**“‘My God, I Says, You Can’t Live That Way!’:   
Langston Hughes and the ‘Low-Down Folks”’**

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Langston Hughes famously declared in “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” (1926) his affinity for the “low-down folks,” wondering if “these common people will give to the world its truly great Negro artist.” While Hughes’s 1930’s creative output and dedication to Scottsboro and Spanish Loyalists attracts the most scholarly attention regarding Hughes and the working class, Hughes’s work in the 1920’s performs politically as well, both in placement and content. In particular, Hughes published four poems in the *New Masses* in 1926: “Brass Spittoons,” “Saturday Night,” “Argument,” and “The New Girl.” These poems reveal the daily lives of workers whose oppression made it possible for Harlem night life and luxury hotels to function. This paper will examine how Hughes aligned “race poetry” with class issues in reaction to widespread Nativism that targeted not only immigrants, but also Black Americans, whose exclusion from the myths of American-ness he makes apparent in his poem “Let America Be America Again.” Hughes’s decision to champion those left out and left behind in his time provides a powerful reminder to the present that responses to Trump’s America must also speak to and about the marginalized in terms of inclusion and respect.

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