Beaumont to Detroit: 1943

Langston Hughes

Looky here, America

What you done done-

Let things drift

Until the riots come.

Now your policemen

Let your mobs run free.

I reckon you don’t care

Nothing about me.

You tell me that hitler

Is a mighty bad man.

I guess he took lessons

From the ku klux klan.

You tell me mussolini’s

Got an evil heart

Well, it mus-a-been in Beaumont

That he had his start-

Cause everything that hitler

And Mussolini do,

Negroes get the same

Treatment from you.

You jim crowed me

Before hitler rose to power-

And you’re STILL jim crowing me

Right now, this very hour.

Yet you say we’re fighting

For democracy

Then why don’t democracy

Include me?

I ask you this question

Cause I want to know

How long I got to fight

BOTH HITLER – AND JIM CROW

From *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* (p.281)