

## Langston Hughes: The Father of a World Black Consciousness Movement

In this paper, I argue that Hughes's interest in black cultures was inspired by his contentious relationship with his father. In an effort to negotiate the pain that he feels, Hughes locates himself within black communities and develops his black consciousness. The result is far-reaching as he inspires a black consciousness in Africa. Edward Ako notes of Hughes's influence as a Harlem Renaissance poet on the Negritude writers "...who had been told that it was a matter of great speculation as to whether the monkey descended from the African or the African from the monkey, ...suddenly realized that over in the United States a group of writers were singing the beauty of black women, affirming their humanity, looking nostalgically at the warm tropical Africa from which they had been stolen."<sup>1</sup> In response to Hughes and other Harlem Renaissance writers, the Negritude African and Caribbean writers applied Hughes' black beauty aesthetic to the creation of their own literature. When Leopold Senghor, a Senegalese negritude poet, spoke at Howard University in 1966, he credited Hughes with inspiring Negritude. I will discuss the relationship between Hughes's personal need to empower himself through his own poetic words and the meaning of this embrace of black consciousness to the African world. I will make use of Hughes' correspondence with his father to illuminate my thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Ako, "Langston Hughes and the Negritude Movement," 49.