

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Concert**  
**Voting with Purpose and Without Fear**  
**ABCL's Black History Portrait Banners Concert**



Map taken from [Down to the Crossroads: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Meredith March Against Fear](#) by Aram Goudsouzian

Narration by Sean D. Osborne  
Music by Brother Dennis and Friends

Sunday, January 19, 2025  
2 PM

**The Black History Project Of Lexington**  
At

Follen Church, 755 Massachusetts Ave, Lexington, MA 02420





**Fannie Lou Hamer singing to a group of people during the "March Against Fear" through Mississippi, begun by James Meredith.**

Credit: [Jim Pepler Southern Courier photograph collection](#)



**The June 26, 1966, March Against Fear rally at the Mississippi state capitol, with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speaking and James Meredith sitting before the podium (right).**

Credit: Bob Fitch Photography Archive [M1994\_Meredith\_092], Stanford University Libraries. Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

Association of Black Citizens of Lexington  
presents

## ***Voting with Purpose and Without Fear***

by Sean D. Osborne

Jonathan Suber..... ABCL President  
Aniece Ragland Kerr.....ABCL Historical and Cultural Events Committee Chair  
Sean D. Osborne.....ABCL Historian

### ***Reading***

Nina Imani Lewis..... **Vote** by Nikki Giovanni

### ***Recitation of Give Us the Ballot***

Aniece Kerr & Jonathan Hsu.....MLK at the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom in DC on 17 May 1957

### ***Supporting Voting Rights in Jackson, Mississippi from 1965 to 1968***

LaVergne Randolph, Jr. ....son of teacher and counselor of Jackson School District

### ***Closing of I've Been to the Mountaintop***

Louis Colon.....Dr. King at the Bishop Charles Mason Temple in Memphis, TN on 3 April 1968

### ***Brother Dennis and Friends***

George-Marie Jasmin.....Vocals  
Ida Kamrara.....Vocals  
Laura Lapointe.....Vocals  
Edward Mallory.....Vocals  
Geoff C. O'Hara.....Vocals  
Dennis L. Slaughter, EdM, DLP.....Choir Director, Piano, Vocals

*Brother Dennis is founding director of the Boston Community Gospel Choir and since 1995 has been artistic director of the Boston Pops Orchestra Gospel Choir. He has served as Minister of Music in Mississippi, Colorado, and Massachusetts. He has filled leadership posts in Baptist, African Methodist Episcopal, and United Methodist churches over his 40 years of service.*

Tiffany Payne .....House Manager  
Stephanie Hsu.....Marketing Manager  
Sean D. Osborne.....Production Manager

### ***Youth Ushers***

Paige Freeman

Kristopher Johnson

Sean Hsu

## Black Lexingtonians of Follen Community Church

Mr. Richard Crawford was a WWI veteran who came to Lexington in the early 1960s and became instantly involved with the Lexington Civil Rights Committee which led to his becoming an active member of the Coalition of Racial Equality. Often, he was the bearer of a large sign for the Coalition in a parade or on the Green.



Mr. Crawford and his family were recruited to Follen Community Church by the Reverend Polly Guild. He became Follen's chief usher and every week during the "Joys, Sorrows and Concerns" section of the service would speak, with passion and directness about racial injustice and Black victories in the Greater Boston area. By the time of his death in 2003, he was one of the longest attending parishioners.

He introduced the Town to the poem by Edwin Markham, "We Drew A Circle..."

"He drew a circle that shut me out-  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But love and I had the wit to win:  
We drew a circle and took him In!"  
— Edwin Markham

As part of the Oral and Visual History Project of Lexingtonians of African Descent, ABCL is seeking stories of Black Lexingtonians who have been or are members of Follen Community Church since MLK spoke at Lexington High School on February 11, 1963.

If you have pictures or stories of these or other church members, please contact Sean at [admin@abclex.org](mailto:admin@abclex.org).

- Richard Crawford
- Dorothy Crawford
- Elinor V. Crawford
- Bernard Harleston
- Marie Harleston
- Kyle Johnson

## **"Give Us the Ballot," Address Delivered on 17 May 1957 at the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom in Washington, D.C.**

Hoping to prod the federal government to fulfill the promise of the three-year-old Brown v. Board of Education decision, national civil rights leaders called for a rally on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Bayard Rustin, Ella Baker, and Stanley Levison organized the Prayer Pilgrimage, which brought together cochairmen A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, and King, along with a host of prominent civil rights supporters including Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Fred Shuttlesworth, gospel singer Mahalia Jackson, and entertainer Harry Belafonte. Thomas Kilgore of Friendship Baptist Church in New York served as national director of the Pilgrimage. Some twenty thousand people listened to three hours of speeches, music, and testimony from southern activists.

Speaking last, King exhorts the president and members of Congress to ensure voting rights for African Americans and indicts both political parties for betraying the cause of justice: "The Democrats have betrayed it by capitulating to the prejudices and undemocratic practices of the southern Dixiecrats. The Republicans have betrayed it by capitulating to the blatant hypocrisy of right wing, reactionary northerners. These men so often have a high blood pressure of words and an anemia of deeds."

Although turnout for the Pilgrimage did not reach the organizers' goal of fifty thousand, the event was well noted in the press, and King's address in particular received much positive attention. Harold Sims, sent by the U.S. National Student Association to cover the Pilgrimage, described the day: "The air was filled with shouts of 'amen' and 'hallelujah' as the speakers sounded their voices in defense of civil rights. Handkerchiefs flew above the heads of the crowd as it listened to the fiery orators.... They were jubilant sounds... sounds of disillusioned souls discovering their country."

Source: <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/give-us-ballot-address-delivered-prayer-pilgrimage-freedom>

## **Address at Lexington High School on February 11, 1963**

Prior to working with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee to organize the Birmingham Peace marches April-May 1963, a set of protests and demonstrations to fight segregation in Birmingham, Alabama, Dr. King visited Lexington.

Prior to writing the "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" on April 16, 1963, Dr. King visited Lexington.

Prior to delivering the *I Have a Dream* speech on August 28, 1963, as part of the March on Washington, Dr. King visited Lexington.

As part of the Oral and Visual History Project of Lexingtonians of African Descent, ABCL is seeking stories of the organizers and attendees of Dr. King's speech at Lexington High School on February 11, 1963.

If you have pictures, memorabilia or stories of the planning and production of Dr. King's visit to Lexington, please contact Sean at [admin@abclex.org](mailto:admin@abclex.org).

# Lift every voice and sing

BY JAMES WELDON JOHNSON

*A group of young men in Jacksonville, Florida, arranged to celebrate Lincoln's birthday in 1900. My brother, J. Rosamond Johnson, and I decided to write a song to be sung at the exercises. I wrote the words and he wrote the music. Our New York publisher, Edward B. Marks, made mimeographed copies for us, and the song was taught to and sung by a chorus of five hundred colored school children.*

*Shortly afterwards my brother and I moved away from Jacksonville to New York, and the song passed out of our minds. But the school children of Jacksonville kept singing it; they went off to other schools and sang it; they became teachers and taught it to other children. Within twenty years it was being sung over the South and in some other parts of the country. Today the song, popularly known as the Negro National Hymn, is quite generally used.*

Lift every voice and sing  
Till earth and heaven ring,  
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;  
Let our rejoicing rise  
High as the listening skies,  
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.  
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,  
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us.  
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,  
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,  
Bitter the chastening rod,  
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;  
Yet with a steady beat,  
Have not our weary feet  
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?  
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered,  
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,  
Out from the gloomy past,  
Till now we stand at last  
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,  
God of our silent tears,  
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;  
Thou who hast 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 our God,  
True to our native land.

Source: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46549/lift-every-voice-and-sing>

Dr. Edgar E. Smith was a Mississippi native who moved to Massachusetts for a post doc at Harvard Medical School and then stayed to serve on the faculty of Boston University School of Medicine. While living in Lexington. Dr. Smith served as chair of the Lexington Civil Rights Committee. Under his leadership, the committee supported three efforts in Mississippi: Larry Farmer and the Mississippi Action for Community Education (MACE), Owen Brooks and the Delta Ministry, and Fannie Lou Hamer's work for greater racial equality through economic and political action.

Below is a transcript of a handwritten letter that Dr. Smith read during an interview for *Speak Now: Memories of the Civil Rights Era*.

*January 24, 1968*

*From Mrs. F. L. Hamer  
626 East Lafayette Street  
Ruleville, Mississippi, 38771*

*To Dr. and Mrs. Edgar E. Smith  
81 Hill Street  
Lexington, Massachusetts, 02173*

*Dear Mrs. Smith,*

*This is to assure you your letters and checks also, also all the boxes. Mrs. Smith, the money was so much help. I've been sick again and couldn't have gone to the—to see—a doctor if you all hadn't helped me. I just wish I could put in writing how I feel about, about what you are doing for us. It make my heart feel so good when I see somebody fixed up real nice and you all, with Hall's and the Morrison's, don't have no dreams of how much you are doing. Thank God for all of you who care. Please send me the Jick's address so I can write them.*

*You know, Mrs. Smith, I've lasted a long time behind the beatings I get in jail, but it is catching up with me, fast. My whole body sometime is sore. But I'm a have to work until my days are done.*

*Please send thanks to the Hall's and Morrison's. We shall never forget you all. Oh by the way, I mailed Mr. Davis a lot of names and addresses yesterday. Thank you all for everything.*

*Yours for God and justice for all men.*

*Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer*

Source: <https://da.mdah.ms.gov/series/conversations/speaknow/dr-edgar-e-smith/detail/823032>

If you have pictures, memorabilia or stories of the work of the Lexington Civil Rights Committee in Mississippi and locally with housing discrimination and school desegregation, please contact Sean at [admin@abclex.org](mailto:admin@abclex.org).

### Ideas on How to Build Upon the Legacy of the Meredith March Against Fear

- Take action to improve local voter access with the NAACP Mystic Valley Area Branch, <https://www.mva-naacp.org/>
- Support NAACP Legal Defense Fund's LDF's Black Voters on the Rise project, <https://voting.naacpldf.org/>
- Join the Black Voters Matter movement, <https://blackvotersmatterfund.org/>
- Advocate for the Restoration of Voting Rights of Felons, <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/felon-voting-rights>

### Follen Responds to Racism

ABCL is grateful to Margaret Micholet and the Follen Responds to Racism Committee for supporting today's concert.

### ABCL Scholarship Program

Proceeds from ABCL's Black History Portrait Banners Concert fund ABCL's scholarship program. For more information on the college scholarships send an email to [admin@abclex.org](mailto:admin@abclex.org).

### Volunteers

We are grateful to ABCL's wonderful volunteers for their time, energy, and commitment. Please thank a volunteer today!

### Black History Project of Lexington Donors

ABCL is extremely grateful for the assistance of the Turner 15 Challenge Donors – individuals and organizations who made significant contributions to the Black History Project of Lexington. Their financial contributions and those of other donors fund ABCL's Black History Portrait Banners, Oral and Visual History Project of Lexingtonians of African Descent, and ABCL's Black Heritage Trail of 18th Century Lexington.

### Upcoming ABCL Events

- ❖ Thursday, April 3, 2025 – **Black Patriots of Lexington Series Premier & Banner Unveiling Ceremony** at First Parish of Lexington (supported by Community Endowment of Lexington grant)
- ❖ Thursday, May 1, 2025 – **4<sup>th</sup> Annual Black History Project of Lexington Banner Unveiling Ceremony** at First Parish of Lexington
- ❖ Saturday, July 5, 2025 – **5<sup>th</sup> Annual Quock Walker Day Hike for Freedom** at Bowman Elementary School and **5<sup>th</sup> Annual Quock Walker Day Community Celebration** at Visitors Center Lawn

