HUGHES, LANGSTON, 1902-1967 . ***CURTAIN TIME*** . Columbia, MO : University of Missouri Press , 1950 .

Curtain Time

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With reference to the fact that there is no serious Negro musical or dramatic theatre in America, the Negro might well sing the refrain of the old song, "It's nobody's fault but mine." The Negro minority of more than fourteen million people has no professional acting group in the United States such as the Abbey or the Gate in Ireland, the Habimah in Palestine, or the Old Vic in England. In truth, the American Negro has no professional theatre of his own at all.

Nevertheless, we are very much a part of the American entertainment world, although still in a limited and inhibited fashion. Our actors act, our singers sing, our dancers dance -- but in the field of the commercial entertainment we almost always amuse under censorship, or under limitations which prevent a full realization of our potential talents.

There is a great deal of money to be made from commercial entertainment in the U. S. A. But American life is heavily afflicted with anti-Negro prejudices so, in order not to offend these prejudices, those who control entertainment for profit mould its forms insofar as colored actors and entertainers go. White Americans control commercial entertainment for *white* Americans. There will be no complete revelation of Negro talent in entertainment in Jim Crow America until some areas of it are controlled completely by Negroes, providing entertainment for their own racial group first, and only incidentally for others who may wish to enjoy it.

Even theatres such as the Apollo in Harlem catering to a Negro audience are controlled entirely by the whites who run them. That is no doubt why, unlike the social comedy of European or Latin countries, in the humor of the low comedians of theatres such as the Apollo there almost never creeps the slightest jibe at the *status quo* of Jim Crow under which the audience and the comedians themselves live. Negro comedians have a wealth of unused satirical material of an hilarious nature inherent in our pseudo-democratic race relations in America. But you would never know it at the Apollo where black comics limit themselves entirely to making fun of Negroes. They are afraid of not getting a return--295--engagement at white-owned theatres if they make fun of white people. So they kid themselves about a ghost in a graveyard instead of kidding the Ku Klux Klan whose hoods and sheets are as absurd as the garb of a ghost. They are afraid of managers and booking agents, afraid they will get but few engagements in the North and none at all in the South.

The shadow of the South hangs heavily over the Negro in entertainment in the U. S. A. It is worse over Hollywood. It also rides the radio waves. It makes a "Mammy" or a "Carolina Moon" of popular songs. This shadow is perhaps least heavy over Broadway. But even on Broadway the producers of a play like *Mulatto* or *Deep Are the Roots* will think ruefully how the road tour, if there is one, must be limited to cities above the Mason-Dixon line. For a serious Negro-white problem play, even Washington and Baltimore, only a few hours from New York, might have to be eliminated. And there will be no movie sale. So it is more profitable to produce a raceless, shootless comedy like *Anna Lucasta* purely for entertainment's sake, than to produce *On Whitman Avenue* or *On Trial* about restrictive covenants and housing. The all-Negro musical fantasy, *Cabin in the Sky*, could tour the South and even be sold to the movies. But for Duke Ellington's interracially cast *Beggar's Holiday*, there were no such chances. The South would not like *Beggar's Holiday*.

Show business is first and foremost a *business*. Often the art therein gets no further than the artist's heart. Still the American theatre has had some fine art groups -- the Provincetown Players, for instance. The early Theatre Guild and the Group Theatre once greatly influenced the purely commercial Broadway theatre for the better. But Negro America has as yet had no such serious art

groups attaining professional stature. In time we will have. Historically speaking, circumstances regarding our participation in the various fields of entertainment have been against us. In explanation, let us take a look at the past.

The Negro as a folk entertainer has always been accepted in America, but as a trained professional artist he has had a long hard way to go. It is one thing to listen to a black troubadour picking a guitar on a street corner and *maybe* drop a dime in his cap. But when you pay a dollar to see a picture, your prejudices as well as your risibilities must be tickled. The Negro began long ago tickling America's risibilities. In slavery he could hardly tickle anything else. It was fun listening to unorganized unprofessional Negro singing, hearing the absurd broken dialect spoken, watching the clog and buck and wing of slave dancers. It was so much fun that before the Civil War professional white entertainers borrowed these things from the Negro and made their famous and highly hilarious--296--blackface minstrels. White actors even borrowed a comic version of the Negro's color -- burnt cork. Eddie Cantor and the late Al Jolson only recently discarded it after many years. Amos and Andy still wear it on their tongues. In the movies there are some Negroes who do not have to wear it, it almost comes natural -- so well do they take direction on the lot. Uncle Tom did not really die. He simply went to Hollywood. Not all the slave songs were humorous. But it was the humorous ones that sold best, the minstrel men discovered. Not all the slave dancers were hilarious buck and wing. But in the early 1800's, who could sell the ache of the spirituals or the frenzy and terror of Congo Square and its drums? Not all things said in dialect were laughable. But the heart-breaking phrases had to wait until today for a dramatist like Theodore Ward to remember. They were not for the minstrel. Thus long ago in America the stereotype of the Negro as a humorous clown was born. That shadow of the South is still over the Negro in professional entertainment. A superb dancer like Bill Robinson told jokes shaming his people because he danced in that shadow.

Negro entertainers themselves in the 80's began to imitate the white minstrels -- they began to imitate the imitators of themselves. They, too, sang "coon" songs that the Negro people did not like, but which the whites paid money to hear. From the first Negro "coon" of minstrel days to Stepin Fetchit on the screen there is a direct line. Therein lies the tragedy of the Negro in American entertainment. For money he became a stereotype *of his own white stereotype* -- and for so *little* money. The white Al Jolsons and the Amoses and Andys made much more.

Fortunately there has been another and more truthful line from the folk art of the Negro past to the commercial entertainment of today. It, too, has had its humor, but it is the humor of the heart, not merely that of imitative tongues and burnt cork shadows. The vitality of Negro folk music from the slave songs to Broadway and the inventiveness of the Negro dance from the plantation to Katherine Dunham have been too great to be completely lost even when exploited most commercially. The Negro has influenced *all* American popular music and dancing.

The Broadway musical theatre from the minstrels to *Porgy and Bess* has been enriched by Negro rhythms, thematic material, and Negro singers and dancers. White composers and lyricists from Stephen Foster to George Gershwin have utilized Negro folk sources for their inspirations. Negro song writers, too, have wisely gone back to these sources. In the minstrel days one of the greatest of these was James Bland of *Carry Me Back to Old Virginny* fame.--297—

Ragtime began as a folk art, became a conscious creation, turned into jazz, to swing, to be-bop, and took decisive hold on American popular music no matter what the composer's color. Given new vitality just before World War I by the folk blues and the personal creations of W. C. Handy in those forms, Negro syncopation became the popular music of America. James Reese Europe created a sensation with the first orchestral concert of syncopated music at Carnegie Hall in 1912. Now Duke Ellington has an annual concert there. And Negro bands, white bands, and mixed bands play syncopated rhythms all over the country, not only for dancing, but for listening. Negro rhythms have begun to affect symphonic composers.

In the theatre there have been many excellent Negro composers and lyricists. At the turn of the century Cole and Johnson wrote a series of beautiful operettas sung and danced by colored artists of national fame. Williams and Walker toured the country in *In Abyssinia* and *Bandana Land*. Will Marion Cook, Will Vodery, and Alex Rogers created songs that swept the U. S. up to the time of World War I. Then there came a lull in the activities of the Negro musical stage, until Sissle and Blake wrote *Shuffle Along* that was to begin the new Negro vogue in theatre, literature, and art of the 1920s. *Shuffle Along* was the show that shot Florence Mills to international stardom.

There followed happy entertainments like *The Chocolate Dandies*, *Runnin' Wild*, *Dixie to Broadway*, *Blackbirds*, *Hot Chocolates*, and *Rhapsody in Black* spotlighting such talents as Louis Armstrong, Adelaide Hall, Josephine Baker, Ethel Waters, and the comedians Miller and Lyles. The 1930's brought about another lull, particularly in the use of Negro creative talents. Musicals employing Negro casts were more and more often written by whites. Individual Negro performers were more and more spotted in otherwise all-white revues; as an example, Ethel Waters in *As Thousands Cheer*. The all-Negro musical gradually began to disappear from the Broadway scene. That old American depression custom regarding the Negro as "first to be fired and last to be hired" had found its way into the theatre, too. An occasional *Cabin in the Sky* or *Carmen Jones* written by non-Negro composers is a far cry from the days of the gloriously dark and full-throated richness of *In Dahomey*when the century began its series of Negro-created musicals.

For both the musical and dramatic actor of color, the Federal Theatre of the depression period was more than a gift from Roosevelt: it seemed like a gift from God. Not only did it bring forth food in a lean period, but it brought forth such real contributions to the art of the stage as--298--Chicago's *Swing Mikado*; the Los Angeles record-breaker directed by Clarence Muse, *Run Little Chillun*; and Harlem's *Macbeth*, beautifully played in which the young Orson Welles had a directorial hand. Chicago, through an excellent production of *Big White Fog*, brought to light a new Negro playwright of genuine talent, Theodore Ward.

Top authorities in the Federal Theatre, Hallie Flannigan and Elmer Rice, believed in no color line. For the first time in America, in a sustained manner, Negroes were able to create their own plays and musicals, act in them, and also gain experience in directing, scene painting, and the other technical aspects of the theatre which had hitherto been closed to them. With few previous exceptions, it was the Federal Theatre that dared cast Negro actors in non-Negro roles, not only on Broadway, but in its units elsewhere as well. The Federal Theatre broke down not only the old taboos against colored Americans as backstage technicians, but the bars against colored actors playing other than racial roles.

Ten years later the results were seen in the mixed dancing chorus of *On the Town*, the colored and white ensembles of *Finian's Rainbow*, and the complete integration of singers, dancers, and actors in the interracially written and interracially produced *Beggar's Holiday*, the Duke Ellington -- John LaTouche novelty coproduced by Negro Perry Watkins and white John R. Sheppard, Jr. In the drama, an interracial producing team, Canada Lee and Mark Mervin, presented *On Whitman Avenue* with a mixed cast. In Gian-Carlo Menotti's *The Medium*, the gypsy boy was played by a Katherine Dunham dancer, Lee Coleman, who made love to a white girl. In the Arena revival *The Medium* was played by a Negro singer, Zelma Watson George.

The history of the Negro in America's spoken drama goes back more than a hundred years. Before the Civil War his problems provided themes for the serious stage, although his roles were acted by whites in blackface. Even Uncle Tom was *first* played by a white actor in 1852. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* shook the world then. Perhaps it shook some theatre taboos, too, for long before the play lost its popularity -- and it had a popularity of fifty years -- many Negro actors had essayed the leading role.

At least thirty years before *Uncle Tom's Cabin* hit the boards, there were Negro actors, and good ones, performing in New York City. As early as 1821 the African Free Players presented Shakespearean

plays and produced a star in the person of James Hewlett as *Othello*. In the mid-1800's, from our own shores to England and the Continent went brown-skinned Ira Aldridge to become internationally famous in the same role, having for his Iago in London the great Edmund Kean.--299--
Just as the old stock companies served as a training ground for many of the stars of stage and screen today, the colored stock company of the Pekin Theatre in Chicago so served for Negro actors. From that famous Negro theatre of the early 1900's came many competent performers, some still active today. Following the Pekin group came New York's Lafayette Players, successfully presenting for a number of years such Negro-acted versions of Broadway successes as *Within the Law* and *Madam X*.

In March, 1917, *Three Plays for a Negro Theatre* began a new era. These poetically written plays by Ridgely Torrence were about Negro life to be acted by Negroes. They were not great box office hits, but they paved the way for a play that was -- Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*. With this play in 1920, Charles Gilpin put the Provincetown Playhouse on the world map. The decade between *The Emperor Jones* and *The Green Pastures* brought many interesting dramas of Negro life to Broadway and uncovered some fine acting talents. Some of the plays were acted entirely by Negroes. Others had mixed casts. *Lulu Belle*, the Pulitzer Prize winner, *In Abraham's Bosom*, Paul Robeson in *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, and later, *Black Boy*, the musicals *Deep River* and *Show Boat*, and the dramatic *Porgy* that was to later become the musical *Porgy and Bess* enlivened Broadway

Written by socially minded whites and aflame with protest against racial and class injustice, in the 1930's Paul Peters' *Stevedore* reached the stage at the downtown Theatre Union, and John Waxley's *They Shall Not Die* pled the cause of the Scottsboro boys uptown. My own *Mulatto*opened at the Vanderbilt and had a record long run for a drama written by a Negro playwright. Various Paul Green plays, Hall Johnson's music-drama *Run Little Chillun*, and Gertrude Stein's quaintly pretty *Four Saints in Three Acts* set to music by Virgil Thomson helped keep the public interest in the Negro at a high boxoffice pitch. Then came Ethel Waters, superb in *Mamba's Daughters* and later in *The Member of the Wedding*. She proved her versatility of range: from revue singer to dramatic actress, and also proved the value of a Negro star's name in lights over the marquee.

In the '40's appeared *Native Son, Jeb, Strange Fruit, Deep Are the Roots, Anna Lucasta*, the musicals *Carmen Jones* and *St' Louis Woman*. But unfortunately, there have been few good Negro playwrights, and these few have written but few plays. Lack of contact with living theatre, and lack of outlet for their plays, has contributed to this scarcity of colored playwrights. Broadway has not been cordial to the Negro dramatist.--300--The one consistently sympathetic outlet to the New Negro playwright during the past twenty years has been the Gilpin Players of Karamu House in Cleveland, Ohio. This settlement house acting group under the direction of Rowena Jelliffe is the nearest thing we have in America to a Negro dramatic theatre portraying racial life through drama and, whenever good scripts can be found, through drama *written by Negro writers*.

Other promising Negro little theatre groups have sprung up only to die after two or three seasons. Such was the Harlem Suitcase Theatre whose presentation of *Don't You Want to Be Free?* for 135 performances marks its only major achievement. The Negro Playwrights Company, attempting to operate in Harlem on a professional basis, closed after a short run of *Big White Fog*. In Chicago the Skyloft Players at Parkway Community House and the newer Negro Art Theatre have managed to survive several seasons.

The most active (but non-professional) producing group with a large membership was the American Negro Theatre in Harlem. The Broadway hit, *Anna Lucasta*, originated with this group, as did an excellent series of radio programs. But this group, while providing good training for actors, did little to stimulate the growth of a real Negro theatre or search out Negro playwrights of talent. The majority of its scripts were by non-Negro writers. And many were rehashes of old Broadway potboilers with themes far removed from the realities of Negro life. From these experimental groups, however, have come to Broadway fine and sensitive actors. Contrary to the popular misconceptions, Negro actors do not act simply with their "natural" talent. On the contrary, most of them have had experience or training

before they get any good parts in the professional theatre. What the Negro actor needs most now is a reservoir of plays about his own people written from the Negro viewpoint.

As long as Negro life is a ghetto life, the plays for a true Negro theatre must be written from *within* the ghetto, not from without. As sincere as a Lillian Smith may be, or as skilled at the craft of theatre as are d'Usseau and Gow, the little nuances of racial life that give a Negro drama its individual glow cannot be known to them. Too often, too, in spite of himself, the white playwright unconsciously falls into stereotypes. But because it is seeking after truth, the dramatic theatre, more often than the musical, has managed to avoid the stereotype. The serious dramatic writer usually does not pander to popular prejudices or chauvinism.

Perhaps comedy is the pitfall of the musical theatre. In drama, problems tend to become universal, even though in racial guise. On the other--301--hand, comedy is often provincial. Exaggerations of racial types, over-stressing the peculiarities of regional speech and stereotyped conventions, frequently dominate comedy -- especially that of the music hall.

Nevertheless, just as out of the serious theatre has come a Rose McClendon, a Robeson, or a Canada Lee, so from the minstrel-vaudeville-musical stage have come some very talented Negro comedians, despite the narrow vein of humor in which they were forced to work -- Ernest Hogan, the great Bert Williams, Miller and Lyles, Dusty Fletcher of "Open The Door, Richard" fame, Pig Meat Markham, Jackie Mabley, and Eddie Green.

Since the end of World War I, colored comedians have devoted as much of their time to the night clubs, and more recently to radio, as to the stage or screen where opportunities for them are not so readily available as to white comics. Radio, and the night clubs too (the clubs even more than the former), have nourished such entertaining talents as the Mills Brothers, the Ink Spots, Ella Fitzgerald, Hazel Scott, Bill Bailey, Cab Calloway, Billie Holiday, Pearl Bailey, the late Fats Waller, and the King Cole Trio, also such folk singers as the great Bessie Smith, Lead Belly, Sister Tharpe, and Josh White. White entertainers haunt the clubs featuring Negro talent, pick up their mannerisms and tricks, and copy their dance steps to use later on stage and screen. Thus, the Negro artist has influenced the whole field of American popular entertainment.

Radio utilizes the colored singer, musicians, and comic sparingly, welcoming most often the musicians, although sometimes giving a semipermanent welcome to such comics as Rochester, Eddie Green, Butterfly McQueen, Hattie McDaniel, and the shadows of Amos and Andy -- as long as they do not wander too far from the stereotype. Singers from Maxine Sullivan to Marian Anderson are granted occasional fifteen minute sustaining shows or guest spots. (A notable exception was the King Cole Trio's commercial program.) But you must be white, usually, to have a long-term spot on radio. If the lips that sing are dark, you await an infrequent guest invitation. Whereas for the Negro actor, the American airwaves might as well originate in Borneo. (A recent exception is the entertaining addition to commercial radio, the "Beulah Show," starring Hattie McDaniel.) Juano Hernandez and a few other colored radio actors work more or less steadily, and not always are they limited to Negro roles. Sometimes they play Indians or some other type of "primitive." And sometimes, but still too infrequently, a Negro may be just an American on the air. But in the vastly popular "soap operas" Negroes are limited practically always to servant roles, if they are heard at all.--302—

There are no radio serials on Negro family life, or of any interracial activity. There have been sustaining series of Negro dramatic programs -- *New World A-Comin'* during the war, for example -- and local station programs such as the *Chicago Defender's Democracy: U' S' A'* series in Chicago. Richard Durham and Robert Lucas are good script writers. There are a few Negro disc jockeys. But radio is still by and large a white man's world for actors and script writers, and entirely so for announcers, directors, and technicians.

Surprisingly enough, television is getting off on a somewhat more liberal foot than its cousin, radio, has yet shown. In its short life, various types of Negro artists from singers to dancers to actors -- the

Hall Johnson Choir, Pearl Primus, Gordon Heath as Lincoln -- have appeared before its audio-visual apparatus. Let us hope the limitations of Hollywood do not affect the television screen, at least, not in the North.

Hollywood is the *bête noire*. It produces America's (and the world's) most popular art, and is one of the great industries. It is a mighty educational force, as well as a powerful force for mis-education. Hollywood is cognizant of its powers. Yet, shamelessly and to all the world, Hollywood has since its inception spread in exaggerated form every ugly ridiculous stereotype of the deep South's conception of Negro character. Until recently, it has given world audiences almost nothing else on film about colored people in the U. S. A. Hollywood's favorite Negro character is a grinning happy-go-lucky half-stupid servant, male or female, usually speaking broken English.

It is true that there are many Negro servants in America, but if the majority of them were of the Hollywood variety, they would not be employed long. Hollywood has distorted and made viciously laughable the role of black domestics in America. Hollywood has almost entirely ignored the fact that there are also in our country thousands of Negro mail carriers, for instance, or Negro policemen, Negro teachers, lawyers and other kinds of professional men, Negro government officials, models, streetcar conductors, insurance salesmen, and just plain housewives and husbands.

Hollywood has not and seemingly will not show the Negro simply as an American citizen. In recent serious films, such as *Host Boundaries*and *No Way Out*, he is a problem. In most others, merely a comic. The shadow of the South is Hollywood's excuse. The Southern box office, Southern censors, Southern exhibitors who cut out sequences of film showing Negroes in normal relationships with their fellow Americans, all prevent Hollywood from doing much about the Negro films -- so says--303--Hollywood. According to Lena Horne, as interviewed by Allan Morrison, the Motion Picture Production Code "has ruled that Negroes and whites must not be portrayed on the screen as social equals."

Miss Horne, who is a notable exception to the servant stereotype, says that in fifteen film assignments, she was not permitted to speak a single line, but only to sing, except in the all-Negro film, *Stormy Weather*. Miss Hazel Scott, the pianist, in her film appearances has had to fight to keep the apron and bandanna from being a part of her costume. Hollywood finds it hard to think of Negroes in terms other than as servants -- even when the picture is an all-Negro film.

Some of Hollywood's most effective films, cinematographically speaking, have been all-Negro films: *Hearts in Dixie, Hallelujah, Cabin in the Sky*. Colored actors, within the limitations of story and direction imposed upon them, have given remarkably fine performances, in spite of the fact that all-Negro casts are usually recruited from the stage without past movie experience. But among the few old veterans of Hollywood there are fine Negro actors and actresses, and they are certainly deserving of a little variety in roles once in a while. At the top of such a list stands Hattie McDaniel and Louise Beavers, the great performers of *Gone with the Wind* and *Imitation of Life* respectively, to mention only single performances. Clarence Muse and Leigh Whipper, Rex Ingram, and small, attractive Dorothy Dandridge are competent actors, but they have had few opportunities to perform. Whipper was great in *The Ox-Bow Incident* and as Haile Selassie in *Mission to Moscow*, but he has never had a role commensurate with his talents, nor is he likely to have in this day and generation.

Our recent war might have put an end to Hilter-like racism, but it did not put an end to segregation in Hollywood. Even radio with all its timidity is ahead of the films in its employment of Negro themes and actors. For every film like *In This Our Life, Bataan, Casablanca*, or *Bright Victory*, where a Negro character is pictured with some semblance of normality, there are a dozen in which he remains the dialect speaking clown. Because of its great influence on public thought, on the conditioning of children, and on world opinion, it would be hoped that Hollywood, out of common democratic decency, would overhaul its film presentations of American Negro citizens, Dixie or no Dixie. But as long as boxoffice dominates decency, I am afraid that Hollywood will continue to degrade Negroes.

Paul Robeson's only good pictures were made in England. Josephine Baker has starred in French films. *Poison* and *To Live in Peace* were made--304--in Italy. Negro artists have been received abroad not only with audience acclaim and newspaper praise, but with personal and community courtesy as well. Louis Armstrong, Ellington, Calloway, and other colored bands and their leaders have enjoyed the hospitality of European countries. Teddy Weatherford was for many years until his death the favorite orchestra leader of Asia from China to India. In night club circles Bricktop was a success in Montmartre for a decade, as was Josephine Baker on the Parisian revue stage. Elizabeth Welch, Nora Holt, Jimmy Daniels, and many other colored entertainers have been hits outside the U. S. A.

As concert artists, of course, Marian Anderson, Roland Hayes, Dorothy Maynor, and Paul Robeson have been widely acclaimed. Ella Belle Davis, Aubrey Pankey, and Edward Matthews have been favorites in Latin countries, while Katherine Dunham and her dancers captivated three continents. Our country, in turn, has welcomed a few East Indian calypso entertainers, Moune, the Martinique *chanteuse*, and it also showed a limited appreciation for the African dancing of Asadata Dafora.

Abroad, colored performers live normally as human beings without discrimination, but at home Negro artists on tour will give them a place to sleep or even a place to eat. American hotels and restaurants will refuse service to a Duke Ellington, an Ethel Waters, a Marian Anderson, or a Lena Horne as quickly as they will to any other Negro. Touring orchestras have to live in busses or Pullman cars most of the time and often subsist on sandwiches out of a bag.

In plays, mixed casts are still taboo in the South. Constitution Hall in Washington still refuses its stage to Negro concert artists. Many Southern radio stations require Negro entertainers to use the back door or the freight elevator. In communities where racial prejudices are in full sway, the ordinary courtesy and politeness granted visiting white performers are denied to Negro performers. Hundreds of American newspapers in the South will not carry photographs of colored entertainers. (These same papers refuse to publish pictures of American Negro war heroes.) Against the entertainer of color in the United States the same Jim Crowisms that make life difficult for all Negroes operate. Since entertainers and actors must travel more than most people, these injustifiable restrictions become doubly difficult for them, often meaning that in a strange town they must search for hours for a place to eat, sleep, or even go to a lavatory.

In opera, Katharine Yarboro and Muriel Rahn have sung *Aida* in an otherwise white company. At the Civic Center in New York Todd--305--Duncan has sung more than one role. Camilla Williams has received an ovation in *Madame Butterfly*. But no Negro singers have been signed by the Metropolitan. The ranks in opera choruses and ballet companies have not been opened to colored aspirants as have some leading roles to stars. (But in regard to choristers, radio has been democratic.) Negroes themselves have no professional opera companies, just as they own no movie studios, control no radio chains, and have no theatres.

Where does the Negro stand today in entertainment? He stands on one leg, with the other tied behind him by Jim Crow. If he were standing flat on two feet with his head up, competing "in the American way" with other artists and entertainers for a chance to work and develop, Negro singers would be at the Metropolitan in big roles and little roles according to their abilities, they would be dancing in its ballet, someone like Dean Dixon could be directing in the pit, and William Grant Still's operas might be part of the Metropolitan's repertoire.

In the movies once in a while, along with other film biographies -- from Pasteur to Al Jolson -- there could be a biography of Mary McLeod Bethune with Hattie McDaniel in the leading role, or of Frederick Douglass with Leigh Whipper. And Lena Horne could talk as well as sing. And not every colored servant would have to drool, drawl, bow, grin and speak dialect endlessly.

If the Negro were standing solidly on his own two feet in the entertainment world, he would have a serious professional dramatic or musical theatre of his own in which plays by Negro and white

playwrights about Negro life might be presented free from the limitations of the Broadway boxoffice, or where the music of Negro life might be heard without having to make it more "primitive" or more commercial, or sweeten up or tone down its lyrics for white audiences with preconceived notions.

The increasing integration of Negro performers in entertainment, aided by the Federal Theatre, *On the Town*, *The Medium*, and *Flahooley*, for example, would be even more pleasing if Negro spectators were not sent to the gallery in almost every American city outside of the Eastern states. The courageous stand of Actors Equity: no more plays for the National Theatre in Washington until discrimination is dropped, and the amazing crusade of Josephine Baker during her highly successful return to America, point to the coming of a better day for colored performers. Certainly, in the world of commercial entertainment, in spite of prejudice, the Negro stands farther ahead now than ever before. But he is still *farther behind* than anybody else in America.