

“Emancipation”

Paul Laurence Dunbar

Fling out your banners, your honors be bringing,
Raise to the ether your paeans of praise.
Strike every chord and let music be ringing!
Celebrate freely this day of all days.

Few are the years since that notable blessing,
Raised you from slaves to the powers of men.
Each year has seen you my brothers progressing,
Never to sink to that level again.

Perched on your shoulders sits Liberty smiling,
Perched where the eyes of the nations can see.
Keep from her pinions all contact defiling;
Show by your deeds what you're destined to be.

Press boldly forward nor waver, nor falter.
Blood has been freely poured out in your cause,
Lives sacrificed upon Liberty's alter.
Press to the front, it were craven to pause.

Look to the heights that are worth your attaining
Keep your feet firm in the path to the goal.
Toward noble deeds every effort be straining.
Worthy ambition is food for the soul!

Up! Men and brothers, be noble, be earnest!
Ripe is the time and success is assured;
Know that your fate was the hardest and sternest
When through those lash-ringing days you endured.

Never again shall the manacles gall you
Never again shall the whip stroke defame!
Nobles and Freemen, your destinies call you
Onward to honor, to glory and fame.