“I Hear America Singing” by Walt Whitman (1900)

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,  
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,  
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,  
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,  
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,  
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,  
The woodcutter’s song, the plowboy’s on his way in the morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,  
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing,  
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,  
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows, robust, friendly,  
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

“I, Too, Sing America” by Langston Hughes (1925)

I, too, sing America.  
I am the darker brother.  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
When company comes,  
But I laugh,  
And eat well,  
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,  
I’ll be at the table  
When company comes.  
Nobody’ll dare  
Say to me,  
“Eat in the kitchen,”  
Then.

Besides,  
They’ll see how beautiful I am  
And be ashamed—  
I, too, am America.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Walt Whitman does not address issues of race in his poem at all, and most of the working people whom he describes in his poem are most likely white. Also, there are NO slaves in the poem by Langston Hughes, and no references to slavery, since slavery in America officially and legally ended in 1865. As you can see, Langston Hughes wrote his poem in 1925, sixty years after slavery in America had legally and officially ended. Hughes very well might be describing a black servant in a white home, but that servant gets paid a salary for doing his job, and is a free man, NOT a slave. Do NOT refer to him or to other black Americans living in the 1920’s as slaves, because they weren’t.