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The Advocate

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BLUE RIBBON FICTION IS FOUND EVERY WEEK IN
THE FEATURE SECTION

ROLAND HAYES, MYSTIC

"The Urge" Directs
His Destiny . . .

Joan of Arc Heard "Voices"; Greatest Black Singer Hears "The Voice"

Roland Hayes, America's Greatest Singer, in an Exclusive Interview, Gives the Secret Formula of His Success. He Reveals Himself for the First Time as a Mystic—a Believer in an Inward "Urge" which Carries Him Successfully Over Every Obstacle as Long as He Listens to its Voice.

Latest Photo of
Roland Hayes



Roland Hayes

"There is something within me, an Urge—call it God. I always cater to it."

By RUBY BERKLEY GOODWIN

As I approached the heavy oaken door, the soft, silver tones of the clear, incomparable tenor voice floated out of the open transom into the hall. A maid paused to listen. I stood without, waiting for the singer to finish a beautiful aria.

All too soon, the last sustained tone died away. Only then did I venture to make known my presence without.

"Come in," a voice called out. This voice could belong only to one person—Roland Hayes, America's most successful and highest paid concert artist.

Upon coming into the presence of this great singer, I was immediately made conscious of the sincerity, integrity, and earnestness of the man. There is no artificiality about him. The hand clasp was hearty. The eyes sent out their welcome without a hint of boredom in their depths.

The two phones rang intermittently. Messengers knocked at the door of the suite incessantly. People, influential people, famous people, were denied audience. They were turned away kindly, yet firmly.

Then, and only then did I realize just how gracious Roland Hayes was, to accord me an hour of his busy day, to give this message to his people.

"What can I say to them?" He paused in reflection. Then with a hint of annoyance he continued: "There has been, so much said. I would rather live my message than talk about it."

"You are living it," I told him. "That is why we are interested in what you have to say. Many people talk who could never attain to greatness. You have demonstrated your purpose by your achievements. Surely you can tell us, this race much in need of teaching, something that will cause us to look up more steadfastly."

"There is not much that I can say, or how shall I say what I wish my people to know?"

We sat for awhile in silence. "I cannot talk; I can only sing." This statement came simply, humbly, with no trace of egotism. It was given apologetically.

"Do my songs mean anything to you?" he asked quickly.

"They do," I assured him. "It is not your voice alone, perfected and matchless though it be. There is something deeper that is felt when you sing. And, at the end of the concert I am always conscious of having just had a spiritual benediction breathed upon me."

As I talked, the singer sat back in the depths of a massive gold and vermilion club chair. His eyes were closed as though in meditation. His hands lay idly upon the arms of the chair.

As I finished speaking it seemed as though the man was surcharged with power. The body became erect. The hands, those expressive hands with long tapering fingers; those hands that still, by their corded veins show years of strenuous labor, clamped the arms of the chair. The piercing eyes looked at me intently. There is something mysterious about the eyes of Roland Hayes. They are powerful, hypnotic eyes, and you feel that the man is looking, not at you, but into your very soul.

"Then you understand my message," he declared. "You are able to feel the 'force' that is driving me

on. There is something within me, 'An Urge' or call it God, higher than myself, bigger than myself, yet within myself that sustains me. Inasmuch as I follow its guidance, I am sustained. I always listen to it. I adhere closely to the path of duty it has set before me. I allow no one to interfere with the plans it outlines for me, and I am successful in the measure that I efface myself and recognize it."

Joan of Arc said she heard many voices which aided her in her rise from a shepherd girl to a national leader. But here was Roland Hayes talking about THE VOICE.

"When were you conscious of this leading?" I asked.

"I felt the 'Urge' first when I was fifteen years old. Only now, I see

much more clearly than I did at that time. Yet, as I look back, I know that each happening, no matter how unpleasant it was, has helped me on to my goal. My way, sometimes through smooth paths, many times over rough places, has always led in the right direction for me.

"This carries me on, and nothing can stop me as long as I follow its leading."

"We as a race must learn to give. Give for the joy of giving, not with the expectation of receiving again. You are wondering what we have to give. Our heritage. Spirituality is our heritage. Expression—colorful tone is our heritage. We know that we have these gifts, yet we are constantly offering to the world something not of ourselves, and we wonder why it is rejected."

"We lack, above all things, the power of conviction. Then, after the conviction comes, we lack the will to stand by it. We must raise a level and stand by it until we can attain to it."

"My mission is to give. My message is in my songs. What is the unfoldment of my message comes to an individual, days, months, years after I am gone. I have done my work. There is no joy in receiving. The real joy comes in seeing the need and helping."

"If only my people would learn to appreciate their own! We appreciate what some other race teaches us. We think nothing we have is good;

therefore we are ashamed to offer ourselves to the world. Take myself, for instance, my people would not come to hear me sing, if I had not first been recognized by the other races."

There was no bitterness in this remark, rather there was profound pity. One has but to know the history of Hayes's earlier struggles to know how truly he spoke. For years Hayes gave recitals at colored churches. There was no marked enthusiasm over him. He was liked, but he was not acclaimed by them. He was just another good colored singer. However, when he was recognized by the Europeans, and by white America, we looked upon him differently. He was not only a singer. He was an artist. Of course he was, and is today, for he stands as the most popular, and the most significant singer in the concert world. But we, his own people had to be told this by another people.

"And yet," Hayes continues, "about one per cent of my audience is colored. You cannot know my joy when I look out over the thousands of faces and see one black face. They cannot say that the concerts are too expensive, for they spend money foolishly for things that profit nothing."

These remarks from the singer brought to my mind a conversation I had some time previously with a youngster. He had sold his car to

get money enough to go to a night club.

"Spending money foolishly for things that profit nothing." How truly the singer spoke!

"You understand me, it is not that I want their money. I want them, my people, to come and hear me because I am their own."

Common sense told me that Hayes spoke the truth. He has no need to try to influence people to go to his concerts for the box office admission. Roland Hayes is always sure of a full house.

"I wish—I wish above all things that we would study more and understand what it our own. We must learn to know values. Today the colored people are not indispensable. Today we do not occupy the places of esteem we once held. Indeed, we are no longer needed for domestic positions. It is deplorable. I do not know what will become of my race. We are being pushed back, shunted aside. Even the menial tasks we once looked upon as ours, are being taken away from us."

"What would you suggest?" I asked. "Would you say that we are lacking in leaders, or shall our leaders become more awakened?"

"If you mean by leaders, one or two exceptional people the race looks up to—No! What we need is a universal awakening of the colored people. Out of this awakening, outstanding individuals will arise. Our race will never be recognized because one or two people have succeeded. Each individual must catch the vision, and all must struggle to rise together. Not one awakened soul, but every colored man must awake."

"If one or two colored men achieve

an honor, it does the race but little good. The masses are still down, while the one who has achieved greatness is looked upon as exceptional. He is not even grouped with the race, for the world claims him. The masses are no better off. And because we do not try to rise, we suffer. There is nothing in the world with enough power to stop us, once we determine to succeed. The trouble is with ourselves. We give up too quickly. We are too easily discouraged. We suffer by our own hand, then censure the world for our reproach.

"As a race we must learn the fundamentals of life. Our training has been wrong. Our vision has been distorted. We have been ashamed of ourselves and our contributions."

"Some people say that the singing of the spirituals helps to keep before the colored people an inferiority complex. Do you agree with them?"

"Not No!" the singer answered my question. "They are mistaken. The spirituals are ours. God gave them to us. Before we sing them however, we should first appreciate them, understand them, then try to interpret them so that the world will love our offering."

"We must set our goal. We must stand there and work until our aim is accomplished. I always think first of my people. Nothing can stop us if we purpose in our hearts to go forward."

I passed from the presence of this "Voice" who had made the world listen, not by ostentation, or blare of trumpets, but by a steadfast belief in his own convictions, and a willingness to work out his purpose in the face of every opposition.

SCULPTURES YOU OUGHT TO KNOW ABOUT

From the book, "Emancipation and the Freed in America's Sculpture," by Freeman Henry Morris Murray.

Of other more or less notable works produced before the Civil War, only one needs to be mentioned on this occasion. That one is the colossal statue of "Freedom" on the dome of the Capitol at Washington. The sculptor called it "Armed Liberty," but the official name adopted was, "Freedom." However, it is popularly known as "Liberty," and by that name I shall generally refer to it.

This statue was modeled by Thomas Crawford several years before the War but was not cast in bronze until about 1861, and it was in 1863, after the Emancipation Proclamation had gone into effect, that it was finally raised into its place.

It is recorded that the head-covering of Crawford's first model of this statue was the familiar "Liberty cap" which was adopted by the French Revolutionists. This form of cap is said to have been derived from the Roman pileus, the Phrygian cap worn by manumitted slaves.

Jefferson Davis, who was then Secretary of War, under whose department the dome was being constructed, objected to the "Liberty cap," holding that it was a symbol unsuited to a people who, he claimed, had "always" been free. There was quite a controversy over it and the outcome was the head-dress which "Liberty" now wears, which has been described in many ways, one description—perhaps no more inaccurate than the rest—being, "an eagle-shaped helmet with a circlet of stars."

Another interesting matter connected with the statue is that while it was being cast in bronze at Mill's foundry, near Washington, the Southern states began seceding; whereupon the white workmen, as Jarves puts it, "turned rebel" and a colored assistant completed the work.



"Freedom" statue on dome of the National Capitol at Washington, by Thomas Crawford