

Down in the Valley

Traditional American folk song, also known as Birmingham Jail

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*G*⁷ *C* *G*

Down in the valley, the valley so low,

C

Hang your head over, hear the winds blow.

*G*⁷ *C* *G*

Hear the winds blow, dear, hear the winds blow.

*G*⁷ *C*

Hang your head over, hear the winds blow.

Roses love sunshine, violets love dew,
Angels in heaven know I love you;
Know I love you, dear, know I love you,
Angels in heaven know I love you.

If you don't love me, love whom you please,
Throw your arms round me, give my heart ease.
Give my heart ease, dear, give my heart ease,
Throw your arms round me, give my heart ease.

Build me a castle forty feet high,
So I can see her, as she rides by;
As she rides by, dear, as she rides by,
So I can see her as she rides by.

Write me a letter, send it by mail,
Send it in care of, the Birmingham jail,
Birmingham jail dear, here my travail,
If you still love me, please come with my bail.

Other Verses

Down in the valley,
Walking between;
Telling our story;
Here's what it sings.

Here's what it sings, dear,
Here's what it sings.
Telling our story,
Here's what it sings.

Bird in a cage, love;
Bird in a cage.
Dying for freedom;
Ever a slave.

Ever a slave, dear;
Ever a slave.
Dying for freedom,
Ever a slave.

History

"**Down in the Valley**", also known as "**Birmingham Jail**," is a traditional country-blues American folk song. It is a popular Appalachian Mountain courting song that descended from a British air and likely originated during the development of the Industrial United States from 1870 to 1900. It is also popular with American cowboys and has developed ties to the the American Civil Rights Movement.

In addition to the Appalachian beginnings, there are other claims about how the song and particularly the Birmingham Jail verses came to be. The

Birmingham City Jail is first mentioned in history in the 1890s and was closed in 2012. According to one biographer of Lead Belly he performed "Birmingham Jail" for Texas

Governor Pat Neff at the Sugarland Penitentiary in 1924. Guitarist Jimmie Tarlton claimed to have

written the lyrics in 1925 while he was jailed in Birmingham for moonshining. It was first recorded by Tarlton and his partner Tom Darby on November 10, 1927 in Atlanta, Georgia for Columbia Records.

Darby and Tarlton use "down in the levee" in place of "down in the valley"; the version sung by Lead Belly in 1934 substitutes "Shreveport jail" for "Birmingham jail."

The **Letter from Birmingham Jail**, also known as **The Negro Is Your Brother**, is an open letter written on April 16, 1963, by Martin Luther King Jr. The letter defends the strategy of nonviolent resistance to racism. It says that people have a moral responsibility to break unjust laws and to take direct action rather than waiting potentially forever for justice to come through the courts. King writes, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere". The letter, written during the 1963 Birmingham campaign, was widely published, and became an important text for the American Civil Rights Movement.

mc3betzwood.wordpress.com, hwww.smliv.com/, <http://www.balladofamerica.com/> and find Dr. King's entire letter from the Birmingham jail and more on Wikipedia

