

# School commemorates forgotten link to Langston Hughes

LINCOLN, Ill. (AP) — Evidence that the "Poet Laureate of Black America" got his start amid Illinois' cornfields is inscribed in one of his books: "For my teacher, Ethel Welch, with happy memories of our eighth grade where my first poem was written. Sincerely, Langston."

Now, thanks to the efforts of a former literature teacher, Langston Hughes' ties to Lincoln have been rediscovered. A plaque marking those was recently dedicated at his old elementary school.

Hughes lived in Lincoln in 1915 and 1916, where Welch encouraged him to write. Though that first poem has been lost, the poet and novelist built a lasting reputation during the Harlem Renaissance, a revival of African-

American art in the 1920s and '30s.

Margaret Peifer formed the Friends of Langston Hughes Committee after a local historian mentioned Hughes' connection in a lecture to the GED class she teaches at Logan Correctional Center.

"The first shock was I'd known Langston Hughes as the poet of the Harlem Renaissance — and to think he got his start here, in Lincoln," she said. "The second shock was after I began to research it, I couldn't believe the community wasn't celebrating it."

There were indications Hughes had attended Central School in his autobiography, "The Big Sea," and in the oral history of the town.

But proof positive came from a 1916

newspaper clipping the committee dug up that listed Hughes among the 80 members of Central's first graduating class. And someone nonchalantly mentioned that the high school library had three books that Hughes, who died in 1967, had inscribed for Welch. After Welch's death, they were given to the local high school, where they are now on display.

The Hughes committee raised \$1,500 through bake sales and penny drives at Central Elementary School to buy a bronze plaque.

"For younger generations, maybe this will be a stepping stone if they have literary aspirations," said Russell Allen, the volunteer at the Lincoln Public Library who unearthed the newspaper clipping. "It'll give them someone to look up to."



LANGSTON HUGHES

## I-200

(Continued from Page 1) showed that support for I-200 had dropped by 10 points from early September, when it was 54 percent, Bond said.

Opposition to the initiative rose from 23 percent to 31 percent in the same period, and the percentage of those undecided on the issue rose from 22 percent to 25 percent, he said.

Bond attributed the shift partly to ads placed by Gov. Gary Locke.

"It takes a while ... for the message to sink in, but I think it's sinking in," Bond said.

Mfume noted there was "overwhelming support" for I-200 when the NAACP joined the fight against it in May, but said it was probably at a break even point now.

"A lot of it has been the

result of a serious educative process," he said.

A September poll by the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and KOMO-TV revealed a profound contradiction in likely voters' opinions. More than half of those surveyed said they supported affirmative action, but 53 percent said they also support I-200.

The initiative ballot title makes no direct mention of affirmative action, though a Superior Court judge ruled the wording accurately reflects the measure's intent.

Mfume and Bond said they were optimistic about the chances of quashing the initiative and anticipated an ongoing field effort for the two weeks before the election.

## Atone

(Continued from Page 2)

and cover his mistakes. But while Clinton may have lied, Farrakhan warned that those who have condemned him are not in a position to judge.

"The self-righteousness and hypocrisy of religious and political leaders is sickening," he said. "Is there any member of Congress that doesn't need washing?"

Congressional leaders themselves have lied to constituents by promising to protect their interests and instead serving the needs of corporate America, he said.

And past presidents have committed far greater atrocities against their people than Clinton, Farrakhan said. He questioned whether Clinton's actions qualified as high crimes and misdemeanors, the standard necessary to warrant impeachment.

Farrakhan also criticized Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr, accusing him of entrapping the president and trying to weaken him. He said Starr's investigation and the graphic report it produced had taken its toll on the nation's well-being.

"You don't dump sewage into the water supply and expect the population to stay healthy," he said.

The Nation of Islam leader maintained he was not defending the president, but rather the truth. He offered reasons why God might have allowed Clinton "to be brought before the world in such a humiliating way."

The president's current situation illustrates how even the most powerful man in the world can be humbled, Farrakhan said. And Clinton also may use this opportunity to take not just political but spiritual leadership, if he seeks redemption, he added.

"The truth will free the president and the truth will free this nation," Farrakhan said. Farrakhan organized the Million Man March in October of 1995, where he urged black men gathered from across the country to take responsibility for their actions and seek atonement for their sins.

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