

James Weldon Johnson Quotes

*People, Race, Hands, Music, Paris, Country, White, World, Voice, Men, Piano,
Sea, Thinking, Ambition, Running, Strong, Cities, Names, May, Heart*

Amsterdam was a great surprise to me. I had always thought of Venice as the city of canals; it had never entered my mind that I should find similar conditions in a Dutch town.

~James Weldon Johnson

You are young, gifted, and Black. We must begin to tell our young, There's a world waiting for you, Yours is the quest that's just begun.

~James Weldon Johnson

Every race and every nation should be judged by the best it has been able to produce, not by the worst.

~James Weldon Johnson

The colored people of this country know and understand the white people better than the white people know and understand them.

~James Weldon Johnson

My appearance was always good and my ability to play on the piano, especially ragtime, which was then at the height of its vogue, made me a welcome guest.

~James Weldon Johnson

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.

~James Weldon Johnson

This country can have no more democracy than it accords and guarantees to the humblest and weakest citizen.

~James Weldon Johnson

Any musical person who has never heard a Negro congregation under the spell of religious fervor sing these old songs has missed one of the most thrilling emotions which the human heart may experience.

~James Weldon Johnson

It's no disgrace to be black, but it's often very inconvenient.

~James Weldon Johnson

Young man, young man, your arm's too short to box with God.

~James Weldon Johnson

We have come over a way that with tears has been watered, We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered.

~James Weldon Johnson

It is strange how in some things honest people can be dishonest without the slightest compunction.

~James Weldon Johnson

And God stepped out on space, and He looked around and said: I'm lonely - I'll make me a world.

~James Weldon Johnson

Through my music teaching and my not absolutely irregular attendance at church, I became acquainted with the best class of colored people in Jacksonville.

~James Weldon Johnson

When one has seen something of the world and human nature, one must conclude, after all, that between people in like stations of life there is very little difference the world over.

~James Weldon Johnson

I thought of Paris as a beauty spot on the face of the earth, and of London as a big freckle.

~James Weldon Johnson

Labor is the fabled magician's wand, the philosophers stone, and the cap of good fortune.

~James Weldon Johnson

I do not see how a people that can find in its conscience any excuse whatever for slowly burning to death a human being, or for tolerating such an act, can be entrusted with the salvation of a race.

~James Weldon Johnson

O Black and unknown bards of long ago, How came your lips to touch the sacred fire?

~James Weldon Johnson

...one of the best things about running is that no matter how fast you've run in the past, running fast in the future does not come easily or with any guarantees.

~James Weldon Johnson

I'm lonely I'll make me a world.

~James Weldon Johnson

It is from the blues that all that may be called American music derives its most distinctive characteristics.

~James Weldon Johnson

And so for a couple of years my life was divided between my music and my school books.

~James Weldon Johnson

This Great God, Like a mammy bending over her baby, Kneeled down in the dust Toiling over a lump of clay Till He shaped it in His own image.

~James Weldon Johnson

In Berlin I especially enjoyed the orchestral concerts, and I attended a large number of them. I formed the acquaintance of a good many musicians, several of whom spoke of my playing in high terms.

~James Weldon Johnson

Shortly after this I was made a member of the boys choir, it being found that I possessed a clear, strong soprano voice. I enjoyed the singing very much.

~James Weldon Johnson

There are a great many colored people who are ashamed of the cake-walk, but I think they ought to be proud of it.

~James Weldon Johnson

But I must own that I also felt stirred by an unselfish desire to voice all the joys and sorrows, the hopes and ambitions, of the American Negro, in classic musical form.

~James Weldon Johnson

I had enjoyed life in Paris, and, taking all things into consideration, enjoyed it wholesomely.

~James Weldon Johnson

My luck at the gambling table was varied; sometimes I was fifty to a hundred dollars ahead, and at other times I had to borrow money from my fellow workmen to settle my room rent and pay for my meals.

~James Weldon Johnson

Southern white people despise the Negro as a race, and will do nothing to aid in his elevation as such; but for certain individuals they have a strong affection, and are helpful to them in many ways.

~James Weldon Johnson

Northern white people love the Negro in a sort of abstract way, as a

race; through a sense of justice, charity, and philanthropy, they will liberally assist in his elevation.

~James Weldon Johnson

She was my first love, and I loved her as only a boy loves.

~James Weldon Johnson

My mother was kept very busy with her sewing; sometimes she would have another woman helping her.

~James Weldon Johnson

And Satan smiled, stretched out his hand, and said, "O War, of all the scourges of humanity, I crown you chief.

~James Weldon Johnson

As yet, the Negroes themselves do not fully appreciate these old slave songs.

~James Weldon Johnson

With his head in his hands, God thought and thought, Till he thought: I'll make me a man!

~James Weldon Johnson

As I look back now I can see that I was a perfect little aristocrat.

~James Weldon Johnson

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