

Note on Commercial Theatre

You've taken my blues and gone—
 You sing 'em on Broadway
 And you sing 'em in Hollywood Bowl,¹
 And you mixed 'em up with symphonies
 And you fixed 'em
 So they don't sound like me.
 Yep, you done taken my blues and gone.

You also took my spirituals and gone.
 You put me in *Macbeth* and *Carmen Jones*²
 And all kinds of *Swing Mikados*³
 And in everything but what's about me—
 But someday somebody'll
 Stand up and talk about me,
 And write about me—

Black and beautiful—
 And sing about me,
 And put on plays about me!

I reckon it'll be
 Me myself!

Yes, it'll be me.

1940, 1959

Democracy

Democracy will not come
 Today, this year
 Nor ever
 Through compromise and fear.

I have as much right
 As the other fellow has
 To stand
 On my two feet
 And own the land.

1. Outdoor concert amphitheater constructed in the 1920s.
 2. An all-black musical (1943), loosely based on the opera *Carmen* by French composer George Bizet (1838–1875), focused on African American life during World War II. An all-black production of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606), set in Haiti, was

a Broadway success in 1936.
 3. During 1939, two different all-black versions of *The Mikado* (1885), a comic opera by the British team of W. S. Gilbert (1836–1911) and Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900), competed on Broadway. *The Swing Mikado* (which premiered in Chicago in 1938) and *The Hot Mikado*.

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 2. Johann Seb