**Patriotism is Not Bounded to Race: A Reflection of “I, Too” by Langston Hughes**

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In the contemporary world, pop culture has developed significantly from the African American art, music, fashion, and literature. This was not always the case. Langston Hughes’ “I, Too” war published in 1927 in his book of poetry *Weary Blue*. This poem focuses on African American identity within the overriding white society in the United States. It captures the history of oppression African Americans faced because they were denied rights in a segregated America. The speaker has a sense of earning for equality in America, yet still affirming patriotism is not defined by race. "I, Too" is about the segregation of African Americans, whites and the hope that “sperate but equal” will come to an end soon.

“I, Too” is written in free verse, that has short lines, and simple language. The speaker is an African American man, that is relieved in the second line “I am the darker brother.” While the poem does not provide what the exact historical context the poem is set in, readers can infer it is either a slave, a free man during the Jim Crow era, or a house servant. This allows Hughes to reflect on the African American experience rather as a whole

In the opening line, the speaker says “I, too, sing America,” declaring he, too, is entitled to feel patriotic about America, despite being “a darker brother”. It is a strong, deliberate statement that makes it very clear what the speaker’s message is. Hughes’ usage of “I” helps echo that he too is an American and will not be let down by society, nor will other African Americans. One can also compare this line to Walt Whitman’s “I Hear America Singing.” Whiteman’s 1865 poem describes all of the workers, their different voices and different sounds, that collectively contribute to America’s song (Greenspan, 1995). Hughes’ seems to be reminding Whiteman, one of Hughes’ scholarly statues, that he forgotten—intentionally or not—someone: African Americans who played a crucial role in building this country that has sometimes been overlooked.

The other position if you hear that “too” as “two” is not the speaker’s willingness to obey others unquestionably, but dividedness (Ward, 2016). This relates directly back to the American civil war and the function of African American slaves in the great houses of the plantations. Lincoln once said that: 'A house divided against itself cannot stand' (Spacey, 2019). Hughes’s pays tribute to W.E.B Dubois, an African American intellectual and civil-rights activist, along with many other attributes. Dubois wrote essays and speeches on the dividedness within the country. “DuBois makes the body of the African-American—the body that endured so much work and which is beautifully rendered in Hughes’ second stanza “I am the darker brother”—as the vessel for the divided consciousness of his people,” (Ward, 2016).

The next five lines are used to summarize the speakers present experience. “They send me to eat in the kitchen/ When company comes, / But I laugh, / And eat well, / and grow strong.” The is the experience faced daily by African-Americans; moving from out of sight and dinning in the kitchen when company is there. But this does not seem to trouble the speaker too much. In fact, he laughs. He recognizes that the “they”, while not stated *who* but can inferred to be the white house owners, are abiding to the status quo. Namely, not allowing African Americans to be seated at the same dinner table, or even in the same room. Yet, the speaker is still content, still healthy. Therefore, he is able to grow both physically and, more importantly, mentally. This suggests that the apartheidic status quo will not last.

The speaker is confident that he will be at the table, that is, he'll have his own space and opportunity to partake in the American dream. “Tomorrow, / I’ll be at the table / When company comes.” Tomorrow is a metaphor for the future as a whole. He won't be told to 'Eat in the kitchen' any longer because times will be different. the culture will be changed and those who dictate to him now will see him in a different light. Not only that, but “they” will see “how beautiful” the speaker is. These same people who treated him with such cruelty and disdain will then conclude that they were wrong and feel ashamed. This statement is extremely hopeful and optimistic. It also embodies the American ambition and firmness in his patriotism and manhood.

Written in heart of the Harlem Renaissance, Hughes’, along with countless other notable African American figures, talk of desegregation and equality was robust. Harlem, a neighborhood in New York City, became the mecca for black culture in the twenties decade that had profound effect lasting through the Great Depression and WWII (Baker, 2013). Langston Hughes was one of the more prominent poets of his time, and a face of the Harlem Renaissance itself. “I, Too” reflects his pride in his race, living in a time that was not easy for African Americans.

In the final line, the speaker proclaims “I, too, am America.” A time, free of racial prejudices, African Americans are finally looked as equals. That’s what the “I, Too”, along with the Harlem Renaissance itself, symbolizes. Tomorrow is no longer a human divided but a whole person, regardless of race, identified as a true American.

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