

FOLKWAYS RECORDS Album No. FL 9791

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Anthology of Negro Poets
in the U.S.A. - 200 years
read by Arna Bontemps
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FL9791 Folkways Records & Service Corp., New York, N.Y.

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All these are represented in ANTHOLOGY OF NEGRO POETS IN THE USA
200 Years
Read by ARNA BONTEMPS

SIDE I

Bars Fight by Lucy Terry
Dawn, Little Brown Baby, Compensation, by Paul Laurence Dunbar
The Black Finger by Angelina Weld Grimke
Song of the Sun by Jean Toomer
The Creation by James Weldon Johnson
My Little Dreams by Georgia Douglas Johnson
The Banjo Player by Fenton Johnson
To James by Frank Horne
Sister Lou by Sterling A. Brown
Havana Dreams, Song for a Dark Girl, by Langston Hughes
For a Poet, For a Lady I Know, Saturday's Child, Youth Sings a Song
of Rosebuds, by Countee Cullen

SIDE II

From the Dark Tower, Yet Do I Marvel, by Countee Cullen
Poet by Donald Jeffrey Hayes
No Images by Waring Cuney
The Road by Helene Johnson
Frederick Douglass by Robert E. Hayden
Poems by Arna Bontemps: A Black Man Talks of Rivers, Miracles,
Nocturne at Bethesda, Southern Mansion, A Note of Humility,
The Daybreakers, The Return
His Excellency General Washington by Phillis Wheatley
Flame-Heart by Claude McKay

Published versions of the selections here recorded are included in
THE POETRY OF THE NEGRO, 1746-1949, An Anthology Edited by
Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps and published by Doubleday & Com-
pany, Inc., 1949.

The poetry of the Negro is hard to pin down. Like his music, from spirituals and gospel songs to blues, jazz and be-bop, it is likely to be marked by a certain special riff, an extra glide, a kick where none is expected and a beat for which there is no notation. It follows the literary traditions of the language it uses, but it does not hold them sacred.

Negroes have taken to poetry as they have to music. In the Harlem Renaissance of the late Twenties poetry led the way for the other arts. It touched off the awakening that brought novelists, painters, sculptors, dancers, dramatists and scholars of many kinds to the notice of a nation that had nearly forgotten about the gifts of its Negro people. And almost the first utterance of the revival struck a note that disturbed poetic traditions:

I've known rivers ancient as the world
and older than the flow of human blood
in human veins.

Soon thereafter the same generation responded to a poem that had been written even earlier and which Claude McKay included in his *HARLEM SHADOWS* under the title of "Flame-Heart." "So much have I forgotten in ten years," the first stanza began. It closed with:

I have forgotten much, but still remember
The poinsettia's red, blood-red in
warm December.

But the poets of the Harlem Renaissance were born nearly two hundred years after Lucy Terry, the slave girl whose semi-literate "Bars Fight" is a verse account of an Indian raid on old Deerfield in 1746. Phillis Wheatley, whose *POEMS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS, RELIGIOUS AND MORAL* attracted much favorable attention in America as well as England in 1773, was born in Senegal, West Africa, sold into slavery in early childhood and brought to Boston in 1761.

Phillis became the property of John Wheatley of Boston whose wife and daughter soon noted the alert sensitivity of the young African girl and encouraged her attempts to master the language and literature of her captors. "A Poem, by Phillis, a Negro girl in Boston, on the death of the Reverend George Whitefield," published when she was just seventeen, heralded the beginning of a unique writing career. When her health failed, Phillis was advised by doctors to take a sea voyage. Arrangements for this were made by the kindly mistress, who also gave Phillis her freedom before she embarked for England. In London the delicate but talented ex-slave girl was a success. It was there that her only collected volume of verse was first issued.

Lucy Terry and Phillis Wheatley, along with such other American Negroes as Jupiter Hammon and George Moses Horton, belong to a tradition of writers in bondage which goes back to Aesop and Terrence. While Aesop's writing may have won him rewards of a sort, there is no clear indication that he succeeded in writing himself out of servitude. Nor did Lucy Terry, so far as is known, nor George Moses Horton of North Carolina, though Horton did manage to survive till the Northern armies set him free. But Terrence and Phillis Wheatley both won their freedom by their writing.

Paul Laurence Dunbar, a son of former slaves, came along about one hundred and twenty years after Phillis and began writing just in time to greet the Twentieth Century with his volumes of lyrics, including poems like "Dawn," "Little Brown Baby" and "Compensation," together with dozens of others which, half a century later, are as fresh and poignant as when they were first written.

A contemporary of Dunbar was James Weldon Johnson, but Johnson's *GOD'S TROMBONES*, his most important poetic achievement, was not completed or published as a collection of folk sermons in verse till the time of the Harlem awakening. Nor were such poems by Angelina and Weld Grimke as "The Black Finger," though she too belonged with the group that was born before the turn of the century. The same is true of Georgia Douglas Johnson whose "My Little Dreams" expresses a mood that runs through her three published volumes of short lyrics.

The Renaissance itself was richly quotable, with Helene Johnson saying:

Ah little road, brown as my race is
brown,
Dust of the dust, they must not
bruise you down.

And Jean Toomer:

Pour O pour that paring soul in song,
O pour it in the sawdust glow of night.
And let the valley carry it along.

And Countee Cullen:

Yet do I marvel at this curious thing:
To make a poet black and bid him sing.

And Waring Cuney:

She does not know
Her beauty
She thinks her brown body
Has no glory.

Other Records Of Interest From FOLKWAYS

"Grant us brotherhood, not only for this day but for all our years, a brotherhood not only of words but of acts and deeds. We are all of us children of earth - grant us that simple knowledge. If our brothers are oppressed, then we are oppressed. If they hunger, we hunger. If their freedom is taken away, our freedom is not secure."

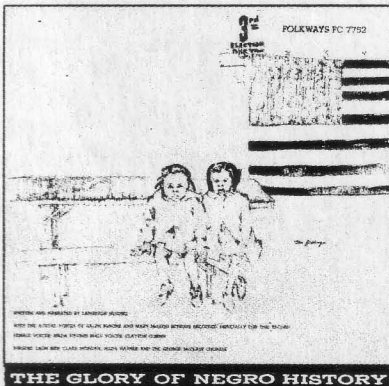
Franklin Roosevelt at the U. N., June 14, 1942

THE NEGRO

FD5252 AMERICAN NEGRO SONGS FROM SLAVERY TIMES:(1619-1865) Sung by Michel La Rue. Link O'Day, I Just Come From The Fountain, Po' Mourner, You Gonna Reap Just What You Saw, Ain't That Good News, I Stood On The River, Certainly Lawd, Railroad Bill, Children's Game Songs, Git Up, Chillums, Go To Sleep, This Little Light of Mine, Easy Rider, I Shall Know Him, My Lawd's Gitting Us Ready, One Morning Soon, Get Right, Stars Begin To Fall, Better Day A-Coming, Salagandou, Step This Way, I'm In Trouble, Stand Still, Jordan, Do' Lawd, Remember Me, Trouble, Gwine To Alabamy, Come & Go With Me To My Father's House, Before The Sun Goes Down, How Come Me Here? March On. Notes feature background of American Negro Slavery by Ralph Knight and song texts. 1-12" 33-1/3 rpm longplay \$5.95

FE4500 NEGRO MUSIC OF AFRICA and AMERICA, edited by Harold Courlander. Recorded in Africa and the New World, including South Africa, (Zulu), French Equatorial Africa, Nigeria, Sudan, Zanzibar, Eritea, Ethiopia, Brazil, Columbia, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Trinidad and the U.S. Selections include recordings made by Melville J. Herskovits, Ricardo Alegra, etc. Notes by Harold Courlander and Richard A. Waterman. 2-12" 33-1/3 rpm longplay records \$11.90

FC7752 THE GLORY OF NEGRO HISTORY; Written and narrated by Langston Hughes with the actual voices of Ralph Bunche and Mary McLeod Bethune recorded especially for this album. Pt. 1 - The Struggle: Oh, Freedom; Steal Away; Swing Low, Sweet Chariot; O! Riley; Go Down Moses; John Brown's Body; Battle Hymn of the Republic. Pt. 2 - The Glory: Statements by Ralph Bunche and Mary McLeod Bethune; Trouble in Mind; Dallas Rag; I'm Not Rough; If We Must Die; Organ Grinder's Swing. Complete text. 1-12" 33-1/3 rpm longplay record \$4.98



THE U.S. NEGRO TODAY

FH5590 THE NASHVILLE SIT-IN STORY, a dramatic documentary based on the lunch-counter "sit-in" campaign by Negro students in Nashville, Tennessee; songs, interviews, re-enactment of historic moments by the students themselves. Conceived, coordinated and directed by Guy Carawan; narration by Rev. C. Tindell Vivien. Notes and documentary photographs. 1-12" 33-1/3 rpm longplay \$5.95

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FH5592 WE SHALL OVERCOME! Authorized Recording, Produced by the Council for United Civil Rights Leadership. Joan Baez, President Kennedy, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Marian Anderson, Odetta, Rabbi Joachim Prinz, Bob Dylan, Whitney M. Young Jr., John Lewis, Roy Wilkins, Walter Reuther, Peter, Paul and Mary, Bayard Rustin, A. Philip Randolph. Notes. 1-12" 33-1/3 rpm longplay record \$5.95

FD5593 THE STORY OF GREENWOOD, MISSISSIPPI Recorded & Produced for S.N.C.C. by Guy Carawan - Song: "This little light of mine" Church: Preacher & Congregation, "I'm a citizen of Greenwood--", This is Clarence Jordan", Mass Meetings: Preacher & Congregation, "The Greenwood Voter Registration--" Congregation: "Sometimes we go hungry", "The coming of the New Year--", "For the first time--", "If you can imagine it--", Congregation: "Let it shine--", "The second stage--", Congregation: "We want more faith", "First, I would just like--", Congregation: "Walk, walk", "We worked all of March--", Cong: "Get on board--", "We sang--"; (d) "I never thought that Greenwood--", "We left City Hall--", Dick Gregory; (b). Mr. Medgar Evers, "For us, the events--"; (b). "It is something--", Congregation: "Ain't no danger--", "Since I went down--"; (e). Congregation: 1-12" 33-1/3 rpm LP, notes \$5.95

FA2448 BILL McADOO sings with guitar. Accompanied by Pete Seeger, with banjo. I'm Gonna Walk & Talk For My Freedom, I Don't Want No Jim Crow Coffee, Wade In The Water, Caryl Chessman, John Henry, Fare Thee Well, Walk On Alabama, Cold Winter Blues, Let Me Hold Your Hand, I Don't Want To Have a War, Darlin', Eight-Hundred Miles. Notes include song texts of McAdoo's "songs of protest. 1-12" 33-1/3 rpm longplay \$5.95

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FL9792 ANTHOLOGY of NEGRO POETS in the USA; selections from outstanding American Negro poets of the past 200 years, incl. Laurence Dunbar, Phyllis Wheatley, Countee Cullen, others; read by Arna Bontemps. Text 1-12" 33-1/3 rpm longplay \$5.95

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