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National Museum of African American History and Culture

The Literary Corner: Introduction to African American Poetry with Eugene Redmond—Part 2 (side b)

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<i>Eugene B. Redmond</i>: and, and, and once they give this development at the turn of the century you know having written the very important, extremely important work "Lift Your Voice and Sing" in 1900 which was put to music by the brother Jay Rosemond Johnson and which was widely known in the United States as the Negro National Anthem later the Black National Anthem, right?

<i>Brooks B. Robinson</i>: Mmhh

<i>Eugene B. Redmond</i>: But, um, Jay Rosemond Johnson in addition to being a major, um, ah writer creator of the er, era, was also one of the chroniclers, one of the important chroniclers of the Harlem Renaissance, one of the people that recorded what occurred.

<i>Brooks B. Robinson</i>: Mmhh

<i>Eugene B. Redmond</i>: ah, who discussed it. The first important, umm, black literary critic.

<i>Brooks B. Robinson</i>: Mm hmm

<i>Eugene B. Redmond</i>: and the most important, ahh, um, ah, anthology of the era, the first anthology of African American poetry in English in the 20th Century, ah, in 1922, Book of American and World Poetry. {SPEAKER = unknown reading excerpt} The Creation by James Weldon Johnson "and God stepped out on space, and he looked around and said 'I'm lonely. I'll make me a world' And far as the eye of God could see, darkness covered everything; blacker than a hundred midnights down in a Cypress swamp. Then God smiled and the light broke, and the darkness rolled up on one side and the light stood shining on the other, and God said 'that good.' Then God reached out and took the light in his hands, and God rolled the light around in his hands, until he made the sun. And he set that sun ablazing in the heavens and the light that was left from making the sun God gathered up in a shining ball and flung against the darkness, dangling the night with the moon and stars. Then down between the darkness and the light, he hurled the world



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