

Ray Charles – a lyric essay
inspired by Lin-Manuel Miranda’s musical *Hamilton*
and presented in this way because it pays homage to
both Ray Charles’ music and his courage

Word Count : 500

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Grade 10

How does a blind man,
black man,
orphan,
born in disproportion,
make his prospects
better than his card decks?

Let's take a trip into his past life
without life
while he tries to save his brother
and brave his mother.

Stay alive!

He screamed at his younger.

Stay alive!

I need you my brother.

But, no matter how hard he tried,

he died,

right before his eyes.

Then, his mother died

while he was off at the school for the blind.

He cried,

for he knew it was up to him
to do somethin'.

“Just because you can't see anything, doesn't mean you should shut your eyes.”¹

Wasn't gonna hide.

Rather show his true side.

Made his future bad as his past had been.

For without him,

the modern version of Jazz

would be nothin'.

Music was one of his parts,

like his ribs,

his kidneys,

his liver,

his heart.

Music!

Man.

Music-man.

What's your name?

What's your claim to fame?

¹ "80 Quotes by Ray Charles [page - 4]." *A-Z Quotes*, www.azquotes.com/author/2744-Ray_Charles?p=4. Accessed 15 January 2017.

Ray Charles Robinson.

Not the boxer but the rocker.

“I told myself, you gotta do it, because don’t nobody know your name.”²

Started singing like himself,

‘stead of someone else.

“No matter how or why we might be different

from somebody else,

we should learn to love who we are

and be proud of it.”³

Soon enough, this became his aim,

made it into his blood and veins.

And with success,

he made sure the press

knew he was not okay

with blacks and whites being sep-ar-ate.

1961, there was two of everything.

One for the whites

and one that would bring

all of color into a long time of suffering.

² “Ray Charles - Quotes.” *Ray Charles – Quotes*, www.raycharlesvideomuseum.blogspot.com/p/ray-charles-quotes. Accessed 15 January 2017.

³ “Ray Charles Quotes.” *Quoteswise*, www.quoteswise.com/ray-charles-quotes. Accessed 15 January 2017.

He took a stand with his band.
Refused to sing in the heartland.
Those that stand for nothing
don't see the wrongs of something.
But Ray said no more,
discrimination has to stop writing score.
Pushed for more than just the back door
and got through onto TV and into music stores.

That's not chaos, that's progress.
Is that your comment?
No, this is it. Check it out.
For every detail I choose, there are 10 left out.
So what are we to make of this great man?
The answer is in the revolution he brought forth.
It went east by west, south to north.
He took a stand for those back in Florida.
and changed ways of life there in every corner.

His voice was part preacher,
part love man, part con man,
part blues man, part dead man.

They call him the genius, father of soul.

When Florida sings, will they know?

Here's a blind man, black man, orphan, born in disproportion, singing,

"You Don't Know Me". Get to know me.

Legacy?

It's like planting seeds in orange groves

you never get to taste

for future Floridians

displaced, debased, embraced, interlaced.

"Hit the Road Jack".

Death doesn't discriminate.

People remember his black shades and overcoat,

but he was someone with more than just hope.

His music was trial,

tribulation,

equality.

He was a voice for humanity.

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