

Beau John  
Words and Music by Tom Paxton

Beau John was a king in his own native land,  
He ruled for a thousand days,  
Till the slave traders came and they locked him in irons,  
And they told him he'd have to go away.  
And they told him he'd have to go away.

Beau John got sick on the long ocean voyage.  
All around him people died.  
They took his friends and they threw them overboard.  
John hung down his head and he cried.  
John hung down his head and he cried.

They sold Beau John down in New Orleans,  
To a man with a whip in his hand.  
He said farewell to his wife and his child,  
And they took him to a strange new land.  
They took him to a strange new land.

Beau John worked hard for thirty-seven years.  
He worked with a woman by his side.  
And on the morn that his last son was born,  
Beau John laid down and he died.  
Beau John laid down and he died.

His son grew up just as big as his dad.  
They called him Beau John too.  
And for one hundred years Beau John and his sons,  
Did just what the master made them do.  
They did just what the master made them do.

Until one day when the cannon fire roared.  
The master's wife and children did flee.  
Some men in blue coats rode into the yard,  
And they told Beau John that he was free.  
And they told Beau John that he was free.

When the nightriders came for old Beau John,  
Little Beau John hid behind a tree.  
He saw what they did and he hit the northern trails,  
Saying maybe up there they'll let me be.  
Saying maybe up there they'll let me be.

But they pushed Beau John and they shoved him around,  
Till he didn't know where to turn.  
Some folks up in Harlem took him into their home,  
And Beau John started into learn.  
And Beau John started into learn.

He fought for his country in World War One.  
His son fought in World War Two.  
And they learned no matter what price they paid,  
There were certain things they weren't allowed to do.  
There were certain things they weren't allowed to do.

And then one night on the television screen,  
He saw that Medgar Evers was dead.  
He took his wife in his arms in the night,  
And these are the words that he said, Beau John,  
These are the words that he said.

Well they made me a slave and I worked in their fields.  
They made me fight in their war.  
They kept me down for four hundred years.  
But I ain't gonna take it any more.

No I ain't gonna take it any more.

His wife got a letter from a Georgia jail,  
From a town called Albany,  
Saying I am proud to be your own Beau John,  
And I ain't coming home till we're free.  
No, And I ain't coming home till we're free.