

Post Office Box 724
North Carolina College At Durham
Durham, North Carolina
November 21, 1967

Dr. Vincent Harding, Chairman
Department of History
Spelman College
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Vincent:

Reference "Report of Ad Hoc Planning Committee" for "a conference on Higher Education and the Search for Afro-American Identity", which you sent me recently, the following is submitted.

1. Because too much of the current national hysteria is now focused on "Black Nationalism", 1968 may not be an ideal time to have such a conference;
2. Item 6 under "Tentative Agreements Reached" over-structures the selection of faculty members who would attend. In addition to college presidents, they probably ought to be chairmen of such areas as the social sciences and English.
3. Item 10 under "Tentative Agreements Reached" allows for a total of only four (4) formal papers -- two each on Thursday and Friday evenings. I feel (a) That the Friday and Saturday morning and afternoon sessions should be built around formal papers; (b) The entire conference should have around twenty (20) formal papers and they should all be published as a book or booklet.
4. The "culturally-oriented" Afro-American entertainment mentioned (10-e, under "Tentative Agreements Reached") ought to be scattered between papers at all sessions instead of being given an entire evening.
5. Several commentators have mentioned in the national press the possibility that money from Havana, Moscow, Peking (or a similar foreign source) is financing some aspects of "Black Nationalism." I will not be a party to use of such money, and I will have to get assurance that the conference being planned is actually financed by only the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, and Danforth and Phelps-Stokes Foundations as you state on page 2 of the "Report". Because we would want this conference to be above reproach (so far as any honest person being able to charge "treason against the U. S. A."), it seems that we might ask investigative agencies to monitor it,-- something they would probably do anyway.
6. Any conference on educational matters ought to be as objective as possible -- not a mere progaganda forum which will antagonize rather than influence people positively.

Such a conference, committed only to an intelligent dialogue, could be of great value. However, as indicated above, the assurances which I

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Dr. Vincent Harding
Report of Ad Hoc Planning Committee

would insist on are such that my continued participation would probably be more of a hindrance than help. For this reason, I am convinced that I should not -- in any way -- participate further.

Thank you for honoring me with the opportunity to have deliberated with you on an idea, which properly planned and executed -- and at a more favorable time -- can be a very valuable contribution to our culture.

Very truly yours,



E. E. Thorpe

EET:jm

cc: Dr. Darwin Turner
Mr. Flournoy A. Coles, Jr.
Mr. Stephen Henderson
Mr. Gerald McWhater

Post Office Box 724
North Carolina College at Durham
Durham, North Carolina
November 28, 1967

Dr. Vincent Harding, Chairman
Department of History
Spelman College
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Vincent:

Reference our telephone conversation of last Sunday, further reflection convinces me again that I should not be a participant in further planning of the conference on "Higher Education and the Search for Afro-American Identity." I am convinced that the "leap of faith" to which I referred is not an adequate basis for my continued involvement, and I would not be honest with myself, or you, to proceed on anything other than my own feelings and convictions.

I must, therefore, cancel my participation in the planning session scheduled for Saturday, December 2, 1967, as well as any subsequent sessions.

My most fundamental reason for the decision above is not the matter to which Dr. Horace Mann Bond addressed himself. Rather, belatedly I have adopted a position very similar to that taken by James Baldwin in his book, *THE FIRE NEXT TIME*, and by Richard Wright in his essay in R. Crossman, ed., *THE GOD THAT FAILED*. Had I reached this conclusion earlier, I could have saved you a great deal of trouble.

With sincere best wishes, I remain,

Very truly yours,



Earl E. Thorpe

cc: Dr. Darwin Turner
Dr. Horace Mann Bond
Mr. Flournoy A. Coles, Jr.
Mr. Stephen Henderson
Mr. Gerald McWharter

Box 724, North Carolina College at Durham
Durham, North Carolina
March 25, 1968

Dr. Vincent Harding, Chairman
Department of History
Spelman College
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Dr. Harding:

Since I found it necessary a few months ago to make known certain attitudes and convictions which I then held, I now feel the necessity to state the following.

I now have greater insight into, and sympathy for the current black revolution. I admit that, when I corresponded with you, I had been influenced too much by the criticism by "liberal" whites of the current phase of black protest. I had not made a proper psychological adjustment from the Sit-In phase of protest.

Respectfully,



Earl E. Thorpe

cc: Dr. Darwin Turner
Mr. Flournoy A. Coles, Jr.
Mr. Stephen Henderson
Mr. Gerald McWharter
Dr. Horace Mann Bond