

Ballad For Americans

Paul Robeson

In seventy-six the sky was red
thunder rumbling overhead
Bad King George couldn't sleep in his bed
And on that stormy morn, Ol' Uncle Sam was born.
Some birthday!

Ol' Sam put on a three cornered hat
And in a Richmond church he sat
And Patrick Henry told him that while America drew breath
It was "Liberty or death."

What kind of hat is a three-cornered hat?
Did they all believe in liberty in those days?

Nobody who was anybody believed it.
Ev'rybody who was anybody they doubted it.
Nobody had faith.
Nobody but Washington, Tom Paine, Benjamin Franklin,
Chaim Solomon, Crispus Attucks, Lafayette. Nobodies.
The nobodies ran a trea party at Boston. Betsy Ross
organized a sewing circle. Paul Revere had a horse race.

And a little ragged group believed it.
And some gentlemen and ladies believed it.
And some wise men and some fools, and I believed it too.
And you know who I am.
No. Who are you mister? Yeah, how come all this?
Well, I'll tell you. It's like this... No let us tell you.
Mister Tom Jefferson, a mighty fine man.
He wrote it down in a mighty fine plan.
And the rest all signed it with a mighty fine hand
As they crossed thier T's and dotted their I's
A bran' new country did arise.

And a mighty fine idea. "Adopted unanimously in Congress July 4, 1776,
We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created
equal.
That they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable
rights.
That among these rights are Life, Yes sir!, Liberty, That's right!
And the pursuit of happiness."
Is that what they said? The very words.
That does sound mighty fine.

Buildiing a nation is awful tough.
The people found the going rough.
Still nobody who was anybody believed it.
Everybody who anybody they stayed at home.
But Lewis and Clarke and the pioneers,
Driven by hunger, haunted by fears,
The Klondike miners and the forty niners,
Some wanted freedom and some wanted riches,
Some liked to loaf while others dug ditches.
But they believed it. And I believed it too,
And you know who I am.
No, who are you anyway, Mister?

Well, you see it's like this. I started to tell you.
I represent the whole... Why that's it!
Let my people go. That's the idea!
Old Abe Lincoln was thin and long,
His heart was high and his faith was strong.
But he hated oppression, he hated wrong,
And he went down to his grave to free the slave.

A man in white skin can never be free while his black brother is in slavery,
"And we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain.
And this government of the people, by the people and for the people
Shall not perish from the Earth."
Abraham Lincoln said that on November 19, 1863 at Gettysburg,
Pennsylvania.
And he was right. I believe that too.

Say, we still don't know who you are, mister.
Well, I started to tell you...
The machine age came with a great big roar,
As America grew in peace and war.
And a million wheels went around and 'round.
The cities reached into the sky,
And dug down deep into the ground.
And some got rich and some got poor.
But the people carried through,
So our country grew.

Still nobody who was anybody believed it.
Everybody who was anybody they doubted it.
And they are doubting still,
And I guess they always will,
But who cares what they say when I am on my way

Say, will you please tell us who you are?
What's your name, Buddy? Where you goin'? Who are you?
Well, I'm the everybody who's nobody,
I'm the nobody who's everybody.
What's your racket? What do you do for a living?

Well, I'm an
Engineer, musician, street cleaner, carpenter, teacher,
How about a farmer? Also. Office clerk? Yes sir!
That's right. Certainly!
Factory worker? You said it. Yes ma'am.
Absolutely! Posolutely!
Truck driver? Definitely!
Miner, seamstress, ditchdigger, all of them.
I am the "etceteras" and the "and so forths" that do the work.
Now hold on here, what are you trying to give us?
Are you an American?
Am I an American?
I'm just an Irish, Jewish, Italian,
French and English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Polish,
Scotch, Hungarian, Swedish, Finnish, Greek and Turk and Czech

And that ain't all.
I was baptized Baptist, Methodist, Congregationalist, Lutheran,
Atheist, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Presbyterian, Seventh Day Adventist,
Mormon, Quaker, Christian Scientist and lots more.
You sure are something.

Our country's strong, our country's young,
And her greatest songs are still unsung.
From her plains and mountains we have sprung,
To keep the faith with those who went before.

We nobodies who are anybody believe it.
We anybodies who are everybody have no doubts.
Out of the cheating, out of the shouting.

Deep as our valleys,
High as our mountains,
Strong as the people who made it.
For I have always believed it, and I believe it now,
And now you know who I am.
Who are you?
America! America!