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**EDUCATION AND BLACK STRUGGLE:**  
**Notes from the Colonized World**

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*Editorial Committee*

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## PART I

# IBW AND THE VOCATION OF THE BLACK SCHOLAR

*The Institute of the Black World began its work during the summer of 1969, but it had existed for almost two years before that through long days and nights of planning by a group of black men and women in Atlanta. In some ways, something like it had existed in hope ever since the days near the dawn of the century when, in Atlanta, W.E.B. Du Bois projected his hundred-year study of black people in America.*

*The Institute was born into a national struggle over the control of the definition of the black experience. We committed ourselves immediately to that struggle, convinced that the black community had no future if it did not act responsibly to define for itself and others the nature of its own past and present.*

*At the same time, it was impossible to confine ourselves simply to the black community or to reshaping the black experience without a fundamental encounter with America. For America confronts black people with questions which we, at the pain of our life and honor, must answer. That is why "speaking the truth" about racial colonialism in America presses itself to the center of any search for the vocation of the black scholar. Most Americans have abandoned the pursuit of such questions, at their own special peril, but black scholars must not fall into that fatal trap.*

*At IBW, we have been forced to come a long way in a short time, and at every point we have been faced with the issue of our identity and the truth of our struggle. The meaning of our journey, both for ourselves and the nation in which we so uneasily live, is set forth in the following essay by our director, Vincent Harding.*



VINCENT HARDING

"... the work of man has only begun."

Aimé Césaire

## The Vocation of the Black Scholar and the Struggles of the Black Community

*Parts of this paper have been shared with others, through lectures and forums, in several cities. Although the audiences thus far have been primarily scholars in the social sciences and humanities, it is hoped that those in other fields will also be stirred to consider what it means to "speak the truth" out of their settings.*

In view of the interminable flood of questions to which the nation has been exposed since the beginning of the Watergate investigations, in the light of the widespread disruptions caused by the fuel shortages, it is ironic but not inaccurate to suggest that most of the real questions for America have not yet been raised, and the deepest problems have not yet been faced. Indeed, by now it is more than obvious that nations, no less than individuals, are best known and most clearly marked by the questions they choose not to ask. This is so whether the society is in a time of relative quiescence, or facing the creative political storm called a Cultural Revolution—or watching its political and economic processes unravel on television screens.

At the same time, it becomes increasingly clear that where real questions are denied, real belief and commitment to humane endeavors also disappear, and no force appears that is adequate to move men and women out of the

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*About the Author:* Vincent Harding is a native of New York City, and holds an M.A. and a Ph.D. in history from the University of Chicago. From 1961 to 1964, he and his wife Rosemarie worked in various capacities as civil rights negotiators and trouble-shooters throughout the South. After several years as chairman of the history and sociology department at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, he became director of the Martin Luther King Memorial Center and chairman of the nationally televised "Black Heritage" series in 1968. He has lectured widely in this country and overseas on history and contemporary issues. His essays, articles, and poetry have been published in books, journals, and newspapers. Vincent Harding is currently completing a book on the history of the black struggle for freedom in America. He has been director of the Institute of the Black World since 1969.

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cramped and sullen individualism which characterizes so much of white American life. Instead, the people gather—remaining profoundly apart—in a miasmal setting of alienation, cynicism, and fear, fully prepared to deny all demands of justice which their own history would urge upon them, unable to know or to do what must be done. They appear before the world on bright video screens, but the real arena of their spirits is more like a small and dreary prison where the winter has only begun.

Because the walls of the academy are, on the whole, merely more tastefully, delicately wrought extensions of the walls of the government, industry, and the military (somewhere along the way the white church got lost in the shuffle), it is not surprising that they too should now encompass part of the national army of cynical, despairing, increasingly frightened men and women. Indeed, as every sound of the campus-based crusades of the sixties dies away, these places reveal more vividly than ever the band of intellectual seekers who have forgotten their vocation, whose spate of captious questions decorate their shields of detached, ironic defeatism.

In this sort of setting, it necessarily follows that one of the questions most out of style is that which attempts to probe the meaning of vocation, of calling, of purpose in work and life. Certainly, such matters were relentlessly shunned through all the televised questioning of the men who help to run America. Nevertheless, by standards other than those of a rootless ("swinging") and opportunistic society, that is a critical inquiry, affecting a person's central vision of himself, his role, and his rootedness in the movement of history. It is a deeply human question especially for post-Industrial, post-Christian women and men. It has on occasion forced its way to the surface in the factories and on the production lines, but has never been seriously addressed.

And in the university? Certainly the question of vocation has a long history there. Indeed the very life of the institution was once said to be based upon such a search. (Within the last decade, certain disaffected groups on or near the campus have periodically hurled this question against the cautious banality of the white mainstream, but they have been largely enveloped and soon disappeared, dropping into the sad consensual flood, or floating away on their own freaked-out streams of consciousness.) But it is unfamiliar now. And the fact that it is out of style in the university—and elsewhere—to probe seriously into the question of one's sense of purpose in work is not only indicative of the plight of society, it also bears a stark warning to black people in America.

It is a warning to us because we are constantly tempted by a strange and poignant set of yearnings to let white America's style become our own, repeatedly forgetful that the best hopes and interests of the masses of black people have always been out of style in America (save for a few visionary and deceptively halcyon years in the 1860's and 1960's when our cause preoccupied, even obsessed, a nation). It is a warning because we are tempted even now, in the midst of the stench of national corruption, to accept American definitions of wisdom, probity, and truth—or, worse, to accept America's claims that such things are not worth discussing.

In few places is this black temptation more prevalent than in the world of the American university, so often cut off from the churnings of our own mainstream, so regularly filled with misleading calls to the mystic, universal fellowship of objective, unpigmented scholarship (or with more crassly formulated invitations to respectability and a certain safety, in exchange for the abandonment of our real questions). Yet in no "profession" is it more crucial that a man or woman ask the old-fashioned, out-of-style question: what is the vocation of the black scholar; what is MY vocation as a black scholar? We avoid the question, American-style, only at the risk of our Soul—which is at once the same as and more than our soul.

### Community in Struggle

In order to situate ourselves on a terrain that is conducive to the search for some answers—and to the coming of new questions—it is necessary to recognize that such a basic inquiry carries with it an intrinsic set of assumptions. Most important among them is a recognition of the fact that we do not exist in splendid isolation from the situation of the larger black community. Admittedly that is not an easy situation to face. It is no pleasant plain for solidarity marches. But it is real. In 1965, one of our most sensitive and perceptive black scholars summarized the besieged condition of the black community in this way:

The dark ghetto's invisible walls have been erected by the white society, by those who have power, both to confine those who have no power and to perpetuate their powerlessness. The dark ghettos are social, political, educational, and—above all—economic colonies. Their inhabitants are subject peoples, victims of the greed, cruelty, insensitivity, guilt, and fear of their masters.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth B. Clark, *Dark Ghetto* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 11.

Though Kenneth Clark has not always been prepared to follow the radical logic of his analysis—one which actually preceded the popular coming of Frantz Fanon to America—his summary is still the quintessential truth of the black condition in America. Nor do one U.S. Senator, sixteen Congressional representatives, a handful of mayors and some two thousand other elected officials provide any real challenge to the assessment. They give the situation a somewhat more neocolonial character, but the broad mass of the black community is no less an internal colony of America now than in 1965.<sup>2</sup>

It is against that black and broken background, within those precarious settings of the oppressed, that the question of the vocation of the black scholar must be framed. Theoretically, we know this. In the mid- and late-1960's, at the height of the burnings and when the assassinations sent death and rage through each of our hearts, we said we knew that we were inseparable from the searing life of the black community. When the students rose on the campuses and demanded our presence, or pressed for greater visibility and recognition of our work, we claimed, with them, indissoluble bonds to the heaving life of the black masses. Now, when a disquieting lull seems to have settled upon us, and so much of the movement against the white mainstream appears in disarray or lost in anti-black crime—at such a time it is easy to forget the pledges of black allegiance, the vows of solidarity with our community.

But surface manifestations are never the best indication of the movement of the black community, where critical repositioning is now taking place. Nor does our forgetfulness of our relationship to that black matrix ultimately dissolve the ties that bind us, or transform the radical nature of our people's position in America. Harshly put, then, the fact still remains that for the life and work of the black scholar in search of vocation, the primary context is not to be found in the questionable freedom and relative affluence of the American university, nor in the ponderous uncertainties of "the scholarly community," nor even in the private joys of our highly prized, individual exceptionalisms. Rather, wherever we may happen to be physically based, our essential social, political, and spiritual context is the colonized situation of the masses of the black community in America.

Such a context obviously makes it impossible for the search for vocation

<sup>2</sup> The colonial analogy is, of course, not a precise one for the American situation. Nevertheless, its major thrust, which draws attention to the control, exploitation, and distortion of a people's institutions by hostile forces external to its essential life, is surely appropriate. For a development of the analogy into the arena of neocolonialism, see Robert Allen's perceptive book, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America* (New York: Anchor Books, 1970).

to be either abstract or comfortable. Rather, the answers emerge hard and thorny out of the ancient, ever-present struggles of our community towards freedom, equality, self-determination, liberation—or whatever the current word which describes the essential reality we seek. Within such a setting we are forced to recognize the fact that there can be no honorable vocation for the black scholar apart from our annealing matrix. For it is finally that community-in-struggle which *calls*. It is that community through which vocation, purpose, direction, and life itself are most fully known and lived.

It is, at times, a hard call to hear. It is surely an agonizing prism through which to pass the continuous spectrum of our often battered, safety-seeking lives. Nevertheless, if the search for vocation is to be synonymous with the ongoing quest for integrity, we have no other choice. For it is only within the context of the long fight for freedom of the black community that we are ultimately moved towards a true sense of ourselves.

Come then comrades; it would be as well to decide at once to change our ways. We must shake off the heavy darkness in which we were plunged, and leave it behind. The new day which is already at hand must find us firm, prudent and resolute.<sup>3</sup>

### Speak the Truth to the People

Because of the nature of the long and relentless struggle for freedom and justice which our people have waged against the white and bloody mainstream of American life, because of its undeniably tragic qualities and its truly epic proportions, it is not surprising that a poet who is a black woman emerges as a central source for direct and measured guidance in the search for vocation. In response to the crucial question: what is the vocation, the role of the black scholar in the context of the struggles of the black community, Mari Evans answers, "Speak the Truth to the People."<sup>4</sup> Under that title-manifesto, her poem provides a remarkable pathway for black seekers:

Speak the truth to the people  
Talk sense to the people  
Free them with reason  
Free them with honesty  
Free the people with Love and Courage....  
and Care for their being

<sup>3</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), p. 252.

<sup>4</sup> In her excellent collection of poems, *I Am A Black Woman* (New York: William Morrow, 1970), pp. 91-92.

Speak the truth to the people  
It is not necessary to green the heart  
Only to identify the enemy  
It is not necessary to blow the mind  
Only to free the mind  
To identify the enemy is to free the mind  
A free mind has no need to scream  
A free mind is ready for other things  
To BUILD black schools  
To BUILD black children  
To BUILD black minds  
To BUILD black love  
To BUILD black impregnability  
To BUILD a strong black nation  
To BUILD.

Speak the truth to the people.  
Spare them the opium of devil-hate.  
They need no trips on honky-chants.  
Move them instead to a BLACK ONENESS.  
A black strength which will defend its own

A black strength which attacks the laws  
exposes the lies disassembles the structure  
and ravages the very foundation of evil.

Speak the truth to the people  
To identify the enemy is to free the mind  
Free the mind of the people  
Speak to the mind of the people  
Speak Truth.

There are few better summaries of our calling available: to speak truth to our people, to speak truth about our people, to speak truth about our enemy—all in order to free the mind, so that black men, women, and children may build beyond the banal, dangerous chaos of the American spirit, towards a new time.

Certain elements of the call deserve closer examination. For instance, there is every reason to believe that the first truth a people needs is the truth about themselves and the nature and possible meaning of their own existence. And when a community shares the African heritage of three-dimensional historical existence, when past, present, and future are in constant,

sometimes ecstatic, conversation, then each dimension of the people's being must be addressed. For the people are their fathers and mothers. They are their children. Just as they are themselves.

Thus, to speak the truth to the people concerning themselves is first to open to the people the lives and struggles of our ancestors. This assumes, of course, that we black teacher-scholars have identified our own fathers, and are indeed open to them. In the light of the nature of the American system of higher education, it is likely that such encounters with the truth of our own ancestry will eventually press us to come to terms with those "fathers" of white history, politics, and cultural and intellectual life of the West who have been foisted upon us (and often eagerly received) in the course of our rites of passage. Whatever we do ultimately with these persons and their ideas, it is necessary that we confront their reality and—too often—their hegemony within us. Only then can we move beyond them to the most basic truth of our existence, to see our fathers as clearly as possible—from the homeland through the long and cruel pilgrimage on this alien ground.

We see our ancestors, first of all, to celebrate them in the presence of the living black community, to celebrate the power of their endurance and the amazing, resilient force of their humanity which do so much to account for our own existence. Celebration, of course, is not enough. But celebration which grows out of identification with and affirmation of the intellectual and spiritual forebears of our ancestral community is not incompatible with analysis. (Indeed, analysis of human history without celebration tends often to the vocation of autopsy.) The deepening of our sense of identity presses us to seek, to know, to understand, to clarify the ways and means by which our fathers and mothers carried on the struggle for integrity and freedom in their time. The urge to meet them and their truth will move us relentlessly to seek out their own essential understandings of themselves, and then to subject that body of knowledge to our best, rigorous thought, humanized by deep and lasting commitments to the common struggle.

Thus our truest vocation will seek us. For out of such probing and analysis will burgeon the studies of black religious, political, and cultural experience which are now so few and so largely unsystematic. Among many hundreds of examples of the work that will surely be produced, the relationships among David Walker's slim volume of revolutionary messianism, Nat Turner's "relayed" *Confessions* (capturing much of his essence, though not quite his voice), Frederick Douglass' voluminous writings, and H. Ford

Douglass' impassioned speeches will be carefully explored.<sup>5</sup> The continuities among the Emigration Convention of 1854, the powerful emigration movements of the post-Reconstruction period, and the rise of Marcus Garvey will be examined. The novelistic treatments of black revolutionary movements, from Delany's *Blake*, through Griggs' *Imperium In Imperio*, to Greenlee's *The Spook Who Sat By the Door*, will form the basis for intensive comparative study.<sup>6</sup>

All such elements of struggle for a new way will be placed into the context of the fugitive letters, the haunting songs, the persistent oral traditions of the masses. Played off against the constantly expanding panorama of the movement of the historical black community, such studies will make it increasingly possible for us to know and speak the truth to our people concerning our common ancestors and our common historical contestation for justice. Indeed, part of our deepest obligation to the past, as well as to the future, is to place our own definitions on those long historical struggles of our people. (For there are many non-black experts on our history who are always prepared to define for us that experience and that fight as either "integration" or "separatism," as either "protest" or "accommodation," as either "irresponsible escapism" or "responsible realism," *ad nauseam*.) Our ancestors did not wade through rivers of blood so that we might surrender the interpretation of their lives into the hands of others.

### The Truth of Here and Now

Certainly, it is obvious that if the black community's long movement towards self-determination is to be advanced—rather than betrayed—in our

<sup>5</sup> The text of David Walker's *Appeal* is available in a number of places. Perhaps the most helpful source is Herbert Aptheker (ed.), *One Continual Cry* (New York: Humanities Press, 1965). Among the several works which now contain the text of Turner's dictated *Confession*, none is more helpful than the collection edited by Henry I. Tragle, *The Southampton Slave Revolt* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1971). The valuable standard collection of Douglass' works is Philip S. Foner (ed.), *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass* (New York: International Publishers, 1950-1955). H. Ford Douglass' (no known relationship to the more famous black man) is a crucial figure for the decade of the 1850's, when he worked closely with Martin Delany, but his speeches are scattered and fugitive. The best, fairly available introduction to his thought and style is found in the pamphlet, *Speech of H. Ford Douglass . . . Before the Emigration Convention . . . August, 1854*. (Chicago: W. H. Worreld, 1854). It is available in the Moorland Collection at Howard University and at the Schomburg Collection in Harlem.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Delany's *Blake* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970) was originally published in serial form from 1859-1861. Sutton Griggs' novel (New York Books for Libraries, 1899) was republished by Arno Press, N.Y. in 1969. Sam Greenlee's popular work was published in 1969 by R. W. Baron (New York), and a film version of the book was released in 1973.

own time, then the truth of our history, while necessary, is not sufficient. For a major part of the truth of our community resides in its present colonized condition. So it is integral to the nature of our calling that we see the contemporary hour with vivid clarity and great imagination. Whenever possible, the meaning of the present must be drawn out of its often hidden relationship to the past and firmly connected to its tendencies towards the future.

It is a risky but necessary part of our business, one which we have not always boldly claimed. For in spite of certain important, creative earlier analyses of their own time and situations by such scholars as W.E.B. Du Bois, Allison Davis, St. Clair Drake, Horace Mann Bond, E. Franklin Frazier, and Ralph Bunche, there has been a tendency in the post-1954 generation to abdicate to others the responsibility for being authorities on our own contemporary condition. We have been hesitant to barge beyond such deceptive concepts as "deprivation," "disadvantaged," and "social pathology." At times we have been tripped up by analytical theories not developed out of the concrete experiences of black people in America. (Two examples of this are the "race relations" approach to the black experience, and the liberal Gunnar Myrdal concept of race as a national dilemma, both of which avoid the realities of white racist-capitalist exploitation of the black community.)<sup>7</sup> Often, we have expended far too much energy reacting to the initiatives of others.

Sometimes, of course, we were hampered by the arrogance of the scholarly-oriented foundations and publishing houses who were certain that they or their white experts knew, far more precisely than black scholars, what the essential questions were, who claimed that black people would be too "emotionally involved" to handle such weighty matters in the "objective" manner they deserved. We may also assume that more than arrogance was often at work; that there was also clear-headed determination to see to it that the wrong questions by the wrong persons were continually asked about the black condition in America—and about America itself.

At times we were thrown off by the prestige of some of the scholarly associations, journals, and publishers, from whose platforms and pages white analyses of the contemporary black condition were launched into the world. Thus we were tempted to allow the Moynihans and the Jensens, the Jencks and the Riesmans, the Rainwaters and the Pettigrews, the Rudwicks

<sup>7</sup> See Gunnar Myrdal's *The American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Torch, 1962).

and the Meiers (to say nothing of the U.S. Supreme Court) to speak our truth, to define our identity, and to proclaim the nature of our struggle in the contemporary period.

The calling of the black scholar is to move insistently beyond such abdication, whatever its cause. Let others study us if they will (although the studies slacken off as they become less profitable), but self-definition is an intrinsic part of self-determination. It is we who must understand our families, our churches, our works of art, the schools our children attend, the economic, political, and spiritual structures which uphold—and oppress—the communities in which we live. It is we who must understand how all these structures and institutions are related to our oppression and our struggle for liberation. It is we who must painfully diagnose our own deepest illnesses and identify with great joy our most soaring aspirations towards new humanity. (Remembering the traditions which claim that Africans could once fly, we must surely refuse to allow this deadly, leaden-spirited society to keep us from the upper reaches of hope.)

As a part of any truth-speaking about the present condition, our situation and our people demand that there be sympathetic but hard black analysis concerning the nature and effectiveness of the sometimes strange and valiant approaches to struggle which have arisen out of our own generation. We have yet to see clearly for ourselves the meaning, the connections, and the lessons which emerge out of the furious passage of time and events between the justice-seeking boycott and marches of Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955-56 and the criminal subversion of the political system symbolized by Watergate. For instance, we are called upon to seek at least some tentative understandings of the relationship between the marching songs and prayers in the churches in the South and the uprisings of the black prisoners across the land. We need to see if there is any chartable way from the lunch counters of North Carolina to the bullets of the snipers in the cities, any recognizable path from the bombings of Birmingham to the mass graves at My Lai. We must measure the ever-shortening span between Malcolm X and Martin Luther King.

We are faced with the hard questions of the meaning on the one hand of 1972's National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana, and its call for independent black political organizing, as against the "delivery" of black convention votes to George McGovern by some of the leaders of the Gary meeting shortly thereafter. Scrutinizing our own time, how do we explain the movement of certain heirs of Malcolm X into almost obscene flirtations

with the Nixon White House, and the movement of certain heirs of Martin King into equally strange support of the myth of Black Capitalism as a means to "Save Humanity"? Or on another, even more current matter, we must ask precisely how much of the apparatus of political espionage and illegal activity developed by the Nixon Administration was geared originally towards the suppression of black struggle?

Beyond these shores we must ask, how have the developments in the world of "revolutionary Marxism" affected our struggles? For example, what is the meaning of the ambiguous evidence we have so far concerning China, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other, and both their responses to America's rapacious movements in Vietnam? How does the presence of Kissinger in the Kremlin and in the study of Chairman Mao affect our stance towards international class-race struggle from a Marxist perspective? What and where is the Third World now, and what is its meaning for us? What is the significance of the recent return to these shores of Stokely Carmichael and other ardent proponents of Pan-Africanism who left America after the Black Power movement appeared to have crested? Do they reenter our struggle-ground with any lessons from Africa?

Far deeper than such matters run the more basic questions, the questions which inextricably bind past to present to future: What are the stakes for which we now struggle? What are the goals toward which we now move? What do liberation, independence, authentic black humanity, self-determination, victory mean in the world of the 1970's and 1980's? What is the nature of the society we seek?

The character and intensity of our concern for all such questions flow essentially out of our approach to Kenneth Clark's fundamental statement of our condition, out of our attempts to bring Fanon to bear upon our situation. Each question, and a host of similar ones, is in its own way a means of asking how an internal black colony in America can move towards liberation for itself and for humankind. Of course, before all else, we are asking, how can we liberate our own minds and spirits and lives to set ourselves seriously to the task before us. How can a victimized, oppressed people begin to see its true identity as more than that of victims and sufferers, and begin to grasp the vast possibilities of their humanity? How can we move from talk of "making it" in the system to the work of total transformation of the system? How can we forget the negative, campy idea of "surviving" and press on to the more human task of prevailing, of creating a new society in America?

These are questions worthy of the best black minds. They demand more than apathy, cynicism, and various personal escapisms. And if past experience is any guide, we may be absolutely certain that white forces in this society are persistently at work on their own analysis of our present situation, posing their own questions, seeking their own answers, for their own purposes. Again, we abdicate our vocation of truth-seeking and truth-speaking at great risk—and the risk is far more than personal.

### Identifying the Enemy

What this means is that Mari Evans is right when she says that there can be no talking sense to the people unless the enemy is clearly identified. *For colonized peoples cannot be honestly studied in isolation from their colonizers, and we are no exception.* Any proper understanding of our present situation (to say nothing of our past and future) must speak the truth about white America and its deepest intentions and actions towards us. None of our black institutions, none of our lives, none of our aesthetic creations may be properly understood apart from the mechanisms of American slavery and colonization, apart from the long, resourceful black struggle to break their hold and transcend their power. Nothing that is black and whole and alive in America can be fully comprehended apart from the endless white thrusts towards our exploitation, deracination, death, and dismemberment. (Indeed, only then can we fully understand and celebrate the miracle of our continued, vibrant, living presence. Only then can we properly understand the nature of the dyings among us.) Therefore, no discussion of schools or banks, of black mayors or black production workers, of black music or black literature, of black politics or black religion in America can make sense to the people unless we identify the enemy.

Enmeshed as we are in the machinery of white American systems of life and thought, hesitant—as most men and women are—to look straight on at evil, voluntarily bound by an oath of aseptic “objectivity,” which often helps to mask both our anger and our fear, black scholars have great difficulty with this element of the truth—at least in public. Nevertheless, once we recognize and admit that the mass of black people live as unmistakably colonized victims (yet courageously as more than victims) of white America, there is no escape from the knowledge that white America and its systems of domination are the enemy. Nor is there any escape from acting on that truth.

Educational systems which invariably spawn wretched schools and powerless officials in black communities are the enemy. Political systems which use code words like "busing," "welfare," "no quota systems," and "crime in the streets" to signal their fear of black people and their willingness to hold us powerless as long as they can—these are the enemy. Economic systems which reject so many of the basic human needs of the poor and the weak in favor of the wealthy and their subalterns are the enemy. Health care systems which provide neither health nor care for the powerless and poor are the enemy. Legal and penal systems which persistently place us, in large, often overwhelming numbers, behind bars, and which place whites in almost all the seats of authority, from the judge's bench to the turnkey's—those are the enemy. Energy conservation systems which give our needs the lowest priority and literally leave us out in the cold are the enemy. A military system which serves as the only "respectable" alternative available to black youth who have been mangled and rejected by America's other systems, a military force which then is ironically guaranteed to be used in the future only against other non-white people—that is the enemy. Cultural systems which in an age such as this still manage to pretend that humane man began and will end with the peoples of Europe are the enemy. Nor is there any difficulty in recognizing the total interpenetration of these systems. They do not exist in any ultimate tension with each other where the future of black people is concerned; and it is part of the vocation of black scholarship to identify that enemy.

Systems do not exist apart from individuals. They are, indeed, the creation and expression of men and women. Therefore, in spite of the pain it often causes us, black scholars must not stop with systems when we identify the enemy. For there is no escape from the fact that all those "good" white people who support, uphold, acquiesce in (and encourage Blacks to believe in) these systems are the enemy. It really makes little difference whether such people fervently grasp this American Way of Death out of their fear of freedom, or coolly consent because of their cynical refusal to believe that fundamental change toward a renewed humanity is possible. Whatever the reasons, they fit the identification.

We need not be reticent in this arena of our vocation, for we did not choose our enemies. We chose only hope and freedom and justice, and the spirits chose us to be black. Because of those things and others, the systems and the people chose us as their enemies. Therefore there is no need to be ashamed to clarify what their choices have done to our relationships. Indeed, the

more clearly they are seen in their flight from justice, the more likely will they be recognized not as our enemies alone, but as enemies of life and joy, enemies of the peoples of Indochina and the waters of the Chattahoochee and the children of the natives of this land. For, these our enemies are friends only to themselves and to their weapons and to their profits and to their cold, white hubris—which their tattered president falsely identifies as “honor.”

If it is indeed the vocation of the black scholar to speak the truth concerning the enemy, then both nationally and locally, we must produce and encourage precise, carefully documented studies of the educational, political, economic, military, and cultural systems of white oppression. We study these systems not to “make it,” or to “buy in,” for they are, after all, the systems which have scourged the lives of our people and other non-white peoples for so long. They are, after all, systems built on the blood and subjugation of our ancestors. We seek to know them in order to speak the truth and to free minds (including our own), so that we may sweep past their deathly hold, “disassemble the structures, ravage the very foundations of evil,” and move towards the new acts of building which are the first calling of every humane society.

But there are still impediments to that movement forward; there are still obstacles to the new task of building which are exceedingly painful to face. Nevertheless, it would be untruthful, illusory, and self-defeating if we were to pretend that the search for the enemies of our struggle either begins or ends with the oppressive systems and the cooperating people of the white world. No, to speak the truth concerning the enemy is to identify the enemy within ourselves.

Thus the role of the black scholar is to identify the enemy within the black community, within our own people, within ourselves. Here the focus will not be so much on people as on tendencies, commitments, and directions which war against the movement for freedom, justice, and self-determination. To identify the enemy is to identify the mesmerizing fear, the debilitating venality, the lack of moral and intellectual self-discipline, the opportunism, the pathological lying, and the self-defeating desire for public recognition and praise which dwell among us. To identify the enemy is to speak the truth to our tendency to place all responsibility for black crime upon white people. To identify the enemy is to clarify our unspoken desire for white models, white recognition, white legitimization. To identify the enemy is to point to our failure to believe in ourselves and our tremendous potentials.

To some degree, all these tendencies, and many others like them, are found in all human societies. However, they are developed to cancerous levels in a situation of oppression. Only when they are identified, only when we take responsibility for them, can our minds be freed from a horrible dependency upon the external enemy. For it is in the struggle to overcome those inner weaknesses that we generate much of the strength, the energies, and the commitment to move us toward the new building, the new society, the new men and women which are our ultimate goal.

### Possibilities

To speak now of building is to be faced with the reality that there can be no work, no speaking of truth to the people, which does not force us into the future. For those black scholars who recognize their profound relationship to the ongoing life and struggles of the larger black community, all work is a pathway to the next stages of the struggle. All history moves us towards the future; all analysis of the contemporary setting seeks to find ways in which we may be situated for the next times. To speak the truth is to speak of the future, for our children are the people, and we must speak imaginatively, speculatively, responsibly to the issues of their terrain, indicating what we see concerning the promise and the dangers before us, suggesting what must be done—and not done.

In part, this means for some of us another harsh encounter with the systems of white oppression. Our vocation demands that we identify those systems in their present manifestations, that we speak whatever truth we understand about their future possibilities for anti-black destructiveness, as well as about the weaknesses inherent in their make-up. In spite of much personal squeamishness among us about such things, there can be no unthinkable thoughts among black scholars concerning the terrifying potentials of white racism in this land. Rather, the historic sufferings of our foreparents and the coming life of our children demand that we make sober estimations of the possible directions of a society which has produced the near decimation of the native population of this land, atomized tens of thousands of Japanese, and destroyed a massive portion of Indochina and its population.

We need unhysterical speculations on the nature of the technological advances, the moral corruption, and the deep-seated hatred and fear in America which might conceivably lead it to seek a solution for its Black Problem no less efficiently savage than the "final solution" which Germany found for

its Jewish Problem. We are not called to be obsessed by the thought of large-scale attempts at black genocide in America, but neither are we called to ignore the real possibilities which are not very far under the surface of America's security-oriented and fearful "democracy." It is surely accurate to suggest that the failure of the large majority of the Jewish intellectuals and leaders of the 1920's and 1930's to face and discuss such possibilities in Germany (even after the grim testimony of the killings began to appear in 1941) was partly responsible for the fact that an entire people was completely unprepared for any effective resistance to the Holocaust.<sup>8</sup> We are totally overwhelmed by the horrible cost which millions of men and women and children had to pay to force such a negative lesson into human history, but we must not allow our horror and unspeakable distress to cause us to ignore the meaning of the lesson for us. For there is nothing in the white American record of the present or past which gives us any comfort. On the contrary there is every reason to believe that this nation is quite capable of an attempt to place us (and not us alone) in the position of the European Jews.

To speak the truth concerning the future is to face such a brutal reality, to keep it in its proper place as one of the possible developments with which we must deal, and then to move forward with our concrete tasks. It is not part of our vocation to be mesmerized by such encounters with the face of death, for the future has many more faces than that. Indeed, at every juncture we see our children and their offspring—and the truth that is demanded is their truth—forever invaded by their life, by their Soul. It is this ecstatic obsession with new black life which drives us forward, not a fascination with the white-washed faces of Apocalypse. This ring of children is the pulsating arena in which we stand when we ask the present and the past for certain intimations concerning the coming time. It is in this setting that we are called to search to know which things need to be held fast to in order to assist the children in the harsh coming moments of their own struggles toward the day.

What institutions must be discarded now in order that they may be more fully prepared to break the circle of white power? What chances and risks must we take in our own time in order to help them towards better positions for their own overcoming movement? How can we practice now—and therefore teach for the future—the art of breaking down the rusty nineteenth-century intellectual and ideological barriers which still hedge in our minds

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1961), especially chapters 2 and 10.

and spirits, so that our children will gain some sense of the tremendous power available to them in their search for a new way? How, for instance, do we move beyond the stultifying determinisms of religion, history, economics, and astrology to suggest to our children what it might be like to seize their destinies and to live self-determining, fully human lives? What life styles need to be explored in their presence? What values must be transformed? What deep convictions do they need to observe in us? What undisciplined self-serving tendencies must they see us opposing in our own lives?

These are the kinds of questions which surge out of our deeply probing encounters with the faces of our black unborn. These are the sounds of our searchings among the children. Nor are we ashamed as scholars to be found in their company, for it is the question of their future which leads us ineluctably to what Aimé Césaire has called "the rendez-vous of conquest." They lead us to his words of affirmation:

for it is not true that the work of man is finished  
that we have nothing to do in the world  
that we are parasites in the world  
that we have only to accept the way of the world  
but the work of man has only begun

and no race has a monopoly of beauty, intelligence, strength  
and there is room for all at the rendez-vous of conquest . . .<sup>9</sup>

No, we cannot be ashamed to walk with the children and seek out their future, for such a walk also sets us into the uncertain but undaunted steps of Frantz Fanon's imperative cadence: "The colonized man who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope."<sup>10</sup>

### Living the Truth of Struggle

For some strange reason, it is especially when we are faced with the concreteness of the future in the faces of our children that we are made painfully aware of the inadequacies of the truth-speaking traditions of the West for the largest fulfillment of our vocation. Historically, since the days of the

<sup>9</sup> *Return to My Native Land*, trans. Emile Snyders, 2nd ed. (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1960), pp. 124-125.

<sup>10</sup> Fanon, p. 187.

Protestant Reformation, these traditions have been heavily focussed in the uttered word, the word from the mouth of the preacher or the university professor or the King. Preaching and lecturing and announcing became the best known means of telling the truth, of proclaiming the truth. Even the Bible was popularly conceived of as the written form of a Divinely spoken word—for was it not by His speech that God first brought the world into being?

Now, it appears that these forms are insufficient for a vocation which seeks to be faithful to the long struggles of the black community to maintain and renew life. They seem unable sufficiently to bear that truth which must be carried beyond past and present into the darkly shimmering future. To speak the truth with our mouths alone, to write it only in our books, somehow seems far less than our children demand and deserve, far less than our fathers and mothers had hoped for.

Therefore, we are finally driven to remember our selves, to recollect our beings, to know that our deepest origins have little to do with American style, but are to be found in a series of cultures in which much emphasis is often placed on the living, acting, dancing, *performing* of the truth. Indeed, we come from great bodies of men and women who have for many centuries experienced what is fittingly known as *possession by the truth*. Perhaps, then, there is no way to respond creatively to this tradition, and to the uncomfortableness raised among us by our children, except to recognize that it is obviously not enough to speak the truth to our people. We must somehow find ways, stumbling ways, to live the truth—to run the risk of being possessed by our struggle for justice and hope.

Everyone who has ever observed or experienced possession in African peoples knows that it is not in any way respectable by American standards.<sup>11</sup> We also know that there are few groups of persons who are more concerned about respectability than black scholars and teachers. But what our history and our vocation insist that we know as well is the fact that in a criminal country truth and respectability meet only accidentally, while the colonized condition of our community is such that its truth cannot be reconciled with the respectability of its colonizers. It is illusory and self-defeating to hope for both. Nevertheless, it is likely that one of the greatest temptations we face in the deceptively insulated situation of the university is to live and teach and write—and get by, and get on—as if there were no

<sup>11</sup> It is important to note here that a certain public respectability (or at least curiosity) has been developing for some limited forms of possession now that elements of the white American middle class have opened their parched lives to this experience.

colonized black community, no colonizing, destructive white America, no struggle, or at least none worth living. (Or, if there is indeed a struggle out there, we are tempted to make believe that our excellent, liberal institution, and our outstanding, gracious colleagues are sterling exceptions among the colonizers—or the colonized. Such a life, of course, is not only illusory and self-defeating; it is, *more than likely*, a lie.)

When we ask what it means as a black scholar to live the truth of black struggle and black hope, it is self-evident that words are not sufficient. Examples are far more to the point and many are available, some illuminating one aspect of the living, some another, a significant number illustrating an impressive integrity and wholeness.

George Washington Williams, author of the massive *History of the Negro Race in America from 1619 to 1880*,<sup>12</sup> provides a case of a man who experienced his own profound encounter with our truth and chose to bear witness to it. In the introduction to the *History*, he revealed his submission to that truth, writing;

"I have tracked my bleeding countrymen through the widely scattered documents of American history. I have listened to their groans, their clanking chains and melting prayers until the woes of a race and the agonies of centuries seem to crowd upon my soul as a bitter reality. Many pages of this history have been blistered with my tears. And although having lived for but a little more than a generation, my mind feels as if it were cycles-old."<sup>13</sup>

For the thirty-two-year-old Williams, living the truth meant a refusal to hold black people at bay, like some alien objects of study. It meant submitting to the invasion of his being by all the agonies of his race. It meant possession.

A little more than a decade later in 1893, the young W.E.B. DuBois sat in a room in Berlin and pondered certain elements of the same question, the same vocation. What would it mean for him to seek and live the truth as a black scholar? After Great Barrington, Fisk, and Harvard, DuBois had come to study in Germany, and had already experienced the temptation which sorely besets so many black scholars. He had heard the misleading call to life as a "universal" man, meaning in stark, colonial terms, an *evolué*, a man beyond his people, beyond his roots, beyond his ancestors—and therefore beyond his children. A man out of touch and out of reach.

There in his room, celebrating his twenty-fifth birthday alone, Du Bois

<sup>12</sup> (1883; reprinted New York: Arno Press, 1968).

<sup>13</sup> Williams, vol. 2, iii.

finally decided that he could not serve two masters. He must either be faithful to the truth of his people first, or he must give first allegiance to something called universalism (meaning, of course, white Western universalism). Lighting candles, remembering his mother, commemorating her life, he said, "I will seek the truth on the pure assumption that it is worth seeking. And heaven nor hell, god nor devil, shall turn me from my purpose till I die." Knowing that truth is not abstract, but is bound up with the living and dying experiences of the world, he added more to the commitment of his own life, and said,

I am firmly convinced that my own best development is not one and the same with the best development of the world and here I am willing to sacrifice.

However, he also knew that "sacrifice to the world's good becomes too soon sickly sentimentality." So he concluded,

I therefore take the world that the Unknown lay in my hands and work for the rise of the Negro people, taking for granted that their best development means the best development of the world . . .<sup>14</sup>

From that point on, with relatively few detours for such a long life, Du Bois sought to live that truth. Though he took many paths which he later considered mistaken ones, his life demonstrated the fact that the truly universal man becomes such not by leaping past his people out into some ethereal universe, but by fighting his way through all the bloody gateways of his particular ancestral experience. For Du Bois, that was the way to the universal nature of truth itself. It was a strange way, rarely taking him by the path of popular, black mass movements, bringing him into a series of hard, costly conflicts on every side, moving him via the NAACP and Russia and China and the loss of jobs and a federal indictment and Communist Party membership, finally to the land of his fathers. It was a strange way, but it was Du Bois' unique way of being possessed.

### A Scholarship of Unity, Discipline, and Independence

Du Bois' life was also a reminder of the fact that Pan-Africanism in its many forms and manifestations has at times been a clear alternative to the various ersatz universalisms of the Western world. Though he was often caught in

<sup>14</sup> W. E. B. DuBois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. DuBois* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), pp. 170-171.

the fierce tension between those two major fields of human force, Du Bois presented one persistent example of the black scholar's seeking to place his life firmly in the context of the larger Pan-African scene. This joining of ourselves and our work to the movement of the great black river of the African diaspora appears to be a critical part of our vocation. Before Du Bois, we saw the tendency in men as varied as Edward W. Blyden,<sup>15</sup> Martin Delany, and George Washington Williams. In our own time, that search for the Pan-African context has been represented in the New World in the lives and work of such crucial scholars as Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, St. Clair Drake, Walter Rodney, C. L. R. James, John Henrik Clarke, George Beckford, Edward Brathwaite, Wilfred Cartey and Sylvia Wynter, to name only some of the best known members of a significant grouping.<sup>16</sup> Living, working, and moving between the African continent and the various outpost nation-tribes of the Black New World, they have at once based their lives upon and helped to create a truth of relationships and linkages so often denied and unseen by the world of white scholarship.

In the United States, this living Pan-Africanism emerges not simply because we need such connections and roots for the strength and integrity of our own work (which we surely do), but it is to be encouraged as well because it is part of the self-definition which must never be lost to our people. To see that triangular setting, to sense that black pluriverse, is not to live in fantasy, but to recognize that black people in America are something more than an isolated, beleaguered minority, lost in the heartless depths of a white society. Seeing the larger vision, we wait for no mythical Black Messiahs from other lands. Rather we work out our own hard and gruelling liberation-salvation here, assured that it is fiercely connected at the roots to the liberation of the entire black diaspora. If we take seriously the examples

<sup>15</sup> The best introduction to Blyden's life and work is found in Hollis R. Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden* (New York; Oxford U. Pr., 1967). Two recent biographies of Delany present complementary approaches. They are Dorothy Sterling, *The Making of an Afro-American* (New York: Doubleday, 1971) and Victor Ullman, *Martin R. Delany* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

<sup>16</sup> While the names of Césaire, Fanon, Drake, and James are generally well known, the others, too, are critical figures for any understanding of Pan-Africanism and black scholarship. Rodney, based at the University of Dar es Salaam, is an authority on African history and the role of European colonialism in that history. Clarke is now perhaps the best known member of a long tradition of self-educated black scholars on the history of the peoples of Africa. He teaches at Hunter College and Cornell University. George Beckford is a lecturer at the Jamaica campus of the University of the West Indies and is one of the foremost political economists of the African diaspora. Brathwaite, also at the University of the West Indies, is a poet, anthropologist, and historian of great skill. Wilfred Cartey, a native of Trinidad, is currently the Martin Luther King Jr. distinguished professor of Black Studies at the City College of New York, and specializes in the study of the literary expressions of Africa and her scattered peoples;

of men like James, Drake, Du Bois, and Fanon, it becomes obvious that it is our fierce devotion to the struggles of the African diaspora which ultimately breaks us open to the larger, formerly colonized non-white world. Thus we are offered even deeper rootage and wider perspectives in the fullest experience of humanity, an experience either denied or seriously distorted in the mainstream of Western scholarship.

In the same way that we break beyond false boundaries of Western colonialism, attempting to recreate our essential Pan-African unity, expressing our solidarity with the larger pro-human struggles, so too our truth demands that we reject the artificial barriers of the academic disciplines to seek the human unity which underlies the experience of our people. Just as the best of the anti-colonial revolutionary leaders reject the national political, economic, and social systems created by the colonizers, so do we deny *a priori* validity of methodological disciplines, concepts, and "fields" which have been established without our participation, and which have often worked against the best intellectual and political interests of the African peoples. (Anthropology, African studies, and "Western civilization" are only among the more obvious.)

Here, again, examples abound of black scholars who have acted out this element of the struggle in their own lives, who have moved continuously beyond, and sometimes against, the disciplines assigned to them by the university. Instead they have allowed the experience of our people to become the organizing reality. Disciplines, fields, and concepts have been either ignored and rejected, or transformed, restructured, and taken to higher levels of usefulness in their lives and work. (It is, of course, another form of possession by the truth.) One such example is C. L. R. James, who somehow manages to combine independent Marxist political analysis, drama, political science, history, and cricket into the building of his work on Pan-African struggle. Not only is James unbound by disciplinary lines, but the content of his work is always shaped by the truth of the black community, especially by its struggles. That truth becomes his defining, sustaining force.<sup>17</sup>

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he refuses to separate such expressions from their basic matrix of anti-colonial struggle. Sylvia Wynter, also with the University of the West Indies, is a versatile playwright, actress, linguist, and historian, who lectures in Spanish and writes on everything else.

<sup>17</sup> Younger scholars of this black cross-disciplinary genre include Mary Berry, who blends history with her legal background; John Bracey, historian, sociologist, and political scientist; William Brown, who seeks out the meaning of Islamic African civilization through multiple social science scholarship; and Robert Hill, expert on Marcus Garvey and the politics, economics, and international affairs that surrounded him. All are fellows or associates of the Institute.

It is important to note, however, that the creative movement of the black scholar beyond the imposed disciplines of the academy does not imply the lack of either external or internal disciplines in our work. What it means externally is that the black experience and its truth apply their own external discipline on us. Moreover there is ample evidence of exemplary submission by black scholars to the inner, self-imposed discipline of work. Du Bois' clockwork-like schedule was legendary. (It was also annoying to those who had other visions of themselves and of him.) Fanon, about whom we often romanticize, was writing at age twenty-seven, "I do not agree with those who think it is possible to live life at an easy pace. I don't want this."<sup>18</sup> True to his word, he kept his short but grand life moving at a gruelling pace, regularly averaging at least fifteen hours of work per day. Without doubt, these lives testify to a central element of the truth that the black scholar is called upon to exemplify. Their commitment to arduous, unglamorous work stands as a hard challenge to the present and coming generations of black scholars. For among our many weaknesses, a critical one is a hesitancy to be hard on ourselves, to be ruthless with our personal softnesses, to discipline our bodies and our minds and our schedules.

Discipline, work, and struggle are not ends in themselves in the truth-seeking course of vocation. The essential goal is to free ourselves for building with and in the black community. That is the message of Mari Evans, and that is the continuing word which breaks loose from the lives of the best black scholars. To live the truth with the black community is to build black institutions which maintain and press forward truth. This is central and ultimate to the living vocation of the black scholar. There is no other way to read Carter G. Woodson and the *Journal of Negro History*, or Horace Mann Bond at Lincoln University and Fort Valley State, or Lerone Bennett and Hoyt Fuller at Johnson Publications, or Charles S. Johnson at Fisk, or Sterling Brown and Stephen Henderson at Howard, or Margaret Walker, Earl Thorpe, Richard Long, Benjamin Quarles, and a variegated but fascinating company of others who have also given their lives and their work to elements of the building that is needed within the black community.

\*An embattled, colonized people need liberated grounds on which to gather, to reflect, to teach, to learn, to publish, to move towards self-definition and self-determination. Some of these grounds may be in the heart of contemporary white-controlled institutions, but the experiences of the past few years indicate that there are far fewer grounds in such places than we

<sup>18</sup> Peter Geismar, *Fanon* (New York: Dial Press, 1971), p. 11.

would like to believe. Others stand in critical *potentio* on the contested setting of purportedly black-controlled institutions. But such places must yet be moved firmly into the effective control of a struggle-conscious black leadership, and set in the direction of our needs. Still others, under such control, are fighting to grow and develop into the full power and prospect they hold for our people.<sup>19</sup>

The vast majority of the black institutions we need are yet to be born. To live the truth is to join in the process of that birth, of that building. For in no other way can the schools, the children, the minds, the love, the impregnability, the "strong black nation" that Mari Evans saw in her vision come into being.

### Fulfillment of the Vocation

It is in the process of building that we continually rediscover what cannot be escaped in any colonized setting. We find that every attempt to build new institutions for the liberation of the minds of our people involves us in serious struggle. Every attempt to transform already existing institutions, to wrest other institutions out of the hands of the colonizers, makes it clear that the struggle for self-determination is not some distant battle. We discover it in different ways in Baton Rouge and in New Haven; in Jackson, Mississippi, and in Evanston, Illinois. Still, there is no doubt that it is impossible to build as we ought without taking new steps into the heart of the ongoing political, economic, and cultural struggles of our people to break the domination of the white systems of power.

Becoming personally involved in the concrete, active struggle for liberation, entering deeply into its life, and opening our own lives to its risks, is, of course, the most unrespectable aspect of the vocation of the black scholar. Here is the place, above all, where to live our vocation may be to lose, to hurt, to die. Appropriately enough it was Fanon who said most clearly that it was not sufficient to observe the struggle. The intellectual of the colonized people, he said, must ultimately "take part in action and throw himself body and soul into the national struggle."<sup>20</sup> Though we approach this truth with fear and trembling, though we seek rationalizations which explain its sup-

<sup>19</sup> Examples of such independent, black-controlled institutions now fighting for life and growth are Third World Press in Chicago, Ill.; *Black World* magazine; scores of independent black schools such as the Freedom Library Day School, Philadelphia, and IBW.

<sup>20</sup> Fanon, p. 187.

posed irrelevance, for those who live with any full consciousness of our history, our present condition, and our future, there is really little choice if the various worlds of fantasy are to be avoided. Each of us must find the place in the struggle where he or she can best stand—or admit that we cannot stand.

Obviously, there will be no uniformity in the ground we find. It will depend partly upon the stages of our developing national struggle. It will depend also upon an assessment of our own personal strengths and weaknesses—and of the hostages we have given to the enemy. In various times and places, many concrete manifestations have been seen. St. Clair Drake was seeking his ground in one way while organizing black sharecroppers in Louisiana in the 1930's, and in another way while marching in Mississippi in the 1960's. C.L.R. James was involved through his books on Toussaint and on the Communist International, as well as in his work of political organizing in London, New York, Detroit, and Missouri. In certain, important ways, John Henrik Clarke's determined, sometimes anguished, stand with his family in the heart of Harlem is part of his way of finding a place in the struggle. Surely John Hope Franklin was in search of his own role when he came to Selma to march in 1965. And the struggle to be faithful probably helps to explain Kenneth Clark's enduring, agonizing, love-hate relationship with "the dark ghetto." On the other hand, in 1969, it was the Jamaican people's recognition of the deep commitment of Walter Rodney to their common struggle which led them to rise in massive protest against his being banned by the government from re-entering the island. And it was the same recognition of deep participation, which explains the response of the Algerian masses to the passing of the funeral cortege of Frantz Fanon in December, 1961. The newspaper report said, "Women cry; young men, rough fighters do not attempt to control their emotions. . . . workers stop, men and women bow, soldiers and policemen salute."<sup>21</sup>

Wherever we are, the search for our living role in the struggle must go on, for it is that which fulfills our vocation. Martin King saw and appreciated that continuing quality in Du Bois, and shortly before King's death King said of his one-time Atlanta neighbor:

[Du Bois] did not content himself with hurling invectives for emotional release and then to retire into smug passive satisfaction. History had taught him it is not enough

<sup>21</sup> Irene L. Gendzier, *Frantz Fanon* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), p. 235. This work, incidentally, deserves serious attention.

for people to be angry—the supreme task is to organize and unite people so that their anger becomes a transforming force. It was never possible to know where the scholar Du Bois ended and the organizer Du Bois began. The two qualities in him were a single unified force. . . .

This life style of Dr. Du Bois is the most important quality this generation of Negroes needs to emulate. The educated Negro who is not really part of us, and the angry militant who fails to organize us have nothing in common with Dr. Du Bois. He exemplified black power in achievement and he organized black power in action. It was no abstract slogan to him.<sup>22</sup>

Such living, building, and struggle comprised the ultimate truth of our paradigms, Du Bois and Fanon, and near the end of their lives their truths were essentially joined. For in October, 1961, they passed in the night, as it were, on the way to their deaths. Fanon was coming to the United States from Africa. Du Bois was leaving this country for Africa. Shortly afterwards, Fanon was dead. But both men had lived their vocations and both ended their lives still working for a new black future through a reinterpretation of the past. Du Bois was creating the *Encyclopaedia Africana* which had been a dream for half a century; Fanon had given himself to the African revolution, and expended his last heart's blood to complete his legacy to Man: *The Wretched of the Earth*.

In December, 1961, a few days before he died, Fanon wrote to a friend, ". . . death is always close by. And what's important is not to know if you can avoid it, but to know that you have done the most possible to realize your ideas." Then the thirty-six-year-old scholar-warrior wrote what amounted to his final confession of truth, his statement of hope:

We are nothing on earth if we are not first of all slaves of a cause. The cause of the people. The cause of justice. The cause of liberty. I want you to know that even at this moment, when the doctors have given up hope, I think of the Algerian people, of the people of the Third World. And if I have held on this long, it is because of them.<sup>23</sup>

Soon his body was returned to Africa, and he was buried with honor and love by the leaders of the Algerian revolution, as the sounds of the struggle and the tears of his comrades provided a fitting backdrop for his departure.

A little more than a year later, W.E.B. Du Bois, who had "held on" to life for nearly three times as long as the younger, more fiercely driven man, prepared for the approach of his own death and burial in Ghana. Central to

<sup>22</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., "Honoring Dr. Du Bois," *Freedomways* (Spring, 1968), p. 109.

<sup>23</sup> Geismar, p. 185.

his preparation was the assumption of Ghanaian citizenship, and on that occasion just six days before his ninety-fifth birthday he spoke these words:

My great-grandfather was carried from the Gulf of Guinea. I have returned that my dust may mingle with the dust of my forefathers. There is not much time for me. But now, my life will flow on in the vigorous, young stream of Ghanaian life which lifts the African personality to its proper place among men. And I shall not have lived and worked in vain.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, then, the many-tiered manifestations of our vocation were telescoped into the living and dying of two magnificent children of Africa. The focus and illumination they provide leave few questions available. All that remains are the necessary, personal responses to the parting summons of Fanon:

Come, then, comrades, it would be as well to decide at once to change our ways. We must shake off the heavy darkness in which we were plunged, and leave it behind. The new day which is already at hand must find us firm, prudent and resolute. We must leave our dreams and abandon our old beliefs and friendships of the time before life began. Let us waste no time in sterile litanies and nauseating mimicry. . . .  
. . . if we want humanity to advance a step further, if we want to bring it up to a different level than that which Europe or America has shown it, then we must invent and we must make discoveries . . .  
. . . we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man.<sup>25</sup>

That is our calling, our truth, and our hope. In the midst of the nation's long winter of discontent, we refuse to despair, for ". . . the work of man has only begun."

<sup>24</sup> *Amsterdam News*, September 7, 1963, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Fanon, pp. 252-255.