

REPORT OF AN AD HOC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Topic: A Conference on "Higher Education and the Search for Afro-American Identity"

Session One: Atlanta, Georgia, November 8, 1967

Participanta: Flournoy A. Coles, Jr. (Economics, Fisk), Vincent Harding (History, Spelman), Stephen Henderson (English, Morehouse), Gerald McWharter (Sociology, Fisk). Unable to attend: Horace Mann Bond (Research, Atlanta University), Earl Thorpe (History, North Carolina College), Darwin Turner (Dean, North Carolina A & T), Paul Puryear (Political Science, Fisk).

I. Background:

1. For several months a number of persons on various of the Negro College campuses have been discussing informally the implications that the newest expression of Black Consciousness might have for their schools and others like them. One of these faculty members suggested to the Woodrow Wilson Foundation that it would likely be most helpful if that Foundation could help to fund a conference which would bring together representatives from as many of the Afro-American Colleges as possible. The idea struck the Foundation directors as sound and they agreed to begin by funding the initial exploratory planning sessions in which a few representatives from colleges in geographical proximity might work towards a larger meeting, if it seemed feasible to them.
2. Meantime faculty persons at Fisk University had been in serious conversation with the Ford Foundation regarding the funding of a conference which would seek to explore the ways in which a healthy sense of Afro-American identity might be encouraged in every sector of the black community of America. Since Ford appeared to be responding positively to this proposal, it became evident that conversation was needed between those who were proposing the more broadly directed conference at Fisk and those (largely in the Atlanta University Center) who were seeking to explore the more circumscribed area of higher education.
3. In consultation with the Woodrow Wilson Foundation it was decided that a group of us in Atlanta would invite several persons from two or three other schools to form an ad hoc committee to explore these matters. It was decided that we should try to bring together at least persons from Fisk and from the Durham-Greensboro complex.

II. Tentative Agreements Reached at Planning Session One

1. A conference on "Higher Education and the Search for (or "the Crisis of") Afro-American Identity" should be held.
2. The Conference would probably best be located in Atlanta, especially when one considers matters of logistics.
3. The Conference would be sponsored by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation (with participation likely from the Danforth and Stokes-Phelps Foundations), but it is not clear who should call such a conference. Nor is it clear whether or not the colleges should be asked to make any financial contribution.
4. The dates upon which there was tentative agreement were February 29 - March 2, beginning with a Thursday evening and running through to Saturday night. Paschal's Motel has been tentatively reserved for these dates.
5. Invitations would go to the presidents of each of the black colleges, asking that he come and bring one or two other members of his faculty. Such a letter would indicate the solid interest of the foundations in such an enterprise.
6. Invitations would also go to selected faculty members and other persons closely related to the issues and institutions involved. These would generally be persons known to the planning committee, persons who have given some significant thought to the questions we are confronting.
7. There would be an attempt to include undergraduate students, graduate students (who studied at the black colleges) and public school teachers who graduated from Afro-American colleges. These three groups would comprise some 15 per cent of the participants.
8. It was our conclusion that we are likely discussing a conference involving some 250-300 persons.
9. These were some of the topics which seemed important centers for discussion in either plenary or smaller groups, or both:
 - a. An historical overview of the search for Afro-American identity
 - b. Identity, black colleges, and the larger Afro-American community

- c. The search for identity and the shaping of curriculum
 - d. Identity and the development of faculty
 - e. Identity and student recruitment
 - f. Identity and the search for financial resources
 - g. Identity and the development of extra-curricular activities
 - h. Identity and science education
 - i. Identity, the colleges, and the international non-white community
 - j. Identity and the training of teachers
10. It was suggested that the conference might consist of these general parts:
- a. Thursday night: a plenary session with one or two formal papers
 - b. Friday morning and afternoon: groups meeting according to discipline and perhaps according to administrative responsibilities
 - c. Friday night: A plenary session with papers
 - d. Saturday morning and afternoon: meetings according to geographical areas (and/or continuation of some disciplinary groups)
 - e. Saturday night: some "culturally-oriented" Afro-American entertainment
 - f. Sunday morning: meeting of a small continuation committee
11. We drew up three lists of names. These were
- a. Resource persons: who might be called upon to read papers (all of our planning committee is included in this group), chair small group sessions or act as resource personnel in such small groups.
 - b. Participants: many of whom would be of the same caliber as the first group.
 - c. Special participants: a list which now includes some of the graduate students and public school teachers, and will eventually include the undergraduates.

Each of these lists will be expanded when the planning committee meets in North Carolina. At present these are the names (The initials in parenthesis indicates the member of the planning committee who has most direct contact with the person listed.):

- A. Resource persons
- 1. Horace Mann Bond, AU (VH)
 - 2. Joseph Pierce (FC)
 - 3. Vivian Henderson (VH)
 - 4. Sir Walter Lewis (FC)
 - 5. St. Clair Drake (GM)
 - 6. George Roberts (VH)
 - 7. Wilfred Carty (VH)
 - 8. J. Alfred Cannon (FC)

9. Charles Hamilton (GM)
10. James Comer (VH)
11. Henry Tones (FC)
12. Tobe Johnson (SH)
13. Miles Jackson (SH)
14. Margaret Burroughs (GM)
15. Margaret Walker Alexander (VH)
16. James Pierce (GM)
17. Benjamin Paxton (VH)
18. Alvin Poussaint (FC)
19. Robert Browne (VH)
20. Herman Bailey (VH)
21. Julius Lester (VH)
22. Lois Mai Lou Jones (SH)
23. John Hope Franklin (GM)
- 24.

B. Participants

1. Sam Proctor (SH)
2. Martin Kilson (GM)
3. Sterling Brown (SH)
4. Howard Mitchell (FC)
5. Hollis Lynch (VH)
6. Lorenzo Turner (GM)
7. Edward Toppin (VH)
8. C. Eric Lincoln (VH)
9. Nathan Scott (VH)
10. Charles Long (VH)
11. Judge Juanita K. Stout (FC)
12. Andrew Thompson (GM)
13. Robert Kitchen (FC)
14. Robert Wedgeworth (GM)
15. John H. Clark (VH)
16. Daniel Watts (GH)
17. William Strickland (VH)
18. Prince Wilson (VH)
19. Lerone Bennett (VH)
20. Chike Onwuachi (FC)
21. John O. Killens (Fisk)
22. Tinsley Spraggins (SH)
23. Paul Williams (Fisk)
24. Tandy Tollison (Fisk)
25. Millicent Jordan (VH)
26. Anita Boswell (GM)
27. Oran Eagleson (VH)
28. Richard Carroll (VH)
29. Floyd Coleman (VH)
30. Richard Barksdale (SH)
31. Stella Brooks (SH)
32. James Lawson (Fisk)
33. Albert Manley (VH)

34. David Driscoll (Fisk)
35. Sam Vonwindbush (Fisk)
36. John Davis ()
37. Stephen Wright (PP)
38. C.T. Vivian (GM)
39. Samuel Gandy (VH)
40. Murray Branch (SH)
41. Gerado Ebanks (SH)
42. Larry Rushing (VH)
43. Charles Wesley ()
44. Benjamin Quarles ()
45. Philip Butcher (SH)
46. Lionel Newsome (SH?)
47. James Harrison (FC)
48. James Parmes (GM)
49. Sterling Stuckey (VH)
50. Herman Blake (VH)
51. Hoyt Fuller (VH)
52. Jim Brown (?)
53. Lawrence Reddick (VH)
54. Father Warren Scott (SH)
55. Nathan Hare (GM)
56. Diane Nash Bevel (VH)
57. John Lewis (VH)
58. Clarence Jones (FC)
59. Kenneth Clark ()
- 60.

Plus representatives from selected foundations and accrediting agencies?

(All of the above names are listed against the background of our initial assumption that every president of a black institution will be invited to participate in the Conference.)

C. Special Participants

1. Joyce Ladner, Grad student (GM)
2. Lucious Outlaw, Grad student (FC)
3. Barry Gaither, Grad student (SH)
4. Marion Phillips, Grad student (VH)
5. Samuel Shepherd, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, St. Louis (FC)
6. German Wilson, Nashville Teacher, (GM)
7. Flora Stone, Atlanta Teacher (VH)

III. Suggested Agenda For Next Meeting

1. As a result of a conference call among Vincent Harding, Earl Thorpe (Durham) and Darwin Turner (Greensboro), it was decided that the next meeting should take place on Saturday, December 2 in the Raleigh-Durham area. We will gather as close to 2 P.M. as possible and work at least until 6 P.M. (longer, if the Nashville group can stay

overnight and thereby overcome the terrible connections.)
The agenda items which seem most pertinent include:

- a. A review and critique of the work done by the group in Atlanta.
- b. The setting of solid plans for specific program items (including topics, speakers, times, etc.)
- c. Budget discussion (to include such items as the value of a registration fee and the value of financial contribution from the colleges)
- d. A discussion of who will actually call the Conference and do the inviting
- e. Exploration of the possibility of publishing papers of the Conference
- f. New business

(As I look at this agenda, it appears to me as if Nashville people had better plan to stay overnight in either Durham or Atlanta. The expense can go into our budget. What do you think of the idea? --VH)

IV. Arrangements for December 2

1. If Nashville participants cannot stay overnight we are going to be running on a very tight schedule. The first flight to Raleigh-Durham from Atlanta which would be available to the Nashville crew gets into Raleigh at 1:54 P.M. (Eastern 386, leaving Atlanta at 1:00 P.M.). The last flight out of Raleigh which would allow for connections in Atlanta for a return to Nashville is a flight that leaves at 6:19 P.M. So it is likely that such an arrangement would allow for only 3-3½ effective working hours.
2. I need some word on this from the Nashville group. Can most or all of you spare the time to stay over either in Raleigh or Atlanta? (You could be in Nashville before 10 A.M. on Sunday, December 3.) We really ought not leave this next meeting without an almost complete set of plans and instructions. If someone from Nashville could get answers from Puryear, Coles and McWharter and then call me collect as soon as possible, it would help us all. Perhaps you might indicate whether or not you wish to make your own reservations or have me take care of them. --VH
3. Earl Thorpe of Durham has volunteered his house as a meeting place. He is also checking on the airport facilities. We obviously need the place where we can do the most sustained work, and will leave that matter to him.
4. If all goes well, then, we shall meet at the Raleigh Airport at 2:00 P.M. on Saturday, December 2.

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Easter
Ar Gren 10:36 PM
Ar Allen 11:35 PM

5. Meanwhile whatever new names and ideas the North Carolina group can muster will be most helpful to us all.

Vincent Harding, Convenor