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First Element of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Center

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Vincent Harding

May 8, 1969

Mr. Marvin Kelly
644 Riverside Drive
New York, New York 10031

Dear Brother Marvin:

Our Planning Staff for the Institute of the Black World was very pleased that you and your colleagues from Barnard and Columbia were able to visit with us here at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center last week.

As we agreed, I am now putting on paper what seemed to us the substance of the agreements reached as we sought to find ways to be mutually helpful and responsible in relationship to Black Studies at Columbia and in the Institute of the Black World here. If there are any errors in this review, please let me know.

For a two-year experimental period, we agreed:

1. That a maximum of five students from Columbia (graduate and undergraduate) would come to the Institute of the Black World to take a maximum of two seminars with members of the staff and Research Fellows here, as well as to receive direction in their own research.
2. That these seminars would be conducted by the following Institute staff persons and Fellows: Lerone Bennett (Reconstruction, 20th Century Black Protest); Vincent Harding (Black Radicalism, Black Religion); Stephen Henderson (Black Poetry, Blues); A. B. Spellman (The Jazz Experience); William Strickland (Racism in America, Northern Politics); Sterling Stuckey (Slavery, Black Americans and Africa); Kofi Wangara (West Africa). Other names will be added by the beginning of the summer.
3. That two or three of the staff or research fellows would be available for adjunct faculty status at Columbia University. They would come to Columbia for a maximum of one week per semester through whatever mechanism the Black students and faculty there agree upon. Their adjunct faculty status would also make it possible for the students to continue with a Columbia registration.

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4. That in exchange for this relationship which would greatly augment its own resources in Black Studies and which would allow Columbia to participate in the creation of an international center for Black Studies, the university would commit itself to the following financial involvement:
 - a. It would be responsible for the full support of its students in the areas of tuition, room and board. This sum is currently estimated at \$4,000 per student per year.
 - b. It would make available to the Institute's overall budget a grant of not less than \$200,00 per year for the two experimental planning years (1969-71).
5. That the Institute will assume full responsibility -- wherever it is desired -- for seeing that the needs of room and board for the students are at least adequately met.
6. That Black faculty persons from Columbia will be available to the Institute for periods of time as we seek to consolidate the efforts of all persons immersed in the black experience towards the building of a significant Black Studies center.
7. That the matter of credits and other administrative details would be negotiated with the staff of the Institute and the appropriate Columbia personnel. At this stage, however, it is likely that a sliding scale of credits (from 2 to 6, perhaps) will be arranged for the seminars.
8. That no more than three students from Columbia-Barnard would participate in our ten-week summer workshop-seminar on Black Studies programs. The university would assume the cost of a weekly stipend (we are suggesting \$150.00 per week), room and board (a maximum of \$100.00 per week) and a contribution of \$2,500 to the overhead of the summer program.
9. Should these agreements be finally approved by the appropriate parties, the Institute of the Black World will make the first public announcement -- to the black press.
10. That the Interim Board or some similar body would likely be the liason between Columbia University and the Institute of the Black World.

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I trust that these 10 items faithfully represent our two days of discussion in Atlanta. Whatever I've omitted or misstated, please correct. I am also sending you a copy of one of our most recent documents which summarizes our assumptions and strategy of attack in the developing of an international focus for Black Studies here in Atlanta.

As you can imagine, we are being pressed by several other schools to work out this kind of agreement, but we cannot go beyond our limit of thirty students -- some of whom must come from the South. Therefore, we would appreciate as speedy a set of actions as you can arrange -- especially since a number of us here look forward to Columbia's being included in our consortium.

I shall expect to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,


Vincent Harding
Project Director

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CC: Mr. Franklin Williams
Mr. William Strickland
Dr. Andrew W. Cordier

Enclosure