

JOSHUA AND GENEVA GENTRY

ESSAY CONTEST

Essay checklist:

- *Be sure to use correct grammar.*
- *Be sure your essay is easy to read.*
- *Be sure to use correct punctuation.*
- *Be sure to have an introduction, body, and conclusion in your essay.*
- *Complete all information requested.*
- *Upload one (1) copy of your college or university acceptance letter.*
- *Upload letter of recommendation from two (2) of the following individuals (pastor, teacher, counselor, or community leader.)*

Joshua and Geneva Gentry Scholarship Checklist:

- I have completed the Joshua Gentry Scholarship application form.
- My union president has signed my application. **(This signature verifies your active involvement with a union of the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses, Inc.)**
- All letters of recommendation have been individually sealed and enclosed in the application packet.

Biographical Sketch of Joshua E. Gentry

Joshua Gentry was born in Cohoma, MS. to Walter and Mary Gentry on February 15, 1912. After the passing of his mother, his father and he moved to Helena, Arkansas. After residing in Helena for a while, they moved to East St. Louis, IL, where he matriculated in East St. Louis public school systems. It was during this time that Mrs. Daisy Westbrook, who began to train and tutor Brother Gentry, noticed his music interest and talent.

As a young lad, Gentry became acquainted with the Lord and focused his extraordinary gift toward religious music. As a teenager, he became a member of the True Light Baptist church, which was pastored by the Reverend J. A. Lampley. At True Light he served as director of the youth choir. Moreover, for the next 25 years he continued his call to serve as minister of music where he was known to have one of the finest music departments in the city of East St. Louis. After service at True Light he continued his music ministry for 25 years at the West Side Baptist Church.

In 1939, Joshua Gentry became a member of the East St. Louis Gospel Choral Union which soon thereafter established affiliation with the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses. Through this body of gospel singers, Gentry became acquainted with Dr. Thomas A. Dorsey who recognized his musical abilities. Together they labored in the music ministry of the National

Convention Gospel Choirs and Choruses. Additionally, Gentry served in many capacities throughout the convention. This includes the President of the Youth Department, member of the Returns Finance Committee, Secretary of the Board of Directors, and 3rd, 2nd, and 1st vice president. Without doubt, the NCGCC is an organization that he truly loved.

Brother Gentry was an arranger and well-rounded musician who understood the importance of and appreciated church music. He believed that church music must not only have order but versatility. He and his wife Geneva, whom he married in 1942, formulated an annual music program, "When Singers Meet, Inc.," that focused on exposing their community to various music genres and artists. Some of the featured artists included Roberta Martin, Thomas Dorsey, Sarah Jordan Powell, Sally Powell, Sally Martin, Alex Bradford, Mahalia Jackson, The Barrett Sisters, Bobby Jones, and Bishop Kenneth H. Moales, Sr.

Gentry and his wife had two children, Joseph and Marabeth, who are quite accomplished. Joseph is a lieutenant Colonel. Marabeth is a teacher, musician and vocalist who became the 1st African American classical music graduate of Webster University. Both of their children are testaments of the positive and professional influence their parents have had in their upward mobility and career successes.

In 1986, Bro. Gentry brought to the attention of the convention that union presidents needed to be honored in some way for their initiative and hard work. That was something for which he strived for until his passing in March of 1990. He truly believed that they were the keys to the successful growth of the convention and the overall effective communication to unions. Thus, the Joshua Gentry Scholarship (since re-named the Joshua and Geneva Gentry Scholarship, in honor of his benevolent and supportive wife, Geneva) of the National Convention of Gospel Choirs was established by the president's council to honor his great soldier of Christ who labored endlessly to make a difference in the life of others.

All applicants must complete an essay to include the following information.

Essay Prompt: Joshua Gentry believed that church music must have order and versatility. How does what you believe and know about (gospel) church music compare to Joshua Gentry? In what ways have you or will you, use your knowledge of church music (and music genres in general) to improve your community, as Joshua and Geneva Gentry did with the formation of their organization, When Singers Meet?

Essay Requirements:

Your essay should be between 3 to 5 pages long, using Times New Roman font, 12-point font and double-spaced.

Be sure you include in your essay the church, school, and community activities you are involved in and your role in each. What honors or awards have you received? Also, include who has been the greatest influence in your life and why? Include any other information that you think is important for the scholarship committee to know about you.