

CONFIDENTIAL BLACK PAPER

JUNE 25, 1969

INSTITUTE OF THE BLACK WORLD

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
PLANET EARTH

TO: PLANNING STAFF INSTITUTE OF THE BLACK WORLD

FR: ABD-AL HAKIMU IBN ALKALIMAT

RE: OUR COLLECTIVE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

This memo is an attempt to put down on paper something about what we've been doing over the last year. And, more significantly, what might be ahead for us during the next few stages of our individual and collective struggles. It has been obvious to me that the planning staff was not a homogeneous group as we had originally assumed in the way we structured ourselves. So as we move from this point into incorporation and separation from one set of problems we ought be careful that we don't repeat ourselves. This can only be accomplished by generating a collective analysis. Hopefully all of us will find the time (as soon as possible) to put our concerns on paper.

And if we are ever to be of one mind in the interests of serving our people, then each one of us must add to the analysis to make it truly a collective analysis. And hopefully a correct one.

1. PAST

Our original vision of an institute was produced as beautifully as our new music_____free, collective but individual, and mutually perceived as being intended in the context of similar_____if not the same_____historical forces and functions. However, as with a series of sound images created by a new grouping of musicians, we created an exciting but ambiguous picture, with much left unsaid, and probably much taken for granted that shouldn't have been. The ambiguous picture we created in our proposal was necessarily left without two important parts: 1. A clear notion of how the institute would ultimately contribute to the liberation struggle of our people, and 2. a clear plan for realizing the institute in light of all of the known contingencies we were going to face.

A. PLANNING STAFF: While it was cool for our style of operating to be loose and as free as possible, we fell into the trap of having no clear division of labor (necessary for disciplined consistent contribution), and moving from one decision making situation to the on the basis of a most ambiguous consensus. Moreover, we never really faced the identity question. A few times someone would remark that we might be considered conservatives to the next generation, but I always felt that we hadn't yet given ourselves up to that historical fate. We hadn't chosen Frederick Douglas over David Walker, Carter G. Woodson over W.E.B.DuBois, or Martin Luther King over El-Hajj Malik El Shabazz. Or had we, really? Perhaps these are not easy questions to answer (if at all), but they

must be raised to help us begin to understand what we must prevent or avoid in future dealings.

One of the greatest dangers that all of us individually and collectively have to guard against is acting and eventually being what the strongest set of expectation placed on us would have us be. We must be so inner directed that our outward submission to the needs of BLACK people can never be subverted by the seductive temptation of legitimate status, money, etc. This means that we must begin, not with a plan for the optimal outcome of money and legitimacy, but with the minimal outcome, so that if all else fails, we'll be able to carry on with a worked out plan. The point is that we have simply danced to the tune of a different drummer now, and he has changed the tempo and beat, threatening to stop playing. We have no contingency plan, and what we do have will be gobbled up willy-nilly without a careful, collectively decided upon course of action. Jerry Butler has insightfully told us that "only the strong will survive." Are we strong? How do we really measure our strength? By our standards or theirs? And, if it comes down to it, are any of us stronger than any others, and in what ways?

B. MONEY: After a session or two of our improvisational verbal jam sessions, we estimated that the institute would cost \$10,000,000 (ten million) if we got everything that we wanted. But we decided to build it around a \$20 million figure so that we could get what we wanted after cut-backs. Instead, the white boys took us the other way and suggested that our ideas, translated well into mercenary terms, amounted to at least a \$40 million dollar proposition. We have acted

as if that were the case every since that bit of fantasy. (Can you imagine that white people will give \$40 million to any Black people in 1969 after King's murder, Malcolm's murder, Lumumbas' murder, etc. etc.?) We need only ask ourselves why we expect to get more money than any other educational institution in the entire Black World has been able to get to date? Are we really that Bad? or that Good???? DuBois was never really funded, why do we expect to be funded to such a high level?

We have projected salaries like we were in a white setting and then taken them seriously. We have all fallen into the trap of assuming standards of living that are totally inconsistent with the Black World that we profess to be a part of? We have thereby removed ourselves from the people and can only pretend to do what is right, even what we think is right (since we know that white people will not give us their money to do anything that will challenge their control), what we have said we want to do in order to liberate our people. There has never been a serious intellectual center developed by Black people that has been funded by Black people, and it looks as if we are not attempting to break that traditional pattern. (Walter White argued with DuBois over how the NAACP should raise funds and White won. We all observe the results of that today!!!!)

C. KING FAMILY: Not much comment is necessary here since we are in the midst of truth time, hopefully a time to set us free from at least one set of contradictions, heartaches, and (political-personal) embarassments. More important than any King we have to deal with now (even in understanding them), I

wonder how Martin would have responded to the Institute. My most optimistic guess is that he would have never hooked up with us. Or if he had, he would have made a sensible (expedient) hard money arrangement (Andy Young would have translated it in dollars and cents). Martin and SCLC never saw \$40 million either, remember. Moreover, in dealing with Corretta we have let white people (zionists, liberals, etc.) get close connections with what we are doing. (How often do you think the white boys in New York have discussed how they have this situation so up tight that they know our moves before we make them?) We might as well appeal to the Anti-Defamation League for money or go to a white school so we could have some privacy!!!!

D. INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION: We took a position against white schools, but never agreed on an ideological analysis of all schools. Hence we violated a fundamental sociological pattern that all social institutions are tied up to each other and have a conservative impact on any program for change. Of course, the dialectic would work if we had a base from which to project our thing when we hooked up with some school. But that is not the case. Any established institution will coopt and absorb (or destroy, or both) any program of change that is not equally powerful and with independent stable resources. There was no hope of dealing with (inside) of the AU Center without yielding to the council of presidents. Why didn't they choose us for their program rather than Russell Williams? They wanted to have a non-existent program that would give Black Studies a bad name in Atlanta, or no name at all. Why did we try to act as if we could convince them about our plans without an

overt power struggle? And what was our reaction when we had a great deal of momentum around the issues of Black and the AU Center? We backed away from conflict and spoke of strategy without moving beyond reaction to a conservative offense; we chose not to fight when we could have won or closed down the center. Now we often speak of student support while at the same time the schools are expelling all of the nationalist students prone to political action. If we talk Black we must act Black. If we believe in struggle, then we must enter history grabbing hold of its reins and gallop over the reactionary forces with the same vigor we allude to when we speak of our peoples' tradition of struggle.

And the same future awaits us at Shaw, Fisk, and Howard. If there is a need for us these schools have failed in what they were supposed to have been doing. We will be a threat to everyone there, and will face one point of conflict after another. Moreover, if we teach courses on struggle and the students decide to use it right then, what do we do? Should we pull out and say they don't have the correct analysis, or should we join the Brothers and Sisters, fully recognizing that there will be internal contradiction, but that human history is never the result of perfectly correct action, but the result of courageous action which only in retrospect can ultimately be called correct.

E. HISTORICAL FUNCTION: Since we failed to ever clarify what differences existed between us and our respective analyses, we never really spoke of our historical function for Black People. We always said it would come later, when we had time. Our proposal and staff conversations have been mind-imagination-

vaccum cleaners without evaluative standards or historical stages for this or that activity or event. I see a tension between a cultural and political alternative. The first would have us be artists-intellectuals working as such to aide our people by being as out there as possible. But the political would have us deal with the socio-economical and political processes involved. We could write books, or we could write them and publish them. We could speak about the contradictions of Blacks in white schools, or we could Act positively to deal with resolving those contradictions. Black intellectuals have always opted out of the political and let whites control these social processes. I wonder have we taken Woodson's precedent seriously. I wonder do we think we can let white people set us up and let us go after we've consolidated ourselves up in their thing. Even now, any serious program in policy studies (such as those already proposed) is going to bring us into a situation of conflict and confrontation with white folks, and this will involve all of us not only those in policy studies. We're either all in it or nobody should be. We can't speak out and be quiet at the same time.

F. STRUGGLE: Another serious question is how we see ourselves relative to the intensification of the Black liberation struggle and the consolidation of white racist conservatism. The struggle must move beyond white funds if we are to really free ourselves from white standards (its hard to not take a proposal seriously if that is the only major document and it is used to convince everyone that the institute is a hip thing).

And white people are going to tighten up more and more on who they give their legitimacy as well as who they let live and work. We have not been building an institute that will be here for the protracted struggle since we are counting on the shifting sands of white philanthropy. Also, I wonder about all of the difficulty that we had with the Harkness Hall Affair in light of the direction of the student struggle. We have to decide if we are going to deal with students, because if we do, we have to prepare ourselves for a much more radical (even if incorrect) group of folks, and be prepared to face the political consequences of working with them. After all, we will not have the same cover as a university who can bring almost anyone and claim academic freedom. The major reason this is so that we will not be carrying all of the establishment programs to balance it out. Or will we?

The above set of comments are impressionistic, but speak to what I consider are some of our major problems to date. We have recently been forced to deal with all of these and some yet to be identified. Even if y'all don't write an independent critique of what we've been into thus far, I would appreciate your comments on these interpretive remarks so that we might be able to close ranks and face the future with a tighter collective front.

2. FUTURE

There are two major factors around which can be developed four alternative models for the Institute of the Black World.

One major axis is our connection with other institutions, e.g., colleges, foundations, etc. The question is whether we are going to be organically attached to them or not. The second axis is whether we are going to be organically attached to them or whether or not we are going to have a cultural program only, or a cultural one with political commitments and plans for implementation, i.e., a program consisting of scholarly-artistic work, only, or also policy considerations and a relevant community and national action. Putting them together we get the following:

Integrated Institute & Society	PROGRAM OF INSTITUTE	
	CULTURAL	POLITICAL
Independent	#1 Reform Pluralism	#2 Protest Pluralism
	#3 Cultural Nationalism	#4 Revolutionary Nationalism

Thus far we have not had before us a set of alternatives clearly stated like this, but instead we have felt or simply alluded to them. We began with an attempt to pull off #1 and the Harkness Hall incident forced us into #2. Now we see the possibility of #1 in another city, or #3 in any city. But what most of us need consider is that the proposed policy studies project (or simply staying in Atlanta) will force us into #4. And if not that, something else will soon come along that will.

I would like to suggest that we can't be all four simultaneously, and so we must decide. We must examine, or re-examine

PROGRAM OF INSTITUTE

		Cultural	Political
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all relevant factors and decide. Each of the four alternatives has a corresponding set of ideological positions, and a necessary commitment to them by any group of people working to implement a program. We must enjoy the fullest consensus if we are to move at all, even if it is a minimal approach. I would imagine that the high level discussions of war in Vietnam present the same problems for the racist warring white boys. The question is how to arrive at a basic position within which one can plan strategy. A given strategic move has meaning only within the context of a larger plan, because the same move in different contexts has different meanings. Withdrawal in war is only positive if you have a plan that includes returning to fight. We have often spoken of withdrawal, but seldom have we mapped out an attack to fight.

The road ahead is a hard one if we choose to do that which is different, and that which would be a real contribution to the struggle and not a false one. White money leads to white control. We can't build our nation in a burning house. Return to the people. The function of a revolutionary is to make the revolution. We must turn these ideological slogans into living reality, or stop giving lip service to them and say what we mean. No analysis of the last decade of struggle can justify seeking funds from the traditional white sources, organically linking up with institutions that have consistently suppressed struggle, counting on white liberals to aide us (publishing efforts, etc.), and maintaining standards of living only manageable within the affluence of white folks kind of living. We have got to decide who and what we are. We have got to decide.

At the present time we are planning to follow the course of least resistance, and are subjecting ourselves totally to the whim and caprice of external situations. We have bases our connections with the white school on students, often folks we don't know and haven't thoroughly checked out. We have seen how the white boys (a la Ford and the like) can seduce our brothers and sisters with money (they used to use white women) at which point they often forget about us. Our front of being the baddest group in the country holds little water when somebody smells the loot somewhere else.

More and more there are groups of folks who have founded groups that will exist as long as the Black Studies industry is considered profitable, i.e., as long as white people continue to fund things. We have placed ourselves in that market, and maintained that we are the true experts. However, without the money we can't back that up, at least not the way we are going thus far. Moreover, we have intended ourselves as a national Institute, but have not taken into full account the rise of local institutions, both within and without existing universities and colleges. There is an intensification of our struggle for the white dust (\$\$\$\$\$), and we have no basis to expect that we're going to win out. In fact, there is every reason to believe, since we seem to be more serious threats, that we will not be funded while folks like Richard Long and Russell Williams will. Typical white boy tricknology.

3. PRESENT:

The obvious priority for the planning staff of the Institute of the Black World is to decide what alternative model we are

going to work with. This involves developing a common analysis of all of the factors necessary to make such a decision as well as a thorough understanding of what kinds of personal and collective commitments are necessary to pull off any one of the alternative models. No real decisions can be made unless this is done. Otherwise, day to day decisions will in effect constitute the major decision and we will have backed into our identity (which will probably lack a real consensus of agreement and commitment) and not have faced it forthrightly and chosen our future.

Following this major kind of decision, it seems that we ought to write another proposal (even if it is for staff use only, and very confidential) that includes in it a series of contingency plans. For example, the \$40 million proposal is the only one that we have and we use it to convince everyone, white and black. In this way we often sound like we believe it ourselves. I have heard a lot of folks talk about or interpret discussions with one or more of us as meaning an invitation to come down and work with the Institute. The fact is that we don't have enough money to handle the planning staff, so it is presently impossible to soeak of even bringing in one additional full time professional because the money is not there. (Particularly if we are expecting to also purchase some property).

We need to estimate how much money we will have in four or five different outcomes of current searching. And then for each sum begin to look at staffing and program development. After all, we all know what we would or at least could do with the money if we had it. But we don't have it. And without

deciding how we want to be, in the process of getting money we will have to enter arrangements that will define what we are going to have to do without our having decided first what we will and won't do. The Institute can proceed no further without taking this action, otherwise there is no Institute but simply a group of loosely connected folks working toward their own interpretation. of the group, hoping that what is often worked out will be cool but not really knowing one way or the other.

If we don't do the above, when will we answer the questions:

1. Who will be here in the fall and what will they be doing:
2. How will we relate to other Institutes dealing with Black folks?
 - a. in White schools?
 - b. in Black schools?
 - c. independent radical institutions?
3. What city do we want to be in? What cities are available to us know? How are these the same questions, if at all?
4. What is the salary structure of the Institute going to be if we don't raise any more dust? or if we raise X, Y, Z amount?
5. What is the policy of the Institute on publishing with white people?
6. ETC. ETC. ETC.

This is an impressionistic collection of thoughts and concerns that couldn't be put off any longer. I hope we will be able to deal with them soon so that the Institute might be what we all know is necessary for the most creative contribution

of Black intellectuals and artists to the liberation struggle of our people. However, the more time it takes to get to this, the more chance there is that we will go the way of most things_____into extreme confusion and irrelevance. Harambee!!!!!!!!!!!!!!