

2010 Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference
I, TOO, SING AMERICA! - A LITANY OF PROCLAMATION

A Call for Participation in the 2010 Census

- Leader: Lift every voice and sing, till earth and heaven ring! We lift our voices as sun kissed children of God who have forged through wildernesses, weathered the storms of exclusion and injustice based on racism, and pushed through that injustice in the spirit of determination fed to us by our ancestors.
- People: *We have not been silent nor have we stood still. We have made it to this day not because of America but in spite of America pushing us back. We have claimed our voices. We have raised our voices. And we have trod over stony paths to get to this day.*
- Leader: Let us never forget that we are a strong people, a people who made it through the Middle Passage, through slavery and reconstruction, through Jim Crow and segregation. We have stood our ground and have demanded justice. We have said without hesitation that we, too, sing America, that we, too, are America!
- People: *On the backs of our ancestors stand the remembrances of blood and sweat shed, as we built this nation's infrastructure, as we endured inhumanity in the military but fought and served nonetheless. We lift up the names of pioneers who forged the paths for us, people like Benjamin Banneker, who helped plan our nation's capital city, and the Tuskegee Airmen who protected white pilots and shot down enemy planes themselves. We lift up the names of ancestors who fought and sacrificed and said, "We, too, sing America!"*
- Leader: Though we have had hard experiences with the American government, though our people have often been used and taken advantage of by this American government, we refuse to let the government win. We will be counted because we DO count. We will be counted because we DESERVE all that this country has to offer. We will be counted because too many died so that we WOULD be counted.
- People: *Every year, more than \$300 billion in federal funds are awarded to states and communities based on census data. If we refuse to be counted, we do a disservice to our ancestors who died so that we would be counted.*
- People: Joshua told the people as they were about to cross the Jordan to consecrate themselves because "tomorrow, the Lord will do amazing things among you."
- People: *In the name of our history and the legacy left to us by named and unnamed ancestors, we consecrate ourselves and commit to being counted. We consecrate ourselves, we give our distrust of the government to the God of our weary years and silent tears, the God who has brought us thus far on the way. We can and we will be counted.*
- Leader: Only we can make our voices heard. Our ancestors knew that. Nobody went to them to teach them to read; they grabbed onto a vision of getting what was due them and made sure they found a way to learn to read. In the same way, we commit this day to grabbing onto the vision of equitable distribution of funds in our communities, so that our schools, our transportation services, our Head Start programs, our emergency shelters, food banks that serve us can continue to not only exist but to thrive.
- People: *Nobody can keep us from seeking righteousness and justice. God commands us to "stand up and plead our case before the mountains." We will fill out the census, we will encourage our community to fill out the census, because we intend to follow God's command. We will plead based on facts. We will plead, no, we will present and then we will demand, services due to us based on what our communities need. We, too, sing America!!*
- Leader: It takes just 10 minutes to fill out a questionnaire that will have major impact on us. Surely ...we have come this far not to give up but we have come this far to go further. In the name of ancestor warriors, like Thur good Marshall and Ruby Bridges, and Robert C. Maynard, and Max Robinson and Langston Hughes and Barbara Jordan and Shirley Chisholm and Mary McLeod Bethune and so many others ... we will not drop the torch. We will not let the flame go out.
- All: *In the name of our God, who demands justice, in the name of our God, who demands righteousness, in the name of our God, who has brought us thus far on the way, we consecrate ourselves and commit to filling out the 2010 census and leading our communities and churches to fill out the form as well. We, too, sing America!!*