



# ==== COUNTEE CULLEN ====

## Scottsboro, Too, Is Worth Its Song

(A poem to American poets)

1934

I SAID:  
Now will the poets sing,—  
Their cries go thundering  
Like blood and tears  
Into the nation's ears,  
Like lightning dart  
Into the nation's heart.  
Against disease and death and all things fell,  
And war,  
Their strophes<sup>1</sup> rise and swell  
To jar  
The foe smug in his citadel.

Remembering their sharp and pretty  
Tunes for Sacco and Vanzetti,<sup>2</sup>  
I said:  
Here too's a cause divinely spun  
For those whose eyes are on the sun,  
Here in epitome  
Is all disgrace  
And epic wrong.  
Like wine to brace  
The minstrel heart, and blare it into song.

Surely, I said,  
Now will the poets sing.  
But they have raised no cry.  
I wonder why.

National Humanities Center, 2007: [nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/). In Countee Cullen, *On These I Stand: An Anthology of the Best Poems of Countee Cullen Selected by Himself and Including Six New Poems Never Before Published* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), p. 160 (originally published in Cullen, *The Medea, and Some Poems*, 1935). Permission pending.

<sup>1</sup> Strophe: stanza; in ancient Greek drama, the first part of a choral ode performed by the chorus as it moved from one side of the stage to the other.

<sup>2</sup> Sacco and Vanzetti: Italian immigrant anarchists executed for murder in 1927 in Massachusetts after a controversial trial deemed prejudicial by critics. The 1920 murder and arrests occurred during the "Red Scare" environment after the Russian Revolution and several anarchist bombings in the U.S.