

# No, I Did Not Rebel Against My Mama

by William L. Jenkins

No, I did not rebel against my mama  
For too many times she was up preparing my  
breakfast while I was still asleep.  
She would turn on the radio so I could hear a  
sermon before I spoke a word.  
So that my steps that day would be guided by  
God's will rather than my own.  
She prepared biscuits for me with hands that  
had already been overworked.  
And served them with the hope that they  
would empower me to soar.  
We ate and went to the fields together to survive  
another day.  
No, I did not rebel against my mama.



I could not rebel against my mama, life was hard  
enough for her as it was.  
Being poor and black and female and powerless, her very existence was a struggle.  
And in retrospect, she must have been scared to death of every day's unknowns.  
The last thing she needed were children who did not love her, honor her, and obey her.  
It was enough that she had to endure the indignities of poverty and injustice.  
It was enough that she had to spend her nights lonely, deprived, and unfulfilled,  
That she had to shelter us, clothe us, and feed us with meager crumbs from leased soil.  
So, I did not rebel against my mama.

I could not rebel against my mama,  
This woman who birthed me in a ragged house with broken windows and an unfinished floor.  
In the November cold she gave me life at the risk of her own life.  
And limited her life so that my life might be unlimited – far beyond her imaginations.  
She went to work so I could go to school – and did without so I could have.  
Many times she went hungry while I ate, and lay awake at night worrying while I soundly slept.  
Not once did she weep or complain or give any sign of weakening under her heavy load.  
Years later I learned of our poverty – thank God by then I knew of our wealth.

I could not rebel against my mama.  
Not this woman who prayed when I was out at night that God would bring me safely home,  
And did not sleep until my footsteps on the porch proved that her prayers had been answered once again.  
I could not go home at the expense of her prayers and reject the heart that had sent them out.  
It was bad enough that I went to bed nightly not knowing of her petitions in my behalf.  
It was bad enough that I saw other women's beauty and only her strength,  
That I wooed their love and took hers for granted, thanked them, and said nothing to her.  
The least I could do was to comply quietly to her few requests.  
So, I did not rebel against my mama.

After a hard week's work mama went to church on Sunday in her white usher's dress.  
She took us with her to show the world that we were earthly proud and heavenly bound.  
We were her claim to importance and her best hope of deliverance from her lowly state.  
We were God's gift to each other; We to her, and her to us.  
Mama introduced us to God early and taught us to honor him in all of our ways.  
We were a team, God, Mama, and us, unwavering, unbeatable, and inseparable.  
Rebelling against mama for me would have been like rebelling against God.  
So, I could not rebel against my mama.

I could not dampen that smile that she wore through all of our trials and tribulations.  
However unbecoming it may have seemed for our situation, she wore it anyway.  
When the hope she placed in her children paid off with their success, the smile grew brighter.  
She was still wearing that bright smile when she went home to be with Jesus.  
Now, just the thought of mama keeps a smile in my heart, knowing that we are together still, inseparable.  
The lessons she taught me, the love she gave to me, and the hope she left with me, abide.  
And have done me so much good that I thank God for her every day.  
And I am so glad that I did not rebel against my mama.