

# WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

*The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song*

## Happy Birthday

STEVIE WONDER

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*In 1981, the immensely talented and popular American singer and songwriter known on stage as Stevie Wonder (born in 1950 as Stevland Hardaway Judkins; he changed his surname to Morris) wrote and released this song in protest against the opposition to having a national holiday in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Its popularity here and abroad helped rally many supporters to the cause, and two years later Congress enacted the necessary legislation.<sup>1</sup>*

*The song is of interest to us here because of the reasons Stevie Wonder adduces to honor King. Gathering evidence from each stanza, what are the reasons Wonder gives for why there should be a celebration of King's birthday? What, according to the song, is the special contribution for which King should be so honored? Do you think that these reasons add up to a defense of a specifically American holiday, rather than a universal human one? Do we—and should we—celebrate King as an apostle of peace and love, rather than, say, of freedom and equality?*

You know it doesn't make much sense  
There ought to be a law against  
Anyone who takes offense  
At a day in your celebration

'Cause we all know in our minds  
That there ought to be a time  
That we can set aside  
To show just how much we love you

And I'm sure you will agree  
It couldn't fit more perfectly  
Than to have a world party  
On the day you came to be

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<sup>1</sup> To watch Stevie Wonder perform the song, visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=inS9gAgSENE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inS9gAgSENE).

# WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

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*(Chorus)*

Happy birthday to you  
Happy birthday to you  
Happy birthday  
Happy birthday to you  
Happy birthday to you  
Happy birthday

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I just never understood  
How a man who died for good  
Could not have a day that would  
Be set aside for his recognition

'Cause it should never be  
Just 'cause some cannot see  
The dream as clear as he  
That they should make it become an illusion

And we all know everything  
That he stood for time will bring  
For in peace our hearts will sing  
Thanks to Martin Luther King

*(Chorus)*

Why has there never been a holiday, yeah  
Where peace is celebrated  
All throughout the world

The time is overdue  
For people like me and you  
You know the way to truth  
Is love and unity to all God's children

It should be a great event  
And the whole day should be spent  
In full remembrance

# WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

*The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song*

Of those who lived and died for the oneness of all people

So let us all begin  
We know that love can win  
Let it out don't hold it in  
Sing as loud as you can

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*(Chorus twice)*

We know the key to unify all people  
Is in the dream that you had so long ago  
That lives in all the hearts of people  
That believe in unity  
We'll make the dream become a reality  
I know we will  
Because our hearts tell us so

Happy birthday  
Happy birthday  
Happy birthday

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