

Communism as an alternative to Segregation

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Communism is the political and economic doctrine that aims to replace private property and a profit-based economy with public ownership and communal control of at least the major means of production. Communism aims to break down the social structure of society and make everyone equals where the working class would control the economy. Communist ideology believes that under communism there would be no divisions within society and that the working citizen would be paid with how long, how hard and how well they worked. Members of the oppressed black community in America saw Communism as form of government that will liberate them from racial segregation and abuse. The African American community believed to see a world where differences between white and black would be ignored and forgotten, where the social barriers would be broken and social equality established in America. The communist party of America supported black Americans through organising them in unions especially the coal miners in which the communist party organised black miners in strikes. The Communist party also took steps within their newspaper to emphasise on the need for integration of the major league baseball.

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The United States of America during the era of racial segregation became consists of social and legal discrimination. The Northern States of America supported social segregation whilst the southern states of America supported legal segregation. Racial Segregation saw black Americans through the eyes of White dominant society as 'animals'. This foreshadowed the beginning of the civil rights movement during the 1950s and 60's triggered from the passing of the Civil Rights Act (1964). The passing of the Act catalysed a public outcry from the black community against black social and civil rights. The era of segregation within America distinguished White and Black people in every possible aspect of social public life e.g. public toilet, attending schools and rental or purchase of real estate. Racial Segregation publically reflected black-white segregation through physical separation and societal provision of resources.

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Langston Hughes was a black poet and writer who became one of the transcended figures fighting for the liberty of black segregated Americans. During Hughes' early childhood, his parent parted and was raised by his mother and grandmother. After the death of his grandmother, Hughes' and his mother moved to six cities before finally settling in Cleveland. In Lincoln Illinois, Hughes began literary publications primarily consisting of poetry. After Hughes graduated from Columbia University, he went to Mexico and held odd jobs of assistant cook. In 1924 he moved once again to Washington D.C. and published his first book of poetry literary works *The Weary*

Blues. After six years, Hughes published his first novel *Not without Laughter* and won many literature awards.

In many of Hughes works, prominent figures, such as Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Carl Sandburg and Walt Whitman became his primary influences known for their insightful, realistic portrayal of black life in America between 20s and 60s. Hughes wrote various literary works consisting of novels, short stories, plays and poetry expressing the black community's hate and oppression experienced by the public discrimination of the era. Hughes openly expressed his black pride to the American nation stressing the theme of 'black is beautiful' in addition to exploring black human conditions within the American community. Hughes primary concern was to uplift the black 'citizens' of America through the encouragement towards the use of their talents (Strengths), Perseverance towards discrimination and courage in speaking out against the stereotypical segregation against them (resilience).

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Hughes, like many black writers and artists of his time, was drawn to the promise of Communism as an alternative to a segregated America. Many of his lesser-known political writings have been collected in two volumes published by the University of Missouri Press and reflect his attraction to Communism. An example is the poem "A New Song". In 1932, Hughes became part of a group of blacks who went to the Soviet Union to make a film depicting the plight of African Americans in the United States. The film was never made. While there, he met African-American Robert Robinson, living in Moscow and unable to leave. Hughes's poetry was frequently published in the CPUSA newspaper and he was involved in initiatives supported by Communist organizations.

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Hughes was also involved in other Communist-led organizations like the John Reed Clubs and the League of Struggle for Negro Rights. He was more of a sympathizer than an active participant. He signed a statement in 1938 supporting Joseph Stalin's purges and joined the American Peace Mobilization in 1940 working to keep the U.S. from participating in World War II. Hughes initially did not favour black American involvement in the war because of the persistence of discriminatory U.S. Over time; Hughes would distance himself from his most radical poems. In 1959 his collection of *Selected Poems* was published. He excluded his most controversial work from this group of poems.