

# The American Collection and Coming to Jones Road (1997 – 2010)

As the 1990s unfolded, Ringgold's quilts became even more imaginative. In *The American Collection*, Ringgold continued to confront the legacy of slavery in quilts like *We Came to America* (1997) that depicts a terrifying scene of enslaved Africans abandoning a burning ship as it crosses the Middle Passage, while the Statue of Liberty - shown as an African mother holding a naked child - stands in the foreground, laying bare the gaping holes in America's revisionist history. She also returned to portraiture, honoring legendary Black performers like Bessie Smith and Josephine Baker. Despite their outsized contributions to the Harlem Renaissance, both Smith and Baker performed mostly for white audiences. This dynamic parallels Ringgold's own experience of moving from Harlem into the predominately white neighborhood of Englewood, New Jersey, in 1992. The move prompted the series *Coming to Jones Road Part 1*, inspired in part by the journey of escaped slaves on the Underground Railroad. Figures are depicted burdened by personal belongings, making their way to the house on Jones Road. Later, in the works that make up *Coming to Jones Road Part 2*, Ringgold incorporated portraits of abolitionists such as Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth alongside preeminent civil rights leaders of the 1960s.