

From  
*Another Black Voice:  
A Different Drummer*  
(1988)

**The Black Man Speaks of Rivers, Part 2:  
A Tribute to Langston Hughes**

'I've known rivers':  
'I've known rivers' current 'as the world.'

'My soul grows deep like the rivers.'

I listened to Stokely Carmichael  
    When furious fire heated cool air.  
I shook hands with Martin Luther King, Jr.,  
    Before garbage cans in Memphis.  
I heard shots in Dallas  
    when John F. Kennedy waved at me.

'I've known rivers.'

I heard the drums of stomachs in New York  
    when welfare queens paraded the streets.  
I danced to the melody of Diana Ross  
    when Leontyne Price sang at the Met.  
I read Sunday school lessons at home  
    when Alice Walker wrote *The Color Purple*.

'I've known rivers.'

I bathed the body of a Rolls Royce  
    when shacks cuddled me with love.  
I plowed through books at Morehouse College  
    when white men perused works at Harvard.  
I moved into the mainstream  
    a century after Huck and Jim journeyed down the  
    Mississippi.

'My soul grows deep like the rivers.'

## Acquaintances

I meet an acquaintance  
whose greeting is icy.  
Good evening. I am this,  
I am that.  
And how about you?  
I am me.  
My desire to explore her heart and soul  
through Antarctica is boundless.  
The ice melts.  
There is no past.  
Here we are,  
discovering each other's worlds.  
Another continent comes between us:  
my mahogany skin, her ivory face,  
my woolly hair, her lips of wine  
create barriers between us as we go.

Noiseless and impatient, we move to darker  
regions of the soul.

Words. Now she has them. She wants more.