

CFP: Langston Hughes Society Panels at the American Literature Association Conference
May 24-27, 2018 | Hyatt Regency San Francisco

The Langston Hughes Society is pleased to invite proposals for the following two panels to be held at the 2018 American Literature Association (ALA) Conference in San Francisco, CA. Though we welcome papers on the themes below, we also strongly encourage submissions on any topic related to Langston Hughes and his contemporaries.

I. “Hold[ing] Fast to Dreams”: Tracing the Literary Legacy of Langston Hughes

One of the most prolific and inspiring authors of the twentieth century, Langston Hughes, the first African-American author to make his living solely by his pen, inherently helped foster a generation of writers and creative thinkers who worked not only to capture the breadth of the Black experience in the United States but to also honor that tom-tom of jazz beating in the African-American soul. In Spring 1964, for instance, Hughes visited the campus of Lincoln University, where he met with budding poets like Everett Hoagland—eventual poet laureate of New Bedford and recipient of the Langston Hughes Society Award—to offer brief critiques of their poetry-in-progress. In response, Hoagland noted that “[m]eeting Hughes contributed to a sense of identity for me. Until then, I’d considered myself someone who was capable of writing poetry, but not necessarily a poet. After I met Hughes, I began to think maybe I *was* a poet.” Similarly, Nikky Finney—winner of the 2011 National Book Award for Poetry—also described Hughes as one of her north stars, taking up his charge to produce “social poetry” that confronts both the pain of the African-American community and the very people whose ideologies and actions contribute to that enduring pain. **In exploration of these topics, this LHS panel asks participants to consider the literary legacy of Hughes and his impact on authors past and present.**

II. “Let It Be the Dream It Used to Be”: Hughes’ Socio-Political Vision in the Trump Era

In pieces such as “Let America Be America Again,” Langston Hughes outlined his socio-political vision for the United States—a country that Hughes believed never truly lived up to the ideal that the founders envisioned in 1776. For Hughes, the pervasive race and class divides that only seemed to widen during his lifetime prevented the nation from becoming the “homeland of the free.” And yet, Hughes also recognized the importance of working to build that better America—an effort far different from the current initiative, under Donald J. Trump, to “Make America Great Again.” To understand Hughes’ vision (and/or the vision of his contemporaries), it is important that we now interrogate his response to the sociopolitical environment of the twentieth century and how his insights might help us to respond to similar yet equally pervasive issues today (as evidenced in the proposed travel ban, the disenfranchisement of people of color, etc.). **In exploration of these topics, this LHS panel asks participants to consider the socio-political vision of Hughes and his contemporaries and how those vital literary conversations might help us respond to a climate in which there is still no “equality...in the air we breathe.”**

Please send proposals of no more than five hundred words (for fifteen to twenty-minute papers) to both Dr. Wallis Baxter III (lhsociety.president@gmail.com) and Dr. Christopher Allen Varlack (lhsociety.secretary@gmail.com) **no later than January 5, 2018** with an expected response no later than January 12, 2018. Note that **presenters must be members of the Langston Hughes Society by January 29, 2018 in order to secure their place on the program.** In addition, please indicate any AV equipment needs in your E-mail.

For more information on the Langston Hughes Society, please visit our website at
www.LangstonHughesSociety.org.