



*The Day
They Changed Their Minds*

We would like to make it clear that this mass movement was not begun to bring economic suffering to the state but to bring to the realization of the citizens of North Carolina that the Negroes, who are also citizens of North Carolina, can no longer remain quiet and complacent and continue to accept such gross injustice from those who desire no change in old customs and traditions solely for the purpose of personal gain or because of the warped ideas which have been instilled in the minds of many responsible citizens.

— Open letter from students of North Carolina A&T College at Greensboro to North Carolina Attorney General Malcolm Seawell February 15, 1960



OKLAHOMA CITY, 1958: "If we can't eat, we can study."

Negroes,
Sweet and docile,
Meek, humble and kind:
Beware the day
They change their minds!
— LANGSTON HUGHES

A single Negro demanding service at a Dixie Jim Crow lunch counter invites humiliation and possibly violence.

A dozen or a score seated at a southern lunch counter

* Reprinted with permission of author from "Selected Poems of Langston Hughes," Alfred Knopf, 1959.