

CFP: Langston Hughes Society Panels at the American Literature Association Conference

May 23-26, 2019 | Westin Copley Place, Boston, Massachusetts

The Langston Hughes Society is pleased to invite proposals for the following two panels to be held at the 2019 American Literature Association (ALA) Conference in Boston, MA.

Though we welcome papers on the themes below, we also strongly encourage submissions on any topic related to Langston Hughes and his contemporaries.

I. The Panther and the Lash: Langston Hughes and the Black Arts Movement

Since the Black Arts Movement (BAM) flourished toward the end of Langston Hughes's long distinguished career and life, criticism related to Hughes's connections to the movement has been underdeveloped. However, James Smethurst argues that "If one looks to uncover linkages between the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s and the earlier radicalisms of the 1930s and 1940s, the work of Langston Hughes as a writer, editor, and cultural catalyst during the 1950s and 1960s is a good place to start." Hughes continued to write and speak on issues of domestic racial oppression as well as international colonial repression, both issues central to the concerns of BAM. In exploration of this topic, this LHS panel asks participants to consider Langston Hughes in relationship to BAM in roles such as ideological forerunner, literary model, collaborator, supporter, or participant.

II. "Poetry to the People": Langston Hughes on Tour

In *I Wonder as I Wander*, Langston Hughes, encouraged by Mary McLeod Bethune, writes that he would test his poetic direction "by taking poetry, my poetry, to my people." Hughes took his poetry on the road throughout his lifetime, lending his physical presence and his poetry to causes such as the Scottsboro case and the Spanish Civil War. Cary Nelson suggests that Hughes's experience in Spain for instance allowed him to represent commonalities between the Spanish peasant and American workers, and to demonstrate through his poetry "that the common sense of oppressed people gives them an appropriate experiential basis for understanding international politics." Hughes toured the American South, the Soviet Union, Japan, and China, giving readings and promoting poetry as a means to social justice. Hughes met with professional writers, college students, and what he called in "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" the "low-down folk," putting his faith in the power of his poetics to cross class lines. In exploration of this topic, the LHS panel asks participants to consider topics including how Hughes met the public, how he used his poetry and presence to further the causes in which he believed, and the possible implications of a populist poetry for the people.

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. Richard Hancuff (lhsociety.secretary@gmail.com) no later than January 25, 2019, with an expected response no later than January 28, 2019. Note that presenters must be members of the Langston Hughes Society by the time of the conference in order to present. 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.