

Folktales and Songs of Our Great Big World

Edited by Mary Evelyn Notgrass McCurdy



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First Edition. 2024 Printing.

ISBN 978-1-60999-185-2

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Cover and interior design by Mary Evelyn Notgrass McCurdy.

Printed in the United States of America.



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Introduction

This collection of folktales and songs from around the world accompanies the lessons in *Our Great Big World*. Some of the stories in this collection come from old books of folktales that are in the public domain. The source for each of those tales is included in its introduction. I have retold all of the other stories based on traditional tales.

Most of the songs in this collection are traditional folk songs. Musicians from Belize and the Democratic Republic of the Congo composed two of the songs and recorded them especially for this collection. A musician in Zambia also composed one of the songs. You can listen to recordings of all the stories and songs at notgrass.com/FSOGBW. The sound quality on a few of these recordings is not professional, but we feel the authenticity of native speakers performing the songs far outweighs this slight lack in sound quality.

Some of the song recordings have words in only one language. Others include an English translation of all or part of the song. The words printed in *italics* in this book are not part of the recordings, but show the English translation of the words.

Special thanks to Titus Anderson for his extensive assistance with this collection and for his excellent work producing the recordings.

—*Mary Evelyn Notgrass McCurdy*



Zawadi za Afrika (Gifts of Africa)

A Song from the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Swahili is the most common language spoken in Africa. It is the primary language of Kenya and Tanzania where the Great Migration takes place. Elie Muhanano grew up speaking Swahili in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Music became Elie's passion. He later moved to Rwanda and began teaching music to children. Elie said, "I love children so much, for me they are joy makers!" When he learned about this collection of songs from around the world, he composed this song in Swahili and recorded it especially for you at a studio in Rwanda. Track 15

Welcome to Africa!

Karibuni!

Cheza, cheza!

Welcome!

Dance, dance!

Ime barikiwa Afrika!

Ime barikiwa Afrika!

Uumbaji wote,

Viumbe vyote,

Via pendeza pendeza sana. *Look so beautiful.*

Blessed is Africa!

Blessed is Africa!

All creation,

All creatures,

Look amazing and beautiful.

Blessed is Africa!

Blessed is Africa!

All creation,

All creatures,

Look so beautiful.



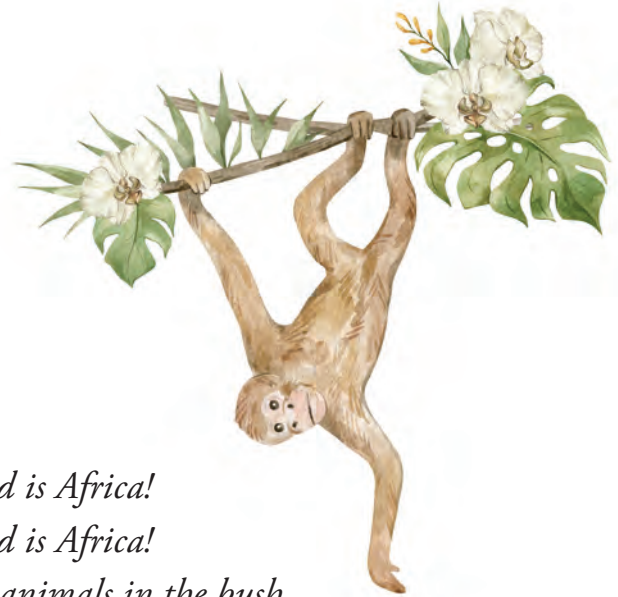


Ime barikiwa Afrika!
Ime barikiwa Afrika!
Wanyama porini,
Ndege angani
Vya pendeza pendeza sana.
Blessed is Africa!
Blessed is Africa!
Samaki baharini,
Utajiri udongoni,
Vya pendeza pendeza sana.

Kwa mungurumo wa simba,
Twa ona nguvu zako.
Kwa mziki wa ndege,
Twa ona upendo wako.
Tembo aki yumba,
Twa ona ukuu wako.
Viboko huzagaa kwenye mito,
Twiga kuelekeya angani,
Na swala huruka ruka.
Na swala huruka ruka.

Twa furaiya u umbaaaji wa mungu. *Oh, God, We rejoice in Your creation.*
Naku sema asante! *And say thank you!*

God, we rejoice and enjoy your creation. We say thank you!



Blessed is Africa!
Blessed is Africa!
Wild animals in the bush,
Birds in the sky
Look so beautiful.

Fish in the stream,
Treasures in the soil,
Look so beautiful.

In the roar of the lion,
We see Your strength.
In the song of the birds,
We see Your love.
When the elephant sways,
We see Your greatness.
Hippos roam in the rivers,
Giraffes soar toward the sky,
And gazelles leap and leap.
And gazelles leap and leap.

Ba Yesu Iyee Ee! (Jesus, Wow!)

A Song from Zambia

Aaron Mulenga's wife, Jennipher, teaches at the school the couple started with Charles Mwila in Twashuka, Zambia. Jennipher composed this song of praise. Listen to children from the school sing it in English and in Bemba on Track 16.

Jesus, iyee ee!
You have done it again!
Jesus, iyee ee!
In your special way
What was impossible
You make possible!
Jesus, iyee ee!

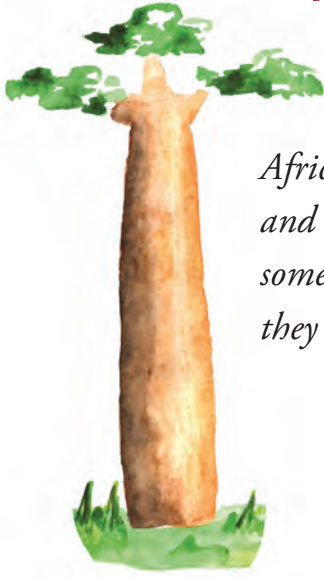
Jesus, iyee ee!
Jesus, iyee ee!
You have done it again!
Jesus, iyee ee!
In your special way
What was impossible
You make possible!
Jesus, iyee ee! *(repeat)*

Ba Yesu, iyee ee!
Ba Yesu, iyee ee!
Nakabili mwabomba!
Ba Yesu, iyee ee!
Munshila shenu
Ifyali ifyakosa
Lelo fyanaka!
Ba Yesu, iyee ee! *(repeat)*



The Legend of the Baobab Tree

A Tale from Africa



Africans have created a variety of legends about the baobab tree and its unusual appearance. The following account is based on some of those legends. These baobab legends are not true, but they are an important part of African culture. Track 17

One sunny day, the baobab tree looked down at his reflection in a pond. In the water he saw the reflection of the clear blue sky, the brilliant white clouds, and the most hideous tree he had ever seen. He stared in horror at himself. “Is that me?” he cried. “How dreadful I look! My leaves are so small! Why are my flowers not as bright as the flowers on other trees? My bark is so wrinkled. Why, I look like a fat old elephant!” The baobab tree turned from the pond in disgust.

Later that day, the baobab saw his Creator in the sky. He complained, “Why did you not make me handsome? Why did you not give me beautiful red flowers like the tulip tree?”

“Why can I not make My creations as I please?” the Creator answered. “Do you think the hippopotamus is beautiful?”

“That is beside the point!” cried the baobab tree. “Why must my leaves be so small?”

“Do you think the hyena has a pleasant cry?” the Creator answered.

The baobab tree huffed. He continued to whine and complain about his appearance. Finally the Creator was tired of listening to the baobab tree’s grumbling and silenced him once and for all. He decided the baobab tree would never see his own reflection again. He plucked the baobab tree from the ground by its roots and firmly planted him again upside down. Ever since that day, baobab trees have been unable to complain about themselves and have instead spent their time doing good and offering help to all people.



Sheng Ming Di He (River of Life)

A Song from China

This is one of the many songs written by Lü Xiao Min that has blessed countless Chinese Christians. Shiwei Zhai is a Chinese Christian who is from Henan Province and grew up close to Xiao Min's village. He recorded this song especially for you. It is one of his favorites. Track 38

Sheng ming di he,
Xi le di he,
Huan huan liu jin wo di xin wo.
Sheng ming di he,
Xi le di he,
Huan huan liu jin wo di xin wo.
Wo yao chang na yi shou ge,
Chang yi shou tian shang di ge.
Tou shang di wu yun
Xin li di you shang quan dou sa luo

River of life,
River of joy,
Slowly flows into my heart.
River of life,
River of joy,
Slowly flows into my heart.
I want to sing a heavenly song,
Sing that song all the day.
Dark skies above, all
Pain and grief shall surely fade away.



The Empty Pot

A Tale from China

This classic Chinese tale teaches that honesty is more important than impressing others. Track 39

Many years ago in China lived a boy who loved to grow plants. The boy's name was Chang. Everything the boy planted grew healthy and strong. His lotus flowers were the most beautiful. His pears were the juiciest. His berries were the sweetest. Everyone in Chang's village knew that Chang was the best gardener in the province.

Imagine Chang's delight when he heard about a new decree from the emperor. The emperor had no son. He had announced that he would be holding a contest to select a boy to succeed him as emperor. He would give a royal seed to any young boy who came to the palace on a chosen day. After six months, the boy who had grown the best plant from his seed would become the next emperor.

When the great day arrived, a large crowd of boys gathered at the palace. Each boy hurried home holding a tiny seed tightly in his hand.

Chang took his seed home and carefully planted it in a beautiful pot filled with the very best soil. He faithfully watered it every day. He watched over it day after day, carefully moving the pot to the sunniest parts of the garden throughout each day. Nothing happened. He transferred the seed to another pot with different soil and fertilized it well. Still nothing happened. Chang didn't understand. All of his friends had plants that were growing strong and tall, but Chang's seed hadn't even sprouted.

The day came when all the boys were to take their plants to show the emperor. A huge crowd of young and old thronged the palace. One boy after another proudly held up his pot to the emperor, but the emperor frowned at each one. Finally Chang stepped up with his empty pot in his hands. The emperor scowled. "Why have you brought me an empty pot?" he asked.

Chang hung his head. “My apologies, your greatness. I planted the seed you gave me and tended it the best way I knew how, but it never sprouted.”

As the emperor stared down at the little boy, a smile slowly crept across his face. “Men and women,” he cried, “I present to you your future emperor!” Chang looked up in surprise and saw that the emperor was pointing at him. “I do not know where these other boys got their seeds,” the emperor continued, “but it certainly wasn’t from me. The seeds I gave out were all cooked. They will never grow. Chang is the only honest boy among them all, and that is how I know he will make the greatest emperor.”



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