Democracy for Me (Abridged)
By Mary Mcleod Bethune
November 23, 1939, New York City, NY

Democracy is for me a goal towards which our nation is marching. It is a dream and an ideal in whose ultimate realization we have a deep and abiding faith.

As we have been extended a measure of democracy, we have brought to the nation rich gifts. We have helped to build America with our labor, strengthened it with our faith and enriched it with our song. We have given you Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Booker T. Washington, Marian Anderson and George Washington Carver. But even these are only the first fruits of a rich harvest, which will be reaped when new and wider fields are opened to us.

Our faith envisions a fundamental change as mutual respect and understanding between our races come in the path of spiritual awakening... We have always been loyal when the ideals of American democracy have been attacked. We have given our blood in its defense-from Crispus Attucks on Boston Commons to the battlefields of France. We have fought for the democratic principles of equality under the law, equality of opportunity, equality at the ballot box, for the guarantees of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Yes, we have fought for America with all her imperfections, not so much for what she is, but for what we know she can be.

Perhaps the greatest battle is before us, the fight for a new America: fearless, free, united, morally re-armed... that this nation under God will have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, for the people and by the people shall not perish from the earth. This is what American democracy means to me.