

# Claudius mckay

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Near the beginning of the twentieth century, a Jamaican, came to New York and changed the entire path of Black people's lifestyle. Claudius McKay became one of the major encourager of the Harlem Renaissance in 1916. The 1920's literary advancement of the arts and literature stayed for merely ten years, but it everlastingly affected the path of African American existence in the America. (Holcomb, 57) Claudius McKay passed away in a comparative insignificance subsequent to his recognition had gradually improved, in order that he is now regarded as one of the main authors of Black literature.

## **Life and Works**

Claudius McKay was born in 1889 in Clarendon Parish, Jamaica and his father and mother both were greatly valued part of the district and also of the neighboring cathedral. McKay's brother who was a teacher near Montego Bay, taught him in the early years. When he was eighteen years old, he was interned at a furniture making shop in Brown's Town.

Although this internship was not for a long period of time but it was this place where McKay actually got a chance to do a better internship of a different type. A British member of the aristocracy named Walter Jekyll, who was also an apprentice of Jamaican society, acquainted with the youthful Claude and commenced his literary schooling. As McKay remembered after many years in his biography in, "A Long Way from Home", that it was basically Jekyll who accustomed him to an entire new world. (Schwarz, 126)

Walter Jekyll understood and polished McKay's ability writing excellent poems and he supported him in using that ability by working for his very own

Jamaican language. This resulted in the publication of “ Songs of Jamaica” and “ Constab Ballads”. “ Songs of Jamaica” was about commemoration of farmer lifestyle, to some extent following the style of Robert Burns, whereas “ Constab Ballads” followed the style of Rudyard Kipling, depicting McKay’s experience of being a constable while he was in Kingston in Jamaica. (James, 131)

Kingston presented McKay his foremost experience of urban lifestyle, and his foremost actual experience of racial discrimination. The dislike of the urban white people and mulatto elite classes for countryside and working-class African American was an unlikable disclosure. The most obvious racial discrimination that McKay observed in Kingston, nevertheless, was in no way Jamaican in foundation—it was brought in the shape of travelers of America.

McKay was bound to know this kind of racial discrimination much more thoroughly in the coming years, which is why just after a few months in the Kingston; he gave his resignation for his job and went to America. (Schwarz, 129) In 1912, firstly he registered at Tuskegee Institution and then at Kansas State University, to learn agronomy. He planned to come back to Jamaica to assist in modernizing the isle’s farming. This plan could have been successful however for a present of few thousand dollars from an anonymous supporter that compensated McKay’s ticket to New York, where he spent his money in a restaurant. The restaurant did not survive for a long time; however McKay got a definite comfort in the activities and liveliness of the New York.

For next several years he employed at different places doing different things like: bartender, fire brigadier, and lastly as a waiter. This was nonetheless,

one more internship; the job where he furthermore increased the compassion for the lower class that stayed with him his entire life. From the time when he was young he had inclined tactfully in the direction of communism, and his time spent with the working class strengthened his viewpoints. (LeSeur, 35)

His awareness about racial discrimination increased close with his class awareness. For the period of his work and increasing racial consciousness, he put it all in writing in the form of literature. By 1918, he started a extensive connection with Max Eastman who was the editor of a renowned journal named “ The Liberator”. After that McKay started to publish poetry and articles in this avant-garde magazine, and finally turned out to be an associate editor.

Later on in reaction to that year’s blood-spattered after warfare racial unrest, McKay published his famous poem “ If We Must Die” in the magazine “ The Liberator”. The bold manner and the open indignation of the poem attracted the African American’s, and almost immediately McKay was at the front position of African American writers. (LeSeur, 51)

After that McKay experienced one more unexpected twist which played an important role in his life and work. Prior to his recently successful reputation had a prospect to boom, he went to United Kingdom where he lived for one year, wrote and edited for a socialist newspaper, named “ Workers’ Dreadnought”, and later on in 1920, published his primary manuscript of poems ever since the Jamaican volumes, which included “ Spring in New Hampshire” and Other Poems.

Then he went back to New York in the beginning of 1921 and worked for another two years for “ The Liberator”, and published an excellent piece of poetry and meanwhile worked on his most important book of poetry named “ Harlem Shadows”. (Hathaway, 23) When it was published in 1922, Wayne Cooper observed that by that time McKay was straight away complimented as the finest African Black poet. Yet another time he did not remain in success for a long time. By this time he was exhausted and wanted something different, particularly subsequent to an unexpected encounter with his ex-wife brought back old wound. By the end of 1922, he toured to Moscow for the Fourth Congress of the Third International.

He was instantly liked by the people of Moscow and was permitted to speak to the Congress regarding the dilemma of African Americans and about the issue of racial discrimination among the communalist Party. He was welcomed like a black icon in the flesh. It appeared that he was on the brink of a hopeful career as a supporting advocate; however regardless of his achievement in Russia, he could still see himself mainly as an author. When he left Russia, he was enthusiastic about restarting what he believed the contemporary author’s appropriate role; that is: to document as fine as he may well the reality of his personal knowledge.

In 1934, using the assistance of a few American associates, McKay went to New York. He wished to be of help to the African American community, nevertheless when he returned; he saw a ruined economic situation, nearly widespread African American poverty, and less unanimity amongst those writers and scholars he had look forward to work with in coming years.

As far his aspiration being a writer was concerned, the “ Harlem Renaissance” had ended; American black authors were no longer in vogue. (Hathaway, 26) He was unable to find a publisher for his book and also he could not find any kind of work, and decided to set up a Camp Greycourt which was a government welfare camp in a remote area of New York. Luckily, Max Eastman came and rescued him from this camp and helped him to get hold of a job with the Federal Writers’ Project.

By the end of 1937 he finished up his autobiography, “ A Long Way from Home”. This book did not result in a significant literary or a monetary achievement. His final piece of work known as “ Harlem: Negro Metropolis” was also unsuccessful. (James, 148)

A few years before his death, McKay was baptized into the Roman Catholic church. This was he appeared to have established peace in himself, although his letters disclose a lasting resentment over his group. With his new faith, however, came a fulfilling participation in Chicago’s Catholic Youth Organization and the chance to continue to write. His health declined with time, and on May 22, 1948, he died due to heart attack.

## **Conclusion**

Claudius McKay was the voice of the evicted, the demoralized and the discriminated. He was one of the most important poetic voices of the “ Harlem Renaissance”. He was one of the top poets who had represented the discriminated people around the world. Last but not the least; he was one of the voices for worldwide self-worth and unity.

## References

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