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February 24, 1949

Dear Mr. Hughes,

We were so pleased to have you visit us here. We enjoyed every moment of your stay, and all who heard and met you thought you were a grand person to know, as well as a treat to hear.

So great was our enthusiasm and interest that we are really ashamed to have you know what the narrow-minded faction of Asheville thought of you being here.

The enclosed article appeared in the Public Forum Column of Asheville Sunday newspaper (City News) and has caused quite a lot of comment both for and against the school, its staff and you. As far as we are concerned, we are [redacted] over the comments, as we are unhappy to know that some "critic" would try to spoil a perfectly wonderful performance with such talk.

We hate for you to know that Asheville people are so far behind times that they
would choose a portion of a poem written as long ago as Comment upon now. We
also know that it is not fair to judge
you by the poem. (This portion) without
reading the entire poem. As I recall it, it
was a lengthy poem which when read in
its entirety sheds a different light from
what these few lines would to such a
fanatic as would write such an article.

We know that you're busy etc., but would
you be willing to write a statement to the
paper concerning the statement that we
have already made, that you are not
a Communist. We would be very grateful
if you would, and it would help us finish
some gossip.

All of the better part of Asheville, each
race, are much upset and in sympathy
with the school and with you, and
have asked us to ask you. If you don't
think it wise to do, then don't, but we
Allen High School
331 College Street
Asheville, N. C.

Mrs. Claire Lennon
Superintendent
Miss Julia Titus
Principal

I would appreciate hearing from you.

Please, Mr. Knight, we want you to know
that this is not the sentiment of all of Asheville,
not of the newspaper staff, but indeed things
even the false can hurt somewhat.

Our girls think that you have been done
a grave injustice, and they too are terribly
sorry and ashamed.

I am also enclosing Miss Titus' answer
to the letter, which is to appear in Sunday's
Forum Column.

Thank you very much for listening.
Our very best wishes for a grand new year
and success for the Anthology. Come to see us again.

Sincerely yours,

Claire Lennon.
Mr. Claire L. Lennon,
Allen High School,
Asheville, N. C.

My dear Mr. Lennon,

Langston Hughes, poet and lecturer, expects to be in North Carolina during Negro History Week, 1949, having just confirmed two Sunday afternoon engagements in the state, one at the beginning and one at the close of the week, with a tentative midweek engagement pending.

While in North Carolina, Mr. Hughes would be happy to give a program of his own poems of Negro Life (incorporating various aspects of our history) at your institution, should you care to present him to your students and community. His fee for a single appearance is $150.00. He would appreciate knowing your choice of a date as soon as you have made a decision, in case you wish to include him on your Negro History Week program. He has just returned to New York from Book Week appearances at Hampton, Orangeburg A. & M. College, Claflin, Allen, and in Charleston, South Carolina, and he has asked me to let you know that his next journey South will be in February. You may address Langston Hughes or myself at the above address.

Very truly yours,

Nate White
Secretary to Langston Hughes
Mr. Langston Hughes
20 E. 127th Street
New York 35, New York

My dear Mr. Hughes:

We were very pleased to learn that you would be in North Carolina during Negro History Week and would be more than happy to have you appear at our school during this time.

If it is possible, we would like to have you do two performances—one for the students during the school day and one that night for the general public. We feel that our auditorium will not be large enough to accommodate all of these at one time. Would you give us some consideration as to reduction of price per appearance in such a case?

As to the date of appearance, we would prefer Monday or Tuesday of Negro History Week. May we hear from you soon concerning this, so that we may know how to arrange our calendar?

Very truly yours,

Claire Lennon
Superintendent

Sent, Dec. 8, 1948:
Pub. sheet & Photos
Plow
Songs: Rivers
Feet
My Land
C. W. artwell
20 East 127th Street
New York 35, New York
December 10, 1948

Mrs. Claire Lennon
Allen High School
331 College Street
Asheville, North Carolina

Dear Mrs. Lennon:

Thank you for your recent letter. I shall be delighted to come to Asheville during Negro History Week. Since I am reading my poems for the Horton Branch Library in Winston-Salem on Sunday, February 6th, and it seems that it is none too easy to get from there to Asheville quickly, I think we had better settle on Tuesday for your date.

I like very much to read my poems for young people and so would be very happy to do a high school program in the afternoon, and another program for the general public in the evening. Both could come within the same fee, $150.00, since very often my sponsors arrange school appearances during the day anyhow, so there would be no extra charge for the school assembly.

Under separate cover I have posted you photographs, publicity material, and some of my songs. There may be music both before and after my portion of the program if you so desire, although my own songs need not be used unless you wish to have them on the program.

Usually my publishers send a dozen or so of my books ahead of me as there are generally people at the program who wish to secure an autographed copy. If you like, the box of books may be opened before my arrival for display and sale. By Negro History Week, my new book of poems, ONE-WAY TICKET, Knopf, and the anthology which I co-edited with Arna Bontemps, THE POETRY OF THE NEGRO, Doubleday, will have been published, as both appear in early January.

All my good wishes to you,

Sincerely,

Langston Hughes
Mr. Langston Hughes  
20 East 127 Street  
New York 35, New York  

My dear Mr. Hughes:  

We regret very much that so much time has passed since your last letter was received, but it is hoped that you will understand that it was because of the Christmas holiday, and we have not been in school.  

Thank you very much for the consideration you are giving us, in that you are willing to give us a separate day program for students for the same fee of $150.00. We are looking forward to both performances with great anticipation.  

The photographs, publicity material, etc., have arrived. What we wish now is a program of the poems you expect to do that night, as we must get busy with the bills, tickets and programs. May we expect this very soon?  

The date, February 8, is satisfactory with us, and we would appreciate it if you could be here in time to give our students a program at 11:00 o'clock of the same day.  

You may send us some of your books, and we will do our best with the sales, although we prefer not to open them until you arrive.  

We hope to hear from you in regard to these matters at an early date.  

Very truly yours,  
Claire Lennon  
(Mrs.) Claire Lennon  

Mrs. Mollie Huston Lee  
Harrison Pub. Library  
Raleigh, North Carolina  

Mrs. Rose Leary Love  
620 East Boundary St.  
Charlotte, N. C.  

Cards sent: Wilson 2/11/49
January 5, 1949

Mrs. Claire Lennon
Allen High School
331 College Street
Asheville, North Carolina

Dear Mrs. Lennon:

Thank you very much for your letter of January 3rd. I shall probably reach Asheville the evening of Monday, February 7th, coming from Winston-Salem, but since I do not have a train schedule at the moment, I will let you know the exact time of my arrival later.

My program is not a recital—in that I do not do a set routine of poems—but rather, I weave them into my talk. And so it is not customary to list separate poems on my program, but simply to put down the general title for the evening. I usually use the title POEMS OF NEGRO LIFE. Other titles that might be suitable, since my talk is a kind of combination of travelogue, commentary on Negro problems, and a reading of various of my poems, are: POEMS AND PROBLEMS OF NEGRO LIFE, HOW POEMS ARE BORN, PICTURES IN POETRY OF OUR PEOPLE. You may use any one of these that you think might appeal to your audiences. Another reason why I cannot list the poems is that, lecturing so much as I do, I don't repeat the exact sequences every night since I do not wish to fall into a rut.

All my good wishes to you,

Sincerely,

Langston Hughes

P.S. Under separate cover I am sending you some sample programs from other places. Often there is no printed program at all, and unless you wish to go to this expense, insofar as I see, it is not necessary.

LH/avw.
January 27, 1949

Mrs. Claire Lennon
331 College Street
Asheville, North Carolina

Dear Mrs. Lennon:

Since I shall be at Black Mountain College on Monday, February 7, they have promised to drive me over to Asheville on Tuesday morning. I shall plan to arrive there about 11:00 A.M., remaining overnight, and leaving on Wednesday morning at 11:25 A.M.

Since I am not familiar with Asheville, I would appreciate it very much if you would arrange a stopping place for me, letting me know the address in advance so that I might drive directly there on my arrival.

I am looking forward with pleasure to reading my poems for the first time in Asheville. I have been in almost every other large city in North Carolina, and in some of them several times for programs, but this is my first lecture in your city.

Sincerely yours,

Langston Hughes

LE:HHSS
February 1, 1949

Mr. Langton Hughes
20 East 127th St.
New York 35, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Hughes,

Thank you for your letter of January 27th. We are looking forward with much pleasure to your visit with us.

If you don't object to being in a girls dormitory, we shall be glad to have you occupy our guest room here. If you would prefer to stay off campus, I shall be glad to arrange it if you will let me know.

We shall expect you Wednesday morning.

Our girls are very much excited.

Sincerely yours,

Claire Lennon
February
19, 1949

Dear Mrs. Lennon:

I certainly enjoyed my very short stay at Allen High School and I hope that you will convey my gratitude to Miss Titus and your entire staff for the cordial welcome given me and many courtesies extended to me during my visit.

In the next two issues of THE CHICAGO DEFENDER I shall be writing about my North Carolina trip and, of course, have included Allen High School.

With my very best regards to you and your husband, I remain

Sincerely yours,

Langston Hughes

Mrs. Claire Lennon
Allen High School
331 College Street
Asheville, N. C.

LH: HHS
March 5, 1949

Dear Mr. Knight,

Thank you very much for taking time out of your busy day to send us the article on "Good Bye Christ." It is very kind of you and we are deeply grateful.

The explanation of yours is truly a masterpiece.

You may be interested to know that your new anthology is in the book store and we have a copy. There was a fine display of Negro literature in the shop window last week. This is lost by Negro authors.

Please forgive me if we missed you. We sincerely hope to see you again next Negro History week.

We extend to you a standing invitation to our guest rooms, whenever you are in the area.

Sincerely yours,

Claire Lennon
March 29 1949

Dear Mrs. Lennon:

Perhaps I told you when I was in Asheville that I was to be poet in residence at the Laboratory School of the University of Chicago this semester. A few days after I returned to New York from my Southern tour I left for the Middle West and have just come back to New York for the rehearsals of TROUBLED ISLAND to find your letters awaiting me. My secretary tells me that he has sent you my prepared statements concerning the poem, "Goodbye Christ." Today, I am sending the enclosed letter to the editor of the newspaper, but it is perhaps very late now for me to make a comment on the controversy. I am sorry if it has caused you or the school any embarrassment.

TROUBLED ISLAND looks quite good in rehearsal and has a very dramatic and melodic score. The cast is interracial, so I would not be surprised if someone red baited the opera, too -- since it seems that always when interracial efforts are involved, such as your school and this opera, somebody raises the cry of "Communism." The music of the opera is by William Grant Still, who happens to be a Catholic, so there is hardly any Communism involved in his music.

Please forgive my very late answer, but since I was so busy in Chicago the first few weeks that I was there, I had asked my secretary to take care of all my correspondence for me here in New York until I returned for the rehearsals of the opera, and only to forward telegrams or very urgent messages.

Please give my very best regards to your husband and to Miss Titus, and to my other friends at Allen High. All my very best wishes to you.

Sincerely,

Langston Hughes

Mrs. Claire Lennon, Supt.
Allen High School
231 College Street
Asheville, North Carolina

LH:HHS
April 18, 1949

Dear Mr. Keigher,

Thank you very much for your letter. I haven't heard one "peep" from anyone since your letter was published except to receive a copy of a letter that the "crank" who started the mess sent you. Did you receive a letter from one Fannie McCoy? Wasn't it sickly? I hope you were ignore it. She is a religious fanatic who is affiliated with some gospel tabernacles sect here. She has no voice whatever in the community except for those in her group. We are very much interested in the success of Dr. F. D. I do hope that really people will not pay anything to hurt it. You are very right in your
statement that whatever is interracial is branded Communists. Here is in Asheville a committee on Human Relations which is interracial, and ever so often they have to face "Communism" - "Reds" - "Communist front" - and such. We're all pulling hard for nothing short of "tops" onца, ack Island.
He Allen family join me in regards for you, and sincere his wishes.

Sincerely yours,
Claire Lennon.
April 22, 1949

Mrs. Claire Lennon
Allen High School
331 College Street
Asheville, North Carolina

Dear Mrs. Lennon:

This is to acknowledge your letter of April 18th along with its enclosure, the clipping from the ASHEVILLE CITIZEN-TIDES, to Mr. Hughes. Miss Eileen Rhode at the Y.W.C.A. there in Asheville had also been kind enough to send the reprint of Mr. Hughes' letter.

At present Mr. Hughes is out of the city. He is at the University of Chicago where he is conducting a seminar in creative writing in the Laboratory School. He will not be home until the Spring Session ends.

The opera, TROUBLED ISLAND, had its world premiere at the New York City Center on March 31st. It was a very colorful and beautiful production and I know that everyone connected with the opera was well pleased with the results.

For Mr. Hughes, thank you for your thoughtfulness in sending the clipping and the letter.

Very truly yours,

Nate White
For Langston Hughes

P.S. Alfred Music Corporation, RKO Building, Rockefeller Center, New York, New York have published the libretto of the opera. It costs fifty cents.