



1984

## Leadbelly

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### Recommended Citation

Leavitt, Mike (1984) "Leadbelly," *Calliope*: Vol. 1984 : Iss. 1 , Article 8.  
Available at: <http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope/vol1984/iss1/8>

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LEADBELLY (SOUTHSIDE BLUES)

Leadbelly,  
leaning back on a crumbling park bench,  
facing the littered alleys and collapsing projects,  
stretched his lumpy arms.  
His clothes, threading at the ends,  
fit tightly on a stomach  
filled with turnip greens and pig knuckles;  
his cane,  
splintered at the tip,  
planted itself by his alligator shoes.  
Picking up his joy,  
a twenty-year old guitar,  
a scare-faced gangster,  
he plucked the rusting strings  
with bony, ebony fingers.  
His lyrics,  
dug from his soul,  
filled the ghetto with sweet sounds.  
Leadbelly, singing the blues,  
is only a reporter,  
bringing lonely messages to an ignoring  
white world.

Mike Leavitt