

# Langston Hughes:

## MALEVOLENT FORCE

by Elizabeth Staples

*The record of this writer is plain, for all to see.*

*From the first, it was and is pro-Communist.*

Two recent happenings prompt and justify definitive research on Langston Hughes, longtime contributor to publications in America.

One is that various denominations of Protestant churches are proceeding, as by a prearranged signal, to recommend Hughes' writings for intensive study by church groups. For example, the Methodist Church, strong arm of the National Council of Churches, urges specific supplemental reading from Langston Hughes in its official study book for WSCS classes, entitled *The Kingdom Beyond Caste*, by Liston Pope (published in 1957 by the Friendship Press, New York). This is but one of many similar recommendations by various sects, while some college courses have stamped this author with their seal of approval for undergraduate perusal. In view of these endorsements, friends of organized Protestantism and of higher education might well do a little independent investigating.

Concurrently, a 500-page book has popped off the Brazillier Press, New York, about which some astonishing review opinion has been printed. Twitters one reviewer: "This versatile Negro . . . handsome cosmopolite . . . has earned the respect and admiration of both races." (From book review by Hermes Nye, p. 15, Roundup Section, *Dallas Times Herald*, July 27, 1958.)

The colorful jacket on the book reads, "*The Langston Hughes Reader*—Novels, Stories, Plays, Autobiographies, Poems, Songs, Blues, Pageant Articles, Speeches." The bulky volume is priced at \$5.95.

We are not informed how many "Autobiographies" Hughes can boast, and must wonder if the *Reader* inadvertently omitted some of them. For unknown reasons, one notable excision is that of his celebrated *vers libre*, "Goodbye, Christ," which has been so widely circulated as not to need reproduction. *Elizabeth Staples is a former editor of Facts Forum News.*

tion here. It may be found, produced in sworn testimony before the Special Committee on Un-American Activities, Vol. 2, page 1366; also in House Special Committee Report No. 2681, on Tax-Exempt Foundations, 83rd Congress, Second Session, pp. 293-294; and is referred to on pp. 41-42 of House Document No. 136, *One Hundred Things You Should Know About Communism*.

Is it possible that the publisher, or someone at the helm, decided that a little scrubbing-up of Hughes' literary offerings was in order? If so, an additional can of strong cleansing powder would have been a good investment.

WE ACKNOWLEDGE perforce that the current mode of fiction, poetry, and plays call for loading the text, to varying degrees, with depravities, obscenities, and miscellaneous, malodorous barnyard dirt. Hughes goes far beyond the call of duty in piling filth on filth.

A critic is both embarrassed and handicapped in trying to assess the devious Langston Hughes expression. For daring to quote verbatim, one could justly be sued. He is master of the sly and wily innuendo—the remark that is either innocent or guilty, depending on the reader's "wised up" reaction. This, in the judgment of some mature yet not hidebound guardians of developing intellects, makes the most unworthy, most unrewarding type of

reading matter which can be placed in the hands of inquiring youth.

Young readers, of course, are loath to let the *double entendre* go "over their heads." They will focus intently, in order to get "the point" (which random reading of a page or two in the *Reader* will convince them is lurking, veiled or unveiled, in almost every paragraph). After they have comprehended "the point," they are apt to plume themselves on being clever; thus the unwholesome interpretation will be impressed upon their plastic minds for keeps.

The part-time joy and jollity of Hughes, as exemplified particularly in his short stories, are thinly spread over bitter, thrice bitter, bedrock sarcasm and hatred. The Negroes he describes are singularly devoid of dignity and race pride.

In a portion of the "Autobiographies," Hughes tells of a trip he made to Africa, at age 21, as busboy on a freighter. He realistically conveys the thrill he felt on visiting the land of his forefathers. The excerpts, however, contain no record of his conclusions as to whether or not he thinks that several generations of American life have given him advantages over those enjoyed by his distant cousins who still inhabit the Dark Continent. To this obvious question, however, his agile mind must have had a ready answer.

He is quick to seize on the term "race relations" to prove that thor-

oughgoing "race relations" would rest on the prerequisite of mating and miscegenation.

His pageant, "The Glory of Negro History," omits a significant factor. When telling of the captive black men and women who, in the early seventeenth century, began to be transported from Africa as slaves, Hughes misses a good chance to inform his audience that those poor wretches were sold into bondage by their own greedy and cruel African chiefs, who rounded up unwanted and troublesome tribesmen and sold them as "blackbirds," thus constituting themselves first offenders in the opprobrious slave traffic.

ADMITTEDLY, Hughes presents a convincing picture, almost a documentary one, of the Negro and Negroid population in America. His fictional characters stride through the pages; they are real, not dreamed. But oh, what traits emerge! Quite matter-of-factly he records Negro qualities and outlook for Leftist critics to accept and rave over. Commonplace are such lines as, "He didn't remember his father," "In mid-June, her illegitimate kid was born," and "He's mighty damn white for a nigger chile." The tone thereby established as normal fits directly into the pattern of statism, wherein family ties, traditions and associations are hacked down to the irreducible minimum.

His short story, "Guitar," from

the collection, *Not Without Laughter*, is a perfect reproduction of spontaneous musical utterance, done without bitterness and yielding up the very heart of transplanted primitive Negro artistry. It's a rare find for a folklorist, yet does not compensate for the viciousness and vulgarity of his work as a whole. And even in this almost-admirable fragment is embedded a violent slap at the minds of "white folks" who will discern evil where it exists; of course the fault is in their own minds, even in the face of reality. This is a perverted conception if ever there was one. Apparently, he puts it over among a certain coterie of Langston Hughes promoters.

Much has been left out of this comprehensive volume.

Not mentioned is the long and constant pro-Communist record of Langston Hughes. His citations run into fantastic numbers. Here are a few:

The *Daily Worker*, September 14, 1932, named Hughes as one of the signers of a "Call for Support of the Communist Party National Elections and Its Candidates." The same newspaper, issue of February 7, 1949, reported that Langston Hughes, Negro people's poet, defends the Communist leaders on trial; and warns the Negro people that "they too are being tried," in his column in the current issue of the *Chicago Defender*. The article further quoted Hughes as declar-

ing, "If the 12 Communists are sent to jail, in a little while they will send Negroes to jail simply for being Negroes, and to concentration camps just for being colored." (Quoted from "Tax-Exempt Foundations," House Report No. 2681.) The spirit of this broadside is clearly akin to that prevailing in his prose and poetry.

Langston Hughes endorsed the drive of Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, and went to Spain in 1937 as correspondent for a Cuban newspaper. His account of this trip in the *Reader* is openly sympathetic to the Loyalist-Communists and is found on pages 418-461.

Through the years his works have been enthusiastically reviewed by the *Daily Worker*, and his books have been advertised and sold by the Workers Book Shop.

He has been identified as a Communist Party member by Manning Johnson and by Louis Budenz, under oath. On July 8, 1953, Manning Johnson testified to that effect (pp. 2174, 2175, U. S. Government publication No. 33909, House Investigation of Communist Activities in New York City Area, Part 7. Verified on page 69, February 6, 1954, in Annual House Report No. 1192, on Un-American Activities).

**A**N ALLEGATION of Hughes' Communist Party membership appears in the 1944 Appendix, Part IX, report of the Special House Committee on Un-American Com-

mittees, Martin Dies, chairman. On Page 261 the appendix states that "the National Citizens Political Action Committee has 141 members. Out of this number, 83 per cent have records of affiliation with Communist and Communist front organizations." On Page 262, the report goes on to say: "So far as is known, only one of Hillman's NCPAC members has been a card-holding member of the Communist Party: namely, Langston Hughes."

Hughes signed a "message" which called upon the United States Congress to oppose renewal of the House Un-American Activities Committee (p. 29, Eleventh Report, California Senate Investigating Committee on Education, 1953).

Hughes was one of a score of Communists and pro-Communists who gathered in New York in 1937 to celebrate the adoption of the new Constitution of Soviet Russia (p. 24, Fourteenth Report, California Senate Investigating Committee on Education, 1956).

House Report No. 378 on the Communist "Peace" Offensive, a "Campaign to Disarm and Defeat the United States, April 1, 1951, mentions Langston Hughes among individuals who have been affiliated with such a significant number of Communist fronts that they may be said to constitute a body of reliable and consistent supporters of Communist organizations."

As far back as March, 1949, Hughes had already been cited for

affiliation in more than 70 Communist-front organizations, according to "Review of the Scientific and Cultural Conference for World Peace," released by the House Committee on Un-American Activities, March 25, 26 and 27, 1949, page 18.

In the testimony of G. Bromley Oxnam, July 21, 1953, at a Hearing before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, Hughes shows up as a member of the American League for Peace and Democracy (page 3639) and as a signer of the "message" to the House of Representatives opposing renewal of the Dies Committee (page 3661).

Also, Hughes rejoices in 25 separate listings for subversive or Communist-front activities in the 1948 volume, Fourth Report, Un-American Activities in California (indexed).

**I**N TRACING his affiliations, it is pitiable to note that Hughes is never an officer in these organizations, is seldom even a sponsor at a dinner party, but is just another member, another signer, another statistic—a mere private in the rear ranks. For so assiduous a worker, this would seem to betray a lack of proper recognition, perhaps even a touch of—ah, well, discrimination.

His friends, as claimed in the

autobiographical data, include such well-known, many-splendored Left-Wingers as Paul and "Essie" Robeson, Theodore Dreiser, Rev. Clayton Powell, Mary McLeod Bethune, Pearl Buck, Clarence Darrow, Salvador Dali, Aaron Douglas (mentioned in the Jack McMichael Hearing), Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Bunche, and many more—for Hughes is a name-dropper.

A United States Senate hearing on Government Operations, dated March 24, 25 and 26, 1953 (Government Document No. 33616), contains nine pages of Langston Hughes' testimony, in which he explains (apparently to the satisfaction of all) that some of his most un-American writings were placed in the utterances of his fictional character, Simple, therefore could not be construed as unpatriotic. He further states under oath that he "never actually joined the Communist Party," although he admits that he wrote some books which "very largely followed at times some aspects of the Communist line, reflecting my sympathy with them." (We trust that his listeners made due allowance for the fact that Langston Hughes is widely accepted as a top-flight humorist!) The foregoing testimony brings to a surprising climax events of his career.

Return postage, together with a self-addressed envelope, must be included with each unsolicited manuscript to insure its return.

# This Is What They Said

- The *Social Crediter*, published in England, on March 1, 1941 stated: "Mr. Harriman and the New York financiers are more or less gentile fronts for Messrs. Kuhn Loeb & Co. *They were granted enormous concessions amounting to thousands of millions of dollars* by Lenin and Trotsky for the industrialization of Russia. (Averill Harriman was Special Advisor on Foreign Affairs to President Truman.)
- From the outbreak of war the President has been under fire for permitting, if not encouraging, William C. Bullitt, American Ambassador to France, and other diplomats, to encourage France and Poland to get into war with promises of American support.—ARTHUR SEARS HENNING, *Washington Times Herald*, November 12, 1941.
- The Soviet radio and newspapers have omitted all reference to the remarks by Nikita Khrushchev to the effect that "half of the members of the presidium of the Communist Party of the USSR have Jewish wives."—CALIFORNIA JEWISH VOICE, May 2, 1958, page 3. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev himself and Soviet President Klimenty Zoroshilov also have Jewish wives.—B'NAL B'RITH MESSENGER, May 2, 1958.
- For as Robison truly adds: Woman is indebted to Christianity alone for the high rank she holds in society. It is undoubtedly Christianity that has set woman on her throne. If not only Christianity but all religion is to be destroyed, then indeed women will sink to a condition which Robison describes as lower than a "Mohammedan paradise."—by NESTA H. WEBSTER, *WORLD REVOLUTION, The Plot Against Civilization*, page 323.
- Jews are now proving their "collectivity" by building Israel, and that they have proved it by building up the labor unions in the United States *and in building the Soviet system in the USSR*.—NATIONAL JEWISH POST AND OPINION, April 18, 1958, page 1.