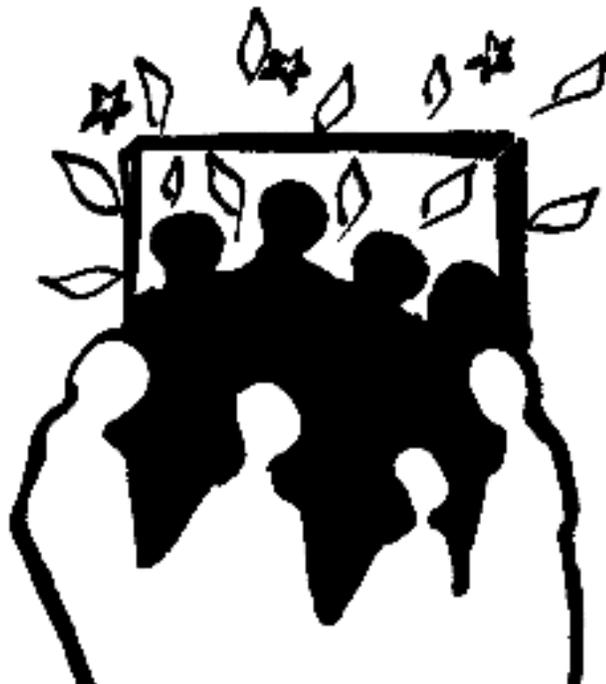


**Jews United for Justice**

presents

The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual  
**Labor Seder**



April 11, 2007  
Temple Shalom  
Chevy Chase, MD

## **The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Labor Seder is Cosponsored By:**

- Greater Washington Jewish Labor Committee
- CASA of Maryland
- Jewish Community Relations Council
- Metro Council AFL-CIO
- AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps
- Temple Shalom
- Ameinu
- DC Jobs with Justice
- UNITE HERE Local 25
- SEIU 32BJ
- DC Employment Justice Center
- UFCW 400
- American Rights at Work
- UNITE HERE Mid-Atlantic Joint Board

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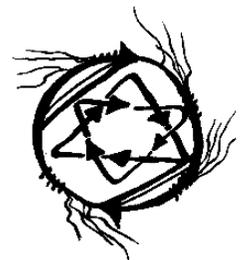
## The Labor Seder as a Socially-Conscious Simcha

This year, the Labor Seder has been planned in collaboration with Jews United for Justice's Simcha Project. This new project will reach out to members of the Jewish community as they plan simchas (celebrations), helping to insure that the money spent on each wedding and bat or bar mitzvah supports the environment, workers' rights, and Jewish values.

This year, we've tried to minimize the Labor Seder's ecological impact and maximize its support of responsible labor practices in the following ways:

- The Labor Seder is located close to a metro station and several bus routes to encourage participants to seek alternatives to driving here.
- All of our ritual foods are local wherever possible, and all are organic. We sourced our apples, *maror*, beets, eggs, and *karpas* from local farmers, while our oranges, walnuts, and grape juice are organic but not local. Purchasing foods, particularly produce, from local sources eliminates the need to transport food long distances and supports farmers in our communities. Purchasing organic foods when possible is one way to reduce our ecological "footprint" by supporting sustainable farming practices.
- Our seder plates, water pitchers, napkins, and tablecloths are all reusable.
- The disposable plates we are using tonight are made from recycled paper. The disposable forks, spoons, cups, and bowls on our tables are made from plant sources, are completely compostable, and were donated by Java Green, a very green vegetarian restaurant in downtown Washington, DC. Learn more at [www.javagreen.net](http://www.javagreen.net).
- Our haggadot and other printed materials are printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper.
- There is Fair Trade Honest Tea on our tables tonight. Honest Tea is a DC-area company that strives to support sustainable agriculture and community-building as they create their healthy, all-natural teas. Find out more at [www.honesttea.com](http://www.honesttea.com).
- To compensate for the carbon dioxide emissions cause by the Labor Seder's inevitable energy use, we have purchased nine tons of carbon offsets from NativeEnergy. NativeEnergy helps finance construction of wind farms and the installation of methane digesters. Learn more at [www.nativeenergy.com](http://www.nativeenergy.com).

If you are planning an event or if you'd like to learn more about the Simcha Project, contact Joelle at [jnovey@post.harvard.edu](mailto:jnovey@post.harvard.edu).



– WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION –

Welcome Union Members/Hineh Ma Tov

Welcome union members  
We are in your presence  
Hand in hand together  
We make the union strong

We are filled with power  
Mobilized to organize  
Conquerors and counselors  
We shall not be moved

Welcome union members  
We are in your presence  
Hand in hand together  
We make the union strong

Bienvenidos todos  
Los sindicalistas  
Demosnos la mano  
Y fuerza a nuestra unión

Estamos ilenos de poder  
Para organizer y defender  
Derechos conquistados  
No nos moverán

Bienvenidos todos  
Los sindicalistas  
Demosnos la mano  
Y fuerza a nuestra unión

Hineh mah tov umanayim  
Shevet achim gam yachad.

*translation:*

How good and pleasant it is for brothers and sisters to sit together.

– THE FIRST CUP OF WINE: YESTERDAY –

**Discussion**

- Where did your ancestors come from?
- What did they (or you) do upon first arriving in the U.S.?

**Presentation: The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire**

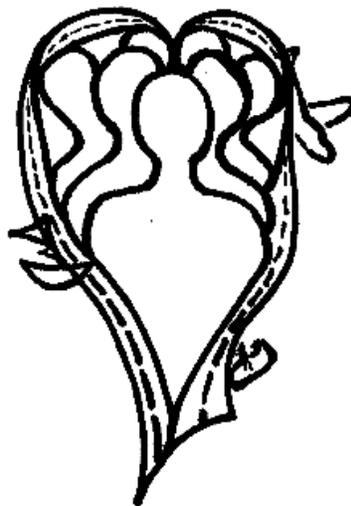
**Blessing Over the First Cup of Wine**

We drink this first cup in honor of the long history of Jewish women and men fighting for labor rights.

*Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam borei p'ri hagafen*

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, Creator of the Fruit of the Vine.

*Drink the first cup.*



## Let My People Go

When Israel was in Egypt's land  
Let my people go!  
Oppressed so hard they could not stand.  
Let my people go!  
Go down, Moses  
Way down in Egypt's land  
Tell old Pharaoh  
To let my people go!  
Thus saith the Lord, bold Moses said  
Let my people go!  
If not I'll strike your first born dead.  
Let my people go!  
Go down, Moses  
Way down in Egypt's land  
Tell old Pharaoh  
To let my people go!



## Karpas

We dip greens in salt water,  
representing the sweat and tears of  
the disempowered.

*Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech  
ha'olam borei p'ri ha'adamah.*  
Blessed are you, Source of All Life,  
Spirit of the Universe, Creator of  
the Fruit of the Earth.

*Eat the karpas.*

## **The Four Questions**

- Why aren't all workers treated fairly?
- Why are we talking about labor at a Seder?
- Why are union jobs different from all other jobs?
- Why are domestic workers different from all other workers?

## **Beginning to Answer**

On Passover we celebrate our freedom. When we tell the story we speak in the first person, as if we, ourselves, were slaves. There are people who are slaves both in name and in reality – even today. Tonight, we dedicate ourselves to working for freedom for all people.

Unions allow workers to band together when they're asking for fair wages and fair treatment. For that reason, workers in union workplaces are generally treated better than workers who do not have access to the solidarity that comes with being a union member.

Unlike most other workers, domestic workers have no contact with people who could advise them of their rights (such as co-workers or human resources managers).

Domestic workers are not protected by our country's labor laws, which means that even if they could reach out to one another to organize for better conditions, they have no legal protection for their organizing activities.

## – THE SECOND CUP OF WINE: TODAY –

### Passover as Social Commentary

#### Ten Plagues: The Challenges of Domestic Work

Our celebration tonight is eclipsed by our awareness of continuing enslavement and oppression. Unlike the plagues visited by God upon the Egyptians in order to set us free, today humanity visits plagues upon itself: plagues that enslave and denigrate our humanity. plagues that do not recognize that we are all made in God's image and worthy of respect, plagues that keep us from seeing our undeniable interconnectedness as human beings. Now we identify those plagues that affect numerous hard working people, and specifically affect domestic workers. Only through identifying these plagues can we eradicate them.



As we read each plague, we remove a drop of wine from our cups with a finger or spoon. These drops symbolize the ways in which each of these plagues lessens our enjoyment of life.

#### **1. No Right to Join a Union**

*Domestic workers are not permitted to unionize under current labor laws.*

#### **2. Low Wages**

*Domestic workers are often paid unfair wages that do not allow them to be self-sufficient and support their families.*

#### **3. Inadequate Health Care**

*Employers often fail to provide domestic workers with health care, denying them a basic human right and burdening government programs and social service non-profits.*

#### **4. Insecurity**

*Domestic workers often lack a standard work schedule and can be fired without cause.*

#### **5. Invisibility**

*Because they work inside people's homes, we often fail to notice the work that many thousands of domestic workers do each day.*

## **6. Unsafe Working Conditions**

*Domestic workers are regularly exposed to toxic chemicals and unregulated safety hazards in the homes where they work.*

## **7. Isolation**

*Domestic workers almost always work alone, so they lack the co-workers who are a source of support and strength for other workers.*

## **8. Discrimination**

*Domestic workers have inadequate protection against discrimination based on ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual orientation.*

## **9. Voicelessness**

*Domestic workers are often afraid to bring forward complaints about abusive or illegal labor practices and are unable to band together to make their voices heard.*

## **10. Lack of Respect**

*Employers often fail to treat domestic workers with the dignity due to those putting in an honest day's work.*

A rabbi was asked by a farmer when the world would truly know peace. The rabbi replied, "Follow me."

He then brought the farmer to the side of a brook, put his hand on the farmer's head, and pressed it into the water until the farmer came up gasping for breath. The rabbi then said: "This is your answer. When man wants peace, when he wants peace as much as you just wanted air, when he comes up gasping for peace, when he is ready to give everything in himself to have peace, as you have given to have air, he will have peace."

When we are distressed by intolerance and economic inequalities, then social equality will flourish.

## Maggid: Telling the Story of Domestic Workers

### Text Study

"You shall not abuse a needy and destitute laborer, whether a fellow Israelite or a stranger in one of the communities of your land. You must pay out the wages due on the same day, before the sun sets, for the worker is needy and urgently depends on it; else a cry to the Eternal will be issued against you and you will incur guilt." Devarim 24:14-15

"The workers' employer says to them to either start early or stay late. In a place where the custom is not to start early or not to stay late, the employer is not allowed to force them. In a place where the custom is to feed, he must feed them. Where the custom is to provide a sweet, he must provide [it]. Everything is according to local custom." Baba Metzia 7:1

- Why do you think the custom of the land is so important in the second source? How does this specifically impact workers who come from different places negatively and positively?
- What kinds of laws exist in our society that follow these principles?

### Dayeinu

At the Seder we recall all the miracles that led us towards freedom from slavery and sing, "Dayeinu": it would have been enough if just one of these blessings had occurred.

The first step towards redemption came from the bravery of two ordinary women. The Pharaoh ordered the murder of newborn Hebrew male infants, but two midwives, Shifra and Puah, defied these orders and sheltered and protected all Jewish babies. By today's standards, Shifra and Puah were domestic workers. These biblical nannies risked their own lives to care for other people's children. With Shifra and Puah in mind, let us think of all of the blessings that can and should occur so that domestic workers and those of us who stand in solidarity with them can say Dayeinu – these things are enough.

*We read responsively:*

If domestic workers had the right to form a union...  
...it would almost be enough.  
If domestic workers were guaranteed health care benefits...  
...it would almost be enough.  
If domestic workers were paid a livable wage...  
...it would almost be enough.  
If domestic workers had the right to paid vacation and paid sick days...  
...it would almost be enough.  
If domestic workers had the right to a written contract...  
...it would almost be enough.  
If domestic workers had the right to take care of their own families as well as  
the families that they work for...  
...it would almost be enough.  
If domestic workers had the respect of their employers...  
... it would almost be enough  
If all of these things occurred...  
...it would be enough. Dayeinu.

Ilu hotsi, hotsianu, hotsianu mimitsrayim, hotsianu mimitsrayim, Dayeinu!  
Dayeinu!  
Ilu natan, natan lanu, natan lanu et hatorah, natan lanu et hatorah, Dayeinu!  
Dayeinu!  
Ilu natan, natan lanu, natan lanu et hashabbat, natan lanu et hashabbat,  
Dayeinu! Dayeinu!

*Translation*

Had God brought us out of Egypt and not supported us in the wilderness, it  
would have been enough!  
Had God given us the Sabbath and not the Torah, it would have been enough!  
Had God given us the Torah and not brought us to the land of Israel, it would  
have been enough!



### **Blessing Over the Second Cup of Wine**

As we drink the second cup of wine, we think of the domestic workers today, in our communities, whose working conditions do not always allow them to be truly free.

*Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam borei p'ri hagafen*  
Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, Creator of the Fruit of the Vine.

*Drink the second cup.*

## – THE PASSOVER SYMBOLS –

According to the mishnah, Rabbi Gamliel said that whoever has not considered the meaning of the pesach, matzah, and maror has not fulfilled the purpose of the Passover seder. These traditional symbols, along with the others on the seder plate, reflect the hardships of slavery and other systems that do not recognize or reward labor.

The maror (bitter herbs) symbolizes the bitterness and pain of slavery; and the charoset, often a mix of apples and nuts, represents the mortar with which the Egyptian slaves were forced to build monuments to a system that oppressed them.

But at the same time that the symbols of the seder memorialize the pain of oppression, they also demonstrate hope for a future of justice and freedom. Just as the sweet taste of the charoset overpowers the bitterness of the maror, freedom can overcome slavery. And while the matzah is the bread of affliction, eaten by slaves who did not have time to wait for the dough to rise, it is also the bread of liberation, eaten by those about to be free.

As the newest symbol on the seder plate, the orange, demonstrates, our efforts to work for freedom and equality continue to this day. The orange represents the fruitfulness of communities that give full roles to women, to gays and lesbians, and to others who are too often marginalized. And it demonstrates the ability of our tradition to embrace new rituals and efforts to fight for equality. Tonight, we pledge to open ourselves up as well to new opportunities to pursue justice.

The roundness of the egg on the seder plate reminds us of the cycles of life. As the cycle of the year begins anew, we strive to make sure that we are not like the Egyptians in the Passover story, that we are neither perpetrators nor disinterested bystanders. Traditionally, the pesach offering – the blood of the paschal lamb, symbolized tonight by the red juice of a beet – represents the outstretched arm of God that separated the Israelites from the Egyptians and delivered them from slavery. Tonight, we vow to extend our own arms and commit ourselves to action to end injustice.

## Blessings over the Matzah and the Maror

*Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz.*

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

*Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tsivanu al achilat matzah.*

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, who has sanctified us through the commandments and instructed us concerning the eating of matzah.

*Eat the matzah.*

*Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tsivanu al achilat maror.*

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, who has sanctified us through the commandments and instructed us concerning the eating of maror.

*Eat the maror.*

– **BREAK FOR DESSERT** –

– THE CUP OF MIRIAM –

Miriam's cup acknowledges the important role that women played in making it possible for the Jews to leave Egypt and survive in the desert. Tonight, our Miriam's cup reminds us of the important role women play in making our communities thrive. We want to particularly acknowledge our security workers and our hotel workers who are currently struggling to get fair contracts.



**Presentation by Local Hotel Workers and Security Workers**

– THE CUP OF ELIJAH –

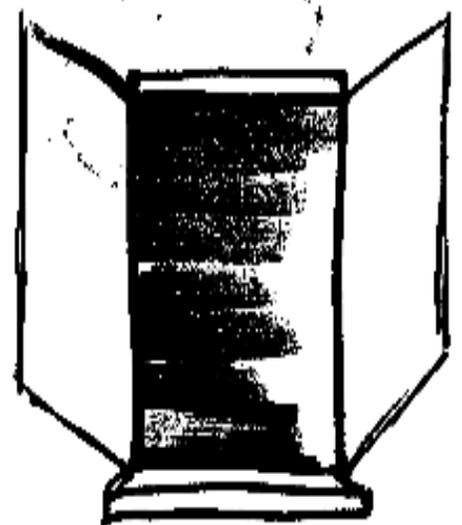
In a traditional Passover seder, Jewish people open the doors of their homes for Elijah the prophet, inviting him to enter, hoping that he will come this year, finally, to announce the coming of the Messiah and the arrival of a new world to come. They don't know what it will be like, this post-Messianic world, but they've been assured that it will be better than the life that they know now, even as it remains a mystery.

As we fill a cup for Elijah tonight, we express our hope for a better world. As we open our doors, we look expectantly not only for a harbinger of the Messiah, but also for other, more worldly messengers: people who have left many homelands for countless reasons and who will challenge our nation to change and grow. We trade the comfort of our four walls for the potential of an open door.

As we welcome Elijah into our homes, we also welcome immigrants to our country.

**Maggid**  
*by Marge Piercy*

The courage to let go of the door, the handle.  
The courage to shed the familiar walls whose very  
stains and leaks are comfortable as the little moles  
of the upper arm; stains that recall a feast,  
a child's naughtiness, a loud blistering storm  
that slapped the roof hard, pouring through.



The courage to abandon the graves dug into the hill,  
the small bones of children and the brittle bones  
of the old whose marrow hunger had stolen;  
the courage to desert the tree planted and only  
begun to bear; the riverside where promises were  
shaped; the street where their empty pots were broken.

The courage to leave the place whose language you learned  
as early as your own, whose customs however  
dangerous or demeaning, bind you like a halter  
you have learned to pull inside, to move your load;  
the land fertile with the blood spilled on it;  
the roads mapped and annotated for survival.

The courage to walk out of the pain that is known  
into the pain that cannot be imagined,  
mapless, walking into the wilderness, going  
barefoot with a canteen into the desert;  
stuffed in the stinking hold of a rotting ship  
sailing off the map into dragons' mouths.

Cathay, India, Serbia, goldenh medina,  
leaving bodies by the way like abandoned treasure.  
So they walked out of Egypt. So they bribed their way  
out of Russia under loaves of straw; so they steamed  
out of the bloody smoking charnelhouse of Europe  
on overloaded freighters forbidden all ports--  
out of pain into death or freedom or a different  
painful dignity, into squalor and politics.

We Jews are all born of wanderers, with shoes  
under our pillows and a memory of blood that is ours  
raining down. We honor only those Jews who changed  
tonight, those who chose the desert over bondage,  
who walked into the strange and became strangers  
and gave birth to children who could look down  
on them standing on their shoulders for having  
been slaves. We honor those who let go of everything  
but freedom, who ran, who revolted, who fought,  
who became other by saving themselves.

– THE THIRD CUP OF WINE: CALLING FOR CHANGE –

CASA of Maryland’s Work for Domestic Workers’ Rights

**Blessing Over the Third Cup of Wine**

As we drink the third cup of wine, we celebrate the work that people are doing today to make this community a better place for all workers.

*Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha’olam borei p’ri hagafen*

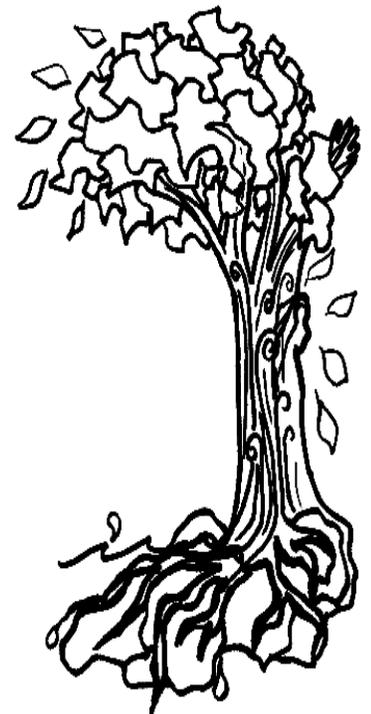
Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, Creator of the Fruit of the Vine.

*Drink the third cup.*

**We Shall Not Be Moved**

We shall not, we shall not be moved  
We shall not, we shall not be moved  
Just like a tree that’s standing by the water  
We shall not be moved  
The union is behind us,  
We shall not be moved,  
The union is behind us,  
We shall not be moved,  
Just like a tree that’s standing by the water  
We shall not be moved  
United we will win  
We shall not be moved  
United we will win  
We shall not be moved  
Just like a tree that’s standing by the water  
We shall not be moved

No, no, no nos moveran  
No, no, no nos moveran  
Como un árbol firme  
junto al río  
No nos moveran  
La union con nosotros  
No nos moveran  
La union con nosotros  
No nos moverán  
Como un árbol firme  
junto al río  
No nos moveran  
Unidos ganaremos  
No no nos moveran  
Unidos ganaremos  
No nos moveran  
Como un árbol firme junto al río  
No nos moveran



## – THE FOURTH CUP OF WINE: TOMORROW –

Our fourth cup of wine is in honor of taking action and creating change. It symbolizes the changes we will work for in the coming year.

*Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam borei p'ri hagafen*  
Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, Creator of the Fruit of the Vine.

*Drink the fourth cup.*

### Four Types of Action

In a traditional Passover seder, we talk about four different ways of interacting with the Passover story. Today, we will discuss four different ways of interacting with political struggles of all kinds.

- Lobbying Decision-Makers (writing a letter, making a phone call, visiting political offices)
- Planning (organizing an event, writing policy)
- Mass Mobilization (march, rally, vigil)
- Spreading the Word (canvassing, raising money, calling or emailing others to alert them about a campaign, contacting media, writing letters to the editors)



### Jews United for Justice's Campaign for Domestic Workers' Rights

#### Letter-Writing

#### Closing

## Next Year, Justice for Domestic Workers

Next year, with your help, domestic workers will:

1. Be guaranteed at least \$10.50 per hour, a living wage.
2. Have health insurance.
3. Have two days off per week.
4. Receive 2 weeks of vacation time.
5. Receive federal holidays off or work them for double their usual rate.
6. Receive 3 personal days per year.
7. Receive up to 7 sick days annually.
8. Have the Family Medical Leave Act apply to them.
9. Have a written contract.
10. Receive notice before being fired.
11. Be able to refuse work that it is beyond their contract.
12. Be able to take a lunch break.
13. Receive one week of severance pay for each year that they have been employed.
14. Be reimbursed for job-related expenses.
15. Not lose pay if they accidentally break an appliance or a fragile household item.
16. Receive a proof of payment for their salary.
17. Be protected by anti-discrimination and anti-retaliation laws.

## Solidarity Forever

When the Union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall run,  
There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun.  
Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one?  
But the Union makes us strong.

*[Chorus:]* Solidarity forever!  
Solidarity forever!  
Solidarity forever!  
For the Union makes us strong.

Is there aught we hold in common with the greedy parasite  
Who would lash us into serfdom and would crush us with his might?  
Is there anything left to us but to organize and fight?  
For the Union makes us strong.

*[Chorus]*

It is we who plowed the prairies; built the cities where they trade;  
Dug the mines and built the workshops; endless miles of railroad laid.  
Now we stand outcast and starving, 'midst the wonders we have made;  
But the Union makes us strong.

*[Chorus]*

All the world that's owned by idle drones is ours and ours alone.  
We have laid the wide foundations; built it skyward stone by stone.  
It is ours, not to slave in, but to master and to own,  
While the Union makes us strong.

*[Chorus]*

They have taken untold millions that they never toiled to earn,  
But without our brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn.  
We can break their haughty power; gain our freedom when we learn  
That the Union makes us strong.

*[Chorus]*

In our hands is placed a power greater than their hoarded gold;  
Greater than the might of armies, magnified a thousand-fold.  
We can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old.  
For the Union makes us strong.

*[Chorus]*

## Acknowledgements

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