

Scenes Taken at Benson High School When Langston Hughes Spoke Which Was Under the Direction of the Urban League of Portland



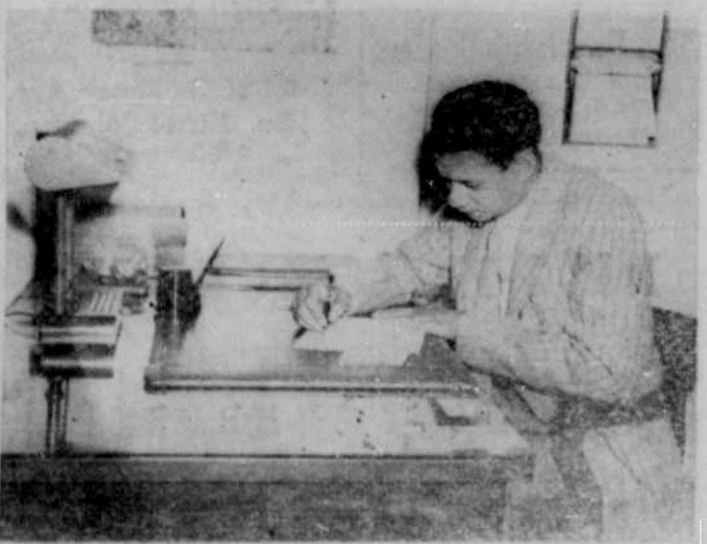
Scene 1. Mr. Hughes in a familiar pose.

Scene 2. A view of some of the 1,200 persons who heard Mr. Hughes speak.

Scene 3. A part of the many service men, under Cpl. Joe Brooks, who were guests of the Urban League and occupied special seats.

Scene 4. A picture of Mr. Edwin C. Berry—The Executive Secretary of the Portland League.

Scene 5. Mrs. Aldena E. Runnells, the efficient and friendly Assistant of Mr. Berry.



By Chesley E. Corbett

On the cover of the program passed out when Mr. Langston Hughes spoke here at Benson High appeared an article which I think is worthy of re-printing; it is billed as:

"MUST GIVE US PAUSE"

Quote:

America is a Democracy!—a nation whose people fight for the chance for "every individual to become what he is capable of becoming"; for the right of each individual to "freedom and the pursuit of happiness". But our exciting American Creed is bluntly contradicted in Portland and elsewhere in America by the denial of the freedom of opportunity and choice—America's birthright—to thirteen million Negro Americans.

Jim Crow is the antithesis of our American Creed. Jim Crow divides Americans; causes fear, suspicion and hate to set Americans one against the other; causes our nation to become internally weak.

Jim Crow lives in Portland! His presence is manifest by the "White Only" signs in restaurants, hotels, and places of amusement; by the symbolic "White Only" signs on jobs, and on houses for sale and for rent; by rigid segregation in our war housing communities; by the slanderous utterances of bigots and demagogues which appear in print, and are passed on by word of mouth.

Jim Crow is a relic of the Feudal System. His counterpart, the ghetto, is an alien technique of compressing a group of people in a certain residential section, and degrading them to the point that one might find some credence for the stories which have been invented about them. The despicable Hitler used this technique in his process of maligning the Jews.

Jim Crow is degrading to Negro Americans who are forced to live by his dictates. Jim Crow dooms the children of Negro Americans who are as yet unborn. Jim Crow is more vicious than all of this, because he is causing America to lose her moral leadership in World affairs. Our utterances of the American Creed and our enunciated war aims sound hollow indeed when superimposed upon the actual life of millions of Americans.

The reasons for this dual system of citizenship—one set of rights and privileges for whites and another, and more limited set, for Negroes—are manifold. Greed, hate, and vested interests all play a part. The unfortunate history of human bondage in America cannot be overlooked. These inequalities and injustices are bred more often by misinformation than by malice. The Urban League, therefore, looks upon that phase of its work which deals with public education—the correction of this misinformation—as fundamental to any lasting progress in the area of race relations.

Langston Hughes possesses a sensitive understanding of the problems sketched herein. Few Americans share his deep feeling and his ability to portray this feeling in verse and song, in prose and in poetry.

To understand the meanings of race relations in our complex American society, one must do as Langston Hughes has done. He has known intimately hundreds of white persons in the capacities of both employee and friend. His acquaintance with Negroes is no less complete. It is with pardonable pride that we present Langston Hughes to the membership and friends of the Urban League of Portland.

There are many persons who do not know the purpose and function of the Urban League. One of

the foremost organizations working for better relationship between majority and minority groups. In order to give you some information along this line we desire to publish the following:

"Quote"

The Urban League

(An Interpretive Statement)

The National Urban League had its origin in New York City 35 years ago. The newest of the affiliated branches is the Urban League of Portland, which has just been organized.

The Urban League is a movement of Americans, people of goodwill, people of all colors, creeds, and national origins, who believe that COOPERATION not coercion, intelligence and not ignorance, will solve the multitude of minority problems which we have in our land.

THE PROBLEM

Black hands built ships, hewed timber, cleared fields, plowed land, bridged streams and raised cities. Black bodies strained over the steel rails and the wooden ties to send railroads, the arteries of the nation, spearing through mountains, tunneled by Negroes, across bridges built by Negroes, beyond prairies and swamps marked by Negro graves. Black bodies gleamed in the seething heat of the steel mills and writhed in agony on the battlefields of our wars. So, the Negro has a stake in America. Yet, what happens to this one-out-of-ten-Americans?

When the jobs are few, he starves. When there are nearly enough jobs for everybody, he gets the hardest work at the lowest wage. When there are more jobs to be done than there are people to do them, even then he gets only the jobs from which he is most easily fired, and, often the jobs go begging because some employers would prefer not to have the job done than have a Negro do it. For instance: railroad companies won't hire him as an engineer. Communication companies will give him a job as a porter or janitor, but little else.

His children become discouraged with preparation for skilled and professional jobs, because they see so few examples of Negroes who are permitted to hold them. Or, they may be counseled by well-meaning but not too well-informed school teachers against preparation, because color of the individual rather than fitness and achievement determines the place he holds in the work-a-day world.

His home costs him more to buy or rent than a comparable one for a white man. Even if he does have money to live in a good house, he frequently isn't allowed to have the house. The white neighbors band together in "gentlemen's agreements" to keep him out.

If he has a case in court, he may find it advisable to hire a white lawyer of doubtful ability rather than a Negro lawyer, because white judges and white juries sometimes won't listen to the best Negro lawyer.

Many insurance companies charge him higher premiums. Some insurance companies (accident and liability) won't insure him at all; the reason: in case of a law suit they don't believe he will get justice before a court.

Hospitals—there are few exceptions—won't accept him as an interne or his sister as a nurse. If he goes to many hospitals as a patient, he must lie in a special bed.

Yet he lives in a democracy—a nation whose people believe in, and indeed fight for, a chance for "every individual to become what he is capable of becoming," for "equality of opportunity," and for the right of each individual to "the pursuit of happiness."

OUR PRINCIPLES

The Urban League does not believe in this dual system of citizenship—one set of rights and privileges for white citizens and another set for Negro citizens. These bitter inequalities, these cruel injustices, bred more often by misinformation than malice, the League seeks to destroy.

The Urban League believes in America and the principles of democratic government; it believes in American people, their innate love of liberty, their sense of right, their desire for fair play.

The Urban League recognizes the emergence of a serious problem in Portland and is cognizant of the need for all the people of this community to awaken; to learn the truth about each other, to work together, black and white alike; not for a community in which whites can live at ease, nor a pleasant place for Negroes, but a better city for all—a finer future for America.

OUR PURPOSE

It is the purpose of the Urban League to assist the community in the process of integrating Negro Americans, to the end that conditions under which they live, work, and play may be improved. It studies economic, social and industrial conditions as they affect Negroes and uses the findings to acquaint the citizenry of the Portland area with the true picture of Negroes. The League seeks to expand employment, housing, health, welfare, educational and recreational opportunity. The League works with existing organizations and encourages the formation of new agencies when the need is established and apparent. It is particularly interested in action which will promote interracial understanding and which will reduce and eliminate the causes of racial tension and violence.

The League employs the technique of COOPERATIVE INTER-RACIAL PLANNING AND COUNSELING. It uses methods of investigation, community organization, coordination, consultation, and interpretation. It employs professionally trained staff workers to guide and assist the executive board, committees, and community groups in achieving the stated purpose. It provides a channel of expression which will lead to positive social action for the many Negro and white Americans who wish to make Democracy a reality.

Urban League Urges Support Of F.E.P.C. Bill

The Urban League of Portland and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People have joined forces in an effort to get a more articulate interest in the Fair Employment Practices Bill, which is before Congress and which Southern senators are attempting to talk to death (filibuster) at his time.

Recent word from Washington indicates that more Oregonians are sending messages against the Fair Employment Practices Bill than for it. Those of us who favor the passage of this legislation should and must let our congressional representatives know where we stand on this issue. Thousands of telegrams must be sent immediately to Senator Wayne Morse and Senator Guy Cordon, at the Senate Office Building, Washington, D. C., advocating their support of the Bill and urging them to vote for cloture (limited debate). This will stop the filibuster.

DON'T WAIT! WIRE NOW! THE COST OF A COUPLE OF TELEGRAMS IS A CHEAP PRICE TO PAY FOR ANOTHER NAIL IN JIM CROW'S COFFIN. DO IT NOW.