

P O E T R Y



F O U N D A T I O N

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**Recently Discovered Langston Hughes Poems Published in *Poetry* Magazine**

CHICAGO — Three poems by the seminal African-American poet Langston Hughes have their first known publication in the January 2009 issue of *Poetry* magazine. The poems, handwritten in pencil on the endpapers of Hughes's edition of *An Anthology of Revolutionary Poetry* (Active Press, 1929), were discovered by Penny Welbourne, a rare book cataloger at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, where the Hughes Papers are housed.

Arnold Rampersad, author of the two-volume *The Life of Langston Hughes* and editor of *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, introduces the poems, composed in 1930, and locates them within the span of Hughes's work, writing, "At his core, Hughes was a lyric poet entranced by the charms and mysteries of nature. Nevertheless, political protest was a key aspect of his writing." Rampersad further remarks that although these poems are simple, "we must remember that Hughes lived as an artist by the idea that simplicity at its best is or can be complex," and "the truth is that we cannot have too many poems by Langston Hughes."

"It's interesting to compare these blunt, enraged poems with the subtle, Bluesy Hughes one gets in most anthologies," said Christian Wiman, editor of *Poetry*. "It's like looking directly into the fires in which those more finished poems were forged."

A facsimile slideshow of the original poems is available on [poetryfoundation.org](http://poetryfoundation.org).

*I look at the world*

I look at the world  
From awakening eyes in a black face—  
And this is what I see:  
This fenced-off narrow space  
Assigned to me.

I look then at the silly walls  
Through dark eyes in a dark face—  
And this is what I know:  
That all these walls oppression builds  
Will have to go!

I look at my own body  
With eyes no longer blind—  
And I see that my own hands can make  
The world that's in my mind.  
Then let us hurry, comrades,  
The road to find.

—Langston Hughes, first published in *Poetry*, January 2009

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### **About *Poetry* Magazine**

Founded in Chicago by Harriet Monroe in 1912, *Poetry* is the oldest monthly devoted to verse in the English-speaking world. Harriet Monroe's "Open Door" policy, set forth in Volume I of the magazine, remains the most succinct statement of *Poetry*'s mission: to print the best poetry written today, in whatever style, genre, or approach. The magazine established its reputation early by publishing the first important poems of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, H.D., William Carlos Williams, Carl Sandburg, and other now-classic authors. In succeeding decades it has presented—often for the first time—works by virtually every major contemporary poet.

*Poetry* has always been independent, unaffiliated with any institution or university—or with any single poetic or critical movement or aesthetic school. It continues to print the major English-speaking poets, while presenting emerging talents in all their variety. In recent years, more than a third of the authors published in the magazine have been young writers appearing for the first time. On average, the magazine receives over 90,000 submissions per year, from around the world.

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