable black poets whose works are suitable for church readings?**

Yes, poets like Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes, and Gwendolyn Brooks have written pieces that resonate with themes of faith and perseverance.

### **What is the significance of using poetry in church to discuss black history?**

Poetry can convey deep emotions and personal stories, fostering a reflective and inclusive atmosphere for discussing historical and contemporary issues.

## How can church leaders encourage the writing of original black history poems among congregants?

Leaders can host workshops, provide prompts related to faith and history, and create opportunities for sharing and performing the poems.

## What role does music play in black history poetry for church?

Music often complements poetry by enhancing emotional expression and creating a powerful worship experience that honors black history.

## Can black history poems for church also address contemporary issues?

Absolutely, many poems draw parallels between historical struggles and current social justice movements, fostering dialogue and action within the church community.

## What impact can black history poetry have on church congregations?

It can promote understanding, healing, and unity, encouraging congregants to reflect on their shared history and commitment to justice and equality.

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