

THE BLOSSOM OF THE GIFT

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[Assignment: Henry Adams, in his autobiography, claims that the most important things he learned in life he learned accidentally. Write a list for yourself of all the things you remember learning accidentally. Choose one interesting and important item from your list; make another list of all the details that flood into your mind as you recount that learning process. Then write a narrative essay about what happened. Your purpose is twofold: to relate that story to your reader as completely as you can, and to comment on what the process meant to you.]

There was a point in my life when I did not think I would ever do anything that took courage. I would pray and ask the Lord to give me courage to do those things which I knew were within me to do. The one thing I knew was within me was a voice to sing. Shy people do not sing in front of other people. And if anyone asked, I was that person in a nutshell.

In the seventh grade I joined my school choir. That's when it all began. My choir director noticed that my voice was more developed than those of the other students, so I got special parts in our mini-musicals with a group of people. Then there was a special performance where the best voices of the choir were selected to sing at a mass choir workshop. I was one of the three chosen to sing and I felt really good. I felt like I had reached a mark, although it was not my goal. I was still climbing.

The next year I was still in my school choir, but I decided to join my church choir also. That was a really big step for me because I was so intimidated by the whole idea of being up there. Everyone in the choir was at least twenty and I was thirteen, but I have never acted or looked my age anyway. To hear them sing was a blessing to your ears and I did not figure that my voice would be good enough to sing with them. So after a lot of inner conflicts, one side prevailed and I finally got up enough guts to join. After some time I started to feel more comfortable and I began to have more confidence in the ability I had. My voice was growing with each year.

Freshman year in high school I was in cadet and concert choir. For our final we had to sing any piece of music we wanted in front of the entire class. Part of me wanted to do this so everyone could hear my voice, but the other part of me wanted this moment in my life to just pass me by. My anxiety level was high. I feared people would not like my performance and that they would tell me I should give it up now because I could not sing. At any rate I had to do it because it was for a grade. The day came for me to perform and my fears were disproved. As I stood before the class all my anxieties seemed to fade away. I received the most applause for performing "Home" by Stephanie Mills, which she did in the musical, The Wiz. That was my first solo and I will never forget it.

I continued to sing, and in my senior year of high school my teacher let me enter a city competition. The piece I did was not an easy one and it was also in German. I received an excellent rating for my performance--one point away from a superior. It was a little discouraging because I wanted to make my teacher proud and get a superior rating, not only for

me, but also for her. But it did not discourage me enough to stop singing. Meanwhile back at church, my director decided to give me a lead to a song. I was ready because I had been wanting to prove something to myself and also to my family although they did not know this. So on a Sunday morning one of the music ministry's songs of praise was my song, entitled "Just When I Need Him Most." My director started to play the introit and I stepped down in front of the organ, where all the singers sang. I really was not nervous even though all those eyes were fixed upon me, and people were wondering what I was going to sing and how would I sound. I picked up the microphone, closed my eyes, and felt myself in the song and the song was within me.

In the Black church, people do not just sit still through a sermon or a song. They react in a boisterous way. So during my song people were starting to react and that is encouragement to continue to pour all you have into the song. A feeling comes over you and you just have to let the spirit use you and have its way. I finished the song and after the service so many people were shocked that I could sing like that, especially my family. But all the comments were inspiring and that would be useful for the next time.

The moral of the story is to never give up a dream or desire. If there is one thing out there in the world that you want bad enough, no matter what the cost, or in spite of the failure sometimes, you still must strive for your goal. Today I am still singing, still building on the foundation of my gift. Who knows where it might take me. All I know is that I am willing to find out so I will just keep trying.