

1/23/20

When I was a little girl, every school day began with “Morning Exercises.”



Hand over heart, we would all recite the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag and then sing a patriotic song together — often AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL.

I recall being mystified at the phrase “purple mountain majesties,” wondering how a mountain could be purple?!

It was in 1893, on the pinnacle of just such a mountain — Pike’s Peak — that Katharine Lee Bates, English professor at Wellesley College was inspired to write the words which would eventually become this esteemed song.

She had ridden the train to Colorado to teach summer school, seeing the wheat fields of America’s heartland along the way and gathering countless sights of the country in her mind and heart. After descending the mountain, she started to compose a poem — “O beautiful, for spacious skies...” In 1910, the poem was paired with a hymn tune composed by Samuel Ward and it has become so beloved that there have been efforts to give it “legal status” as an official national hymn.

One hundred years after Katharine’s pen touched paper, Sister Miriam Therese Winter, professor of Transformative Leadership and Spirituality and director of the Women’s Leadership Institute at Hartford Seminary, found herself serving as a member of the panel creating THE NEW CENTURY HYMNAL. As she studied the text of AMERICA, THE BEAUTIFUL, she felt moved to create some additional stanzas, clearly including all of the Americas as well as an updated dream of liberty for all...

[Click on this link](#) to listen to Verses 1, 3 and 4 of MT’s version ... verse 2 is as follows:

“Indigenous and immigrant, our daughters and our sons:
O may we never rest content till all are truly one.
America! America! God grant that we may be
A nation blessed with none oppressed, true land of liberty.”

As we enter a new era with a new President, may we each re-commit ourselves to the task of creating such a nation!

Amen.



Katharine Lee Bates (1859-1929)



Sr. Miriam Therese Winter ("MT") b. 1938