

Are You Now or Have You Ever Been...

The year is 1953 in the Harlem apartment of Negro writer Langston Hughes. Unable to sleep he gets up and begins to write a poem, but finds his living space somehow inhabited by his readers. He implores his readers not to abandon him no matter what they read or hear. His confession is intermittently interrupted by flashes of inspiration, seen in projected texts and images, of a word or line for his poem. As he tells the story of what he's written and why, the poem continues to grow and clarify with a life of its own, and together they reveal a portrait of an artist faced with his fears and regrets before the greatest ordeal of his life.

Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes (1902-1967) was a poet, novelist, playwright, and newspaper columnist. Born in Missouri, Hughes went on to publish more than three dozen books in his life and was an influential part of the Harlem Renaissance—the growth of African American literature and music in New York city. His works include *The Weary Blues* (1926), *Shakespeare in Harlem* (1942), *Not Without Laughter* (1930), and *The Ways of White Folks* (1934). Langston Hughes was called to appear in front of the HUAC council in 1953.

The HUAC

Sparked by Senator Joseph McCarthy's communist suspicions, the House Un-American Activities Committee was established in 1938 and conducted investigations through the 1940s and 1950s of alleged communist activities. Many artists and entertainers were investigated, including Pete Seeger, Arthur Miller, and Langston Hughes. The actions of the HUAC resulted in many contempt -of- Congress convictions and blacklisting of many. This committee was highly controversial because of its violation of the rights in the First Amendment. The committee was eventually dissolved in 1975.

Other Plays by Carlyle Brown:

Pure Confidence
The Beggars' Strike
The Negro of Peter the Great
Arabian Nights
The Pool Room
Buffalo Hair
The African Company Presents Richard III
...and more!

Free Speech Organizations:

American Civil Liberties Union:
www.aclu.org
American Library Association:
www.ala.org
Free Speech Coalition:
www.freespeechcoalition.org
National Coalition Against Censorship:
www.ncac.org
Public Citizen:
www.citizen.org

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Works Cited

<http://www.answers.com/topic/langston-hughes-poet-writer>

www.carlylebrowncandcompany.org

ARE YOU NOW OR HAVE YOU EVER BEEN...



Miami University
Studio 88

Play Reading and
Talk-Back Forum

Hosted by the Department of
Theater, Ann Elizabeth
Armstrong, kClare Kemock,
Lanita Davis, and Anne Towne

Date: April 11, 2007
Time: 5:00pm

These quotes were taken from an interview with playwright, Carlyle Brown, and offer some insight as to the process of writing...

“Writing is a mystery. It suites me best as a mystery. Once you engage in a play, it takes on a life of its own. Like Langston Hughes says in the play, “It’s not from you, it’s through you and you just obey it.”

“If you’ve gotten away with a good play, people stop asking questions and start having a dialogue.”

“I always wanted to write a piece about Langston Hughes. I don’t remember why but I never could because it was too close to home... But one day, I just say down and it was as if Langston visited me. I had to keep writing so he would get the hell out of my house!”

There’s the craft of writing, developing technique throughout your career so that you don’t have to think about it when you’re working.”

“I think I was trying to work something out or vent something that I could not do any other way... Obviously the play is not yet finished.”



Carlyle Brown

Carlyle Brown is a writer/performer and artistic director of Carlyle Brown & Company based in Minneapolis, which has produced *Pure Confidence* and others.

Brown has been artist-in-residence at New York University School of the Arts Graduate Acting Program, The James Thurber House in Columbus, and The Ohio State University Department of Theatre where he directed his music drama, *Yellow Moon Rising*. Currently, he serves as Miami’s playwright-in-residence as part of a "Finding Freedom Summer: Documenting and Performing Freedom Summer at Miami University" project through the Miami Department of Theater.

He has worked as a museum exhibit writer and story consultant for the Charles Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit and the Kentucky Center for African American Heritage in Louisville. Brown is a core alumnus of the Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis and an alumnus of New Dramatists in New York.

He began work on *Are You Now or Have You Ever Been...* in 2005, which he plans to produce with his company in the upcoming future.

“They are giving you that suspension of disbelief... It’s a covenant and you don’t break it. You have to teach them have to engage in this world so they feel safe. Some writers, in a post-modern sense, think you can watch a play with your head. I don’t think that. Art is manipulation.”

“The text is not the art form; it’s just the blueprint for the art form.”

“There is a truth in the theater... people can look at it and say, “Oh yeah, I see that. I’ve been there. Actually, I was there this morning... Those things are your tools— so human nature and those truths—that is what gives the work authenticity.”

“The worst thing you can do is create a character who knows because then they are just talking about what they know. We want to follow a character who discovers. What an author has to do is create a character who the audience cares for... In the case of the play about Langston Hughes, the other character is the audience.”

Georgia Dusk

*Sometimes there’s a wind in the Georgia dusk
That cries and cries and cries
Its lonely pity through the Georgia dusk
Veiling what the darkness hides*

*Sometimes there’s blood in the Georgia dusk
Left by a streak of sun
A crimson trickle in the Georgia dusk
Whose Blood? ...Everyone’s*

*Sometimes a wind in the Georgia dusk
Scatters hate like seed
To sprout its bitter barriers
Where the sunsets bleed*

-Langston Hughes