
I Have a Faith



A Made-Up Mind

BY MAHALIA JACKSON

■ I'D LIKE TO TELL everyone that God's got the whole world in His hand. I'd like to tell everyone that God can take nothing and make something out of it. If, for example, I have accomplished anything, it is nothing but the grace of God that has brought me this far; all the way from the backwoods of Louisiana to the great streets of Paris, to Carnegie Hall in New York, Albert Hall in London, the State Opera House in Vienna. God has sent me all over the world just singing the simple songs of the South. That's why I love to sing, "He's Got the Whole World in His Hand."

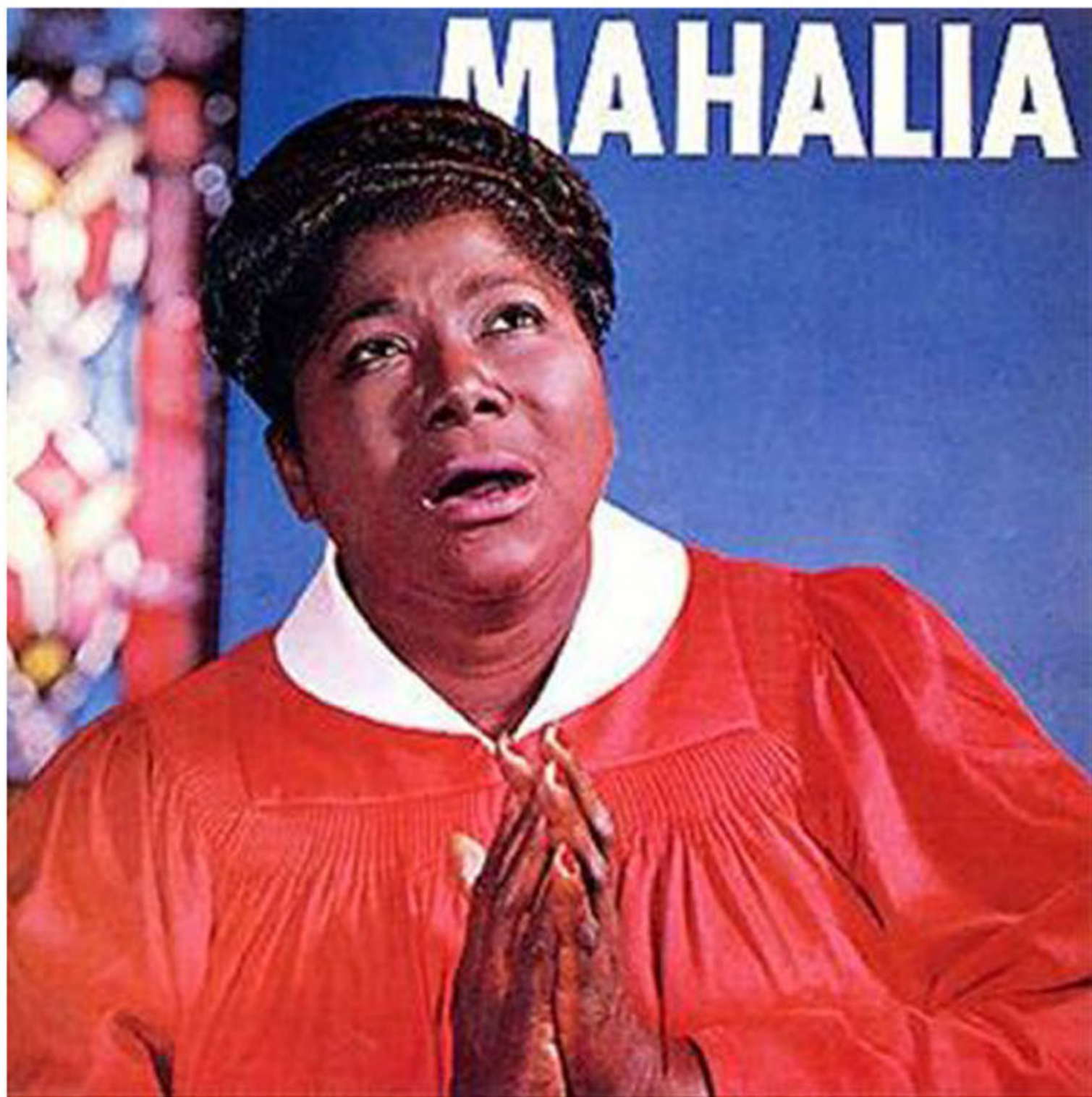
Anything you want (anything you want to be, anything you want to do, God is able to lift you up. But you have to have one thing—you have to have a *made-up mind*. You don't straddle the fence serving God; we must put our all on the altar and let God abide. In my own life, in the early desperate days in New Orleans and Chicago, I learned to lean on the word of God. I still read the Bible every day and ask God to give me the understanding of His Word. For the Bible says, "Seek Me, learn of Me." This constant inspiration comes only through Divine power and Divine guidance. You can't get that unless you commune with God in prayer, meditation, and reading His Word. That

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is why I seek Him daily to know Him and His will for me.

To me, the first gospel song happened when the angels sang, "Peace on earth, good will toward men." It has been that way with me ever since I started singing as a child in our New Orleans shack between the railroad tracks and the levee. New Orleans was full of music then—jazz, ragtime, and the blues—and although I don't sing the blues anymore myself, I heard all the marching brass bands, the showboat music on the Mississippi, the great jazz orchestras of King Oliver, Louis Armstrong, and Jelly Roll Morton, and learned to love their powerful beat. But I loved to sing all the more in the choir of our hard-shell Baptist Church, where my papa used to preach after his week's work on the river docks and where I could raise my big voice in "I'm so glad Jesus lifted me." All around me I could hear a real jubilant expression, the feet tapping and the hands clapping. Even today I feel that same bounce when I sing. Like the psalmist said in the Bible, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord," that's me!

I've been singing now for nearly forty years, and most of that time I've been singing for my supper as well as for the Lord. I've never had a music lesson and I still can't read



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a note, but I say this from the heart—a gospel song must do something for me as well as for the audience, or I can't sing it. When I'm singing at concerts, sometimes I whisper, sometimes I shout and drive the rhythm real hard. Sometimes when I'm singing inspirational songs like "Just as I Am," or "How great Thou art," I get down on my knees and sing with the folks and keep right on singing afterward in my dressing room until I've expressed all that I feel inside of me.

So, using the gift God gave me, singing the old spiritual songs for people everywhere has been a great personal help for me. Not to become just an entertainer or a star, but to help give people faith—that is the most important thing I can do. Gospel songs are the songs of hope and faith. Thus, I have been lifted up by singing; I have been brought through many trials by singing. Personally, I like to sing before live audiences because I can sing directly to them. I can pick up their vibrations and feel the Spirit of God communicating with me. Sometimes I have been criticized for not using a prepared program for my concerts, but I like to walk out on the stage and let the Holy Spirit guide me. Sometimes when I plan to sing one group of selections, the Spirit tells me to sing something else. Because I know He's got the whole world in His hand, I know there is a reason He wants me to sing certain songs. It is when I feel directly led that I am best able to project God's Spirit into my concerts.

Many people tell me they have been healed through hearing me sing these gospel songs—many tell me they have been saved. Naturally, I'm so grateful for that. You can't reach or uplift people in this way through a mechanical medium such as radio or records or television. Singing directly to a live audience is the only way.

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At this time in history so many people are longing for spiritual help. There never was a time when Christians needed to be more Christian than now. They need to feel themselves lifted up in the Lord. Because there are so many people today really seeking the Holy Spirit in their lives, they would like to know that God uses us. They would like to know the power God has given us. They would like to know God's got the whole world in His hands. And all we have to have is a made-up mind!

So, if the Lord will let me, I'm going to become an evangelist so I can reach many more people. I'm planning now to build a big evangelist temple in Chicago and get up a group of fine gospel singers who have the real beat, to help me express to so many people the happiness and strength that can come from the Lord. I want my temple non-segregated and non-denominational—even though I'm a hard-shell Baptist—and to have our services televised nationally, with or without sponsors, so that people all over the country can hear our singing.

I want to have all kinds of classes connected with the temple to help the many talented singers and musicians, to give them another path of study besides commercial show business where there are so many sinful temptations and frustrations. Some of the young colored people with great talent get hurt badly by discrimination and the doors that are locked to them. It breaks their spirit. It saddens my heart when they come to me and say, "Mahalia, please help us." I say, "I'm trying to, honey. I'm going to. Just give me a little time. I just got my toe in the door after thirty years of trying. It takes time to be delivered by the Lord."

I WANT to prove to young people that they can take what they've got and go to great heights if they be-

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lieve in themselves and have faith in God. I say to them, "The Lord took me, and I was nothing, and He put me up. It can happen to you too. If the Lord can bring me this far—take me out of the washtubs and off my knees scrubbing other people's floors—then He can do as much and more for others." ■ ■

'A JOYFUL NOISE'

Mahalia Jackson, America's great gospel singer, has been making "a joyful noise unto the Lord" for nearly forty years. Born into an indigent Negro family, brought up in the Storyville jazz atmosphere of New Orleans, Mahalia (the Biblical name means "Good Woman") joined her father's Baptist Church show at the age of five. She left school at age twelve to work full time in the Louisiana cotton fields, then at sixteen in the factories of Chicago. Her first major singing opportunity came with her appointment as soloist in Chicago's Salem Baptist Church.

Since 1954 Miss Jackson has starred on both CBS radio and television network programs. Her first single record, "Moving On Up," has sold nearly eight million copies during the past decade. Of a half-dozen performances for United States Presidents, Chicago's Christ-lifted evangelist sang at the 1962 Lincoln Memorial ceremony, commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of President Lincoln's Proclamation of Emancipation.

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