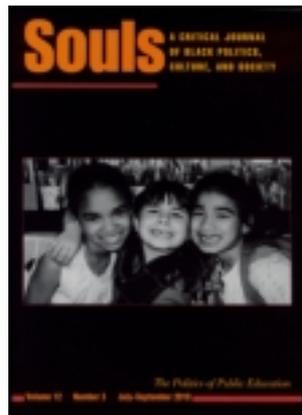


This article was downloaded by: [Tufts University]

On: 28 June 2011, At: 13:58

Publisher: Taylor & Francis

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office:
Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Souls

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/usou20>

Black Intellectuals: The Perennial Question

James Jennings

Available online: 30 Nov 2010

To cite this article: James Jennings (2002): Black Intellectuals: The Perennial Question, *Souls*, 4:2, 65-76

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10999940290105237>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Black Intellectuals

The Perennial Question



James Jennings

The most important thing about any democratic regime is the way in which it uses and exploits popular sovereignty, what questions it refers to the public for decision and guidance, how it refers them to the public, how the alternatives are defined. . . .

—E.E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People* (1960)

Given the current state of inequality in U.S. society and the increasing concentration of wealth, it seems to me that there is at least one fundamental responsibility that Black intellectuals committed to the political and economic empowerment of the Black community must consider. It is to critique public and social welfare policies that support and perpetuate social and economic inequality, thereby challenging the dominant civic discourse that rationalizes inequality. I believe this calling for Black intellectuals is key to ensuring that the Black community and other communities of color are able to generate and sustain political and economic strategies necessary for improving living conditions. The capacity and willingness to critique the dominant civic discourse also expands the boundaries of our democracy.

The role of Black intellectuals is relevant because our society is still characterized by fundamental social, racial, and gender inequalities that occur in the midst of plenty for a few. This economic context includes an entrenched racial hierarchy, where Black life is treated as inferior to white life. Racial hierarchy, a concept differentiated from race and racism, is reflected in the continuing racial gap between Blacks and whites in income, poverty, unemployment, and health. It is also reflected in historical and continuing disparities in arrest rates and educational and housing opportunities. For the masses of people, life in many Black and Latino communities is characterized by chronic lack of opportunity to change these conditions. To be sure, there are many impoverished whites who suffer from poor health, poor housing, high unemployment levels, and poor schooling. Their plight, however, is not as severe or as entrenched as that

which exists in the Black community and other communities of color. This racially based social, economic, and gender hierarchy has been documented and analyzed in many national studies.

Historical Context: The Black Intellectual's Role

The role of the Black intellectual in American life has been perennially debated throughout the history of this nation because race has been a key and continuing dynamic in the evolution of U.S. society. Historically, the Black community represents an integral and, in many ways unique, part of our society. As Herbert Aptheker explained more than three decades ago in *Afro-American History: The Modern Era*:

Fundamental to the history of the United States is the struggle of the masses of its population—of every color and every ethnic and national origin—against repression, oppression, and exploitation. Central to this record of struggle has been that waged by the Afro-American people; in so struggling, they have forged for themselves an inspiring history and they have simultaneously affected in a decisive way every aspect of the history of the United States as a whole. Every aspect of that history—whether of laborer or farmer, of student or intellectual, of the women's movement or the peace movement, whether diplomatic history or legal history or economic or political or social or ideological, whether of church or press, of cooperatives or science everything, absolutely everything, everything that has ever appeared or ever occurred in the United States of America must be understood in terms of the relationship thereto of the Black people in the United States. To the degree that relationship is minimized—not to speak of being ignored to that degree the [study of the history of the nation] is false and is racist.¹

W. E. B. Du Bois not only argued this claim in his own writings, but proposed that an understanding of the history of Black people be the basis for expanding social and economic democracy in the U.S. As he wrote in *The Souls of Black Folk*, “The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. . . .”² This veil, or second sight, is important in understanding the role of Black intellectual thought in U.S. society. It also provides the nation crucial insights into the limitations, and therefore possibilities, of the expansion of social democracy.

The role of Black intellectuals in the struggles against slavery and the social advancement of Blacks was highlighted in 1827 in the opening editorial of the first Black newspaper in the nation, *Freedom's Journal*.³ In 1898, Du Bois also posed the question as a challenge to the graduates of Fisk University: “The concrete question, then, that faces you . . . is: what part can I best take in the striving of the eight million men and women who are bound to me by a common hope that through the strivings of the Negro people this land of our fathers may live and thrive. . . .”⁴ A reading of Booker T. Washington's autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, published in 1895, and especially the chapter titled “Helping Others,” suggests that there was a high expectation that Black intellectuals and leaders had a professional and moral responsibility to work and teach in the Black community.⁵ Ida B. Wells, a journalist at the turn of the twentieth century, also worked for racial and gender equality and established models of protest and militancy for Du Bois, William Monroe Trotter, and other civil rights activists. Wells believed that Black intellectuals had a moral responsibility to devote energies to Black self-help and the economic development of the Black community. She went further, believing that such



At Your Service. Photo by LeRoy Henderson

efforts should be coupled with the explicit aim of overthrowing a system of wealth that oppressed Black people and poor whites and all women.⁶

Similarly, the speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr., make continual reference to the roles that Black intellectuals and leaders can play in advancing political and economic equality for all people. This position is clear in his use of the biblical parable about the Good Samaritan in his last speech on April 3, 1968, and it is clear in his support of the sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee. King's humanistic call for Black students and leaders to engage in activism against social and economic injustice parallels the positions of many Black intellectuals and activists throughout U.S. history.

Using a different tactic, Malcolm X shaped the role of the Black intellectual by condemning those among them who served as apologists for the political status quo rather than fighting for social and economic change. He called upon Black intellectuals and students to change the direction and challenge the assumptions of the dominant civic discourse about race, class, and power. He urged Black intellectuals and leaders to advance the interests of social democracy for all people, in the United States and in other nations.

The activism of these leaders shows that they aimed not only at the social and economic empowerment of the Black community, but at advancing social and economic democracy for the entire society. In recent history, many intellectuals and activists of all races have mobilized against ideas, politics, and policies that served to keep the Black community in social, cultural, or economic second-class citizenship. It is critical to note that many Black intellectuals and activists believed their struggles should not be defined solely in terms of the political and economic well-being of the Black community, but concomitantly in terms of the democratic and social justice interests of the entire nation.

The approach of linking Black liberation to liberation of all people has been overlooked by some Black intellectuals and is missing from much of contemporary civic and scholarly discourse about race and social welfare

This theme has been addressed effectively in several recent works, including Charles V. Hamilton and Dona Hamilton's *Dual Agenda: The African-American Struggle for Civil and Economic Equality*; James W. Button's *Blacks and Social Change*; and Darlene Clark Hine and her colleagues' anthology about Black women titled *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible*.⁷ This approach—linking Black liberation to liberation of all people—has been overlooked by some Black intellectuals and is missing from much of contemporary civic and scholarly discourse about race and social welfare.

Black struggles for racial equality were hardly confined to the attainment of legal equality for Blacks. There are numerous examples of the involvement of Black activism in struggles for women's rights, anti-colonialism, higher wages and better conditions for

workers, and against war that illustrate this point. The Black intellectual as regards the interests of Blacks should not be separated, therefore, conceptually from struggles for the democratization of U.S. society. As racial struggles evolved and some victories were won, many activists were compelled to move beyond the concept of legal equality because they realized that a society could be socially and economically unjust, yet imbued profusely with color-blind language professing legal equality. It is this realization, as explained by historian Eric Foner, that propelled the Civil Rights Movement to seek freedom not simply as the legal dismantling of apartheid in this nation, but rather as a movement in the pursuit of social and economic equality. Foner writes, "[E]ven at its moment of triumph, the civil rights movement confronted a crisis as it sought to move from access to schools, public accommodations, and the voting booth to the intractable economic divide separating blacks from other Americans."⁸ Here, the author is reiterating the logic underlying the decision of Martin Luther King, Jr., to stage a massive Poor People's Campaign in Washington, D.C., in 1968. King focused on economics because he understood that the legal victories of the Civil Rights Movement were but initial steps in the forthcoming struggles and conflict on behalf of economic justice. Again, King was attempting to change the dominant civic discourse about relationships between race, class, and power.

Dissenting Opinions

In spite of the social and historical context presented here, two caveats should be acknowledged in this discussion. One is that some Black intellectuals believe it is inappropriate to even question the role of Black intellectuals in the U.S. They may feel that intellectual activities should not be proscribed by race—that race should be insignificant, even if it is not treated as such by society. They would argue that the intellectual or scholar should not be defined—*or limited*—by his or her Black experience or group identity, and that any sense of obligation toward the Black community on the basis of racial or ethnic identification, therefore, is misguided.

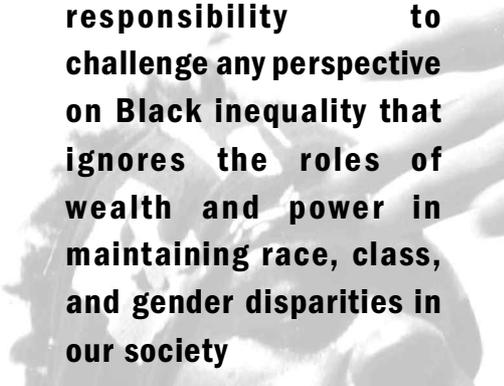
An extremist example of this point of view is Shelby Steele's award-winning book,

The Content of Our Character.⁹ Steele insists that the role of Black intellectuals and the Black middle class is to move beyond their history of oppression. Given the significant racial progress of the nation, Blacks who suggest otherwise are either trying to hustle whites, or are simply mired in a myth of oppression because they are too weak to accept responsibility for their problems. He writes, “I believe that one of the greatest problems black Americans currently face—one of the greatest barriers to our development in society—is that our memory of oppression has such power, magnitude, depth, and nuance that it constantly drains our best resources into more defense than is strictly necessary.”¹⁰ Alas, for Steele and others who take similar positions, the very raising of the question of the Black intellectual’s role in U.S. society represents a “machinery of separatism that . . . redraws the ugly lines of segregation.”¹¹

As far as some observers are concerned, the query before us, the role of the Black intellectual in U.S. society, is considered invalid, passé, or insignificant for a second reason. A number of scholars propose that U.S. society has achieved full civic democracy as a result of civil rights legislation, that society has seen a lessening of supremacist attitudes on the part of whites. They conclude that we now live in a color-blind society, and, therefore, we no longer need laws, policies, civil rights organizations, or political mobilization to address racial disparities. Voices in this camp tend to emphasize the racial progress and reconciliation that has taken place in the last several decades. They believe that we now live in a post-civil rights period where continuing social and economic problems facing Blacks and others usually reflect deficiencies in these groups rather than racism or social inequalities and accompanying economic manifestations.

One re-emerging and related idea in this kind of dialogue is that given this extraordinary racial progress, we only need to appeal to the moral conscience of whites to resolve lingering racial inequalities or injustices. Here, again, the need to challenge the dominant civic discourse about race, class, and power is dismissed. Political scientists Paul M. Sniderman and Edward G. Carmines wrote in their work, *Reaching Beyond Race*, for example, “With the rise to prominence of the civil rights movement during the 1950s, followed by the passage of the historic civil rights laws in the middle of the 1960s, Gunnar Myrdal’s classic work, *An American Dilemma*, seemed to have won the verdict of history. The American Creed, with its commitment to liberty, equality, and fair play would prevail.”¹² These authors continue, “There are deeper moral considerations, having nothing intrinsically to do with race, that are responsible for the very fact that the issue of race has a moral claim upon us. Two of them are the values of equal opportunity and of equal treatment. It is by appealing to them that more support can be won in behalf of policies to assist the badly off.”¹³ Thus, citizens interested in expanding policies or strategies reflecting their perception of social justice and economic democracy will find much support among fellow citizens if the call for such is couched in acceptable terms—and is consistent with the dominant paradigms reflected in civic discourse.

A related idea is that society should emphasize and celebrate the racial progress achieved up to this point rather than continually dwelling on what has not been accomplished, because the nation is no longer as racist as it once was. Some make this call in spite of a continu-



Black intellectuals have a responsibility to challenge any perspective on Black inequality that ignores the roles of wealth and power in maintaining race, class, and gender disparities in our society



I, Too . . . Copyright © Beuford Smith/Cesaire

ing problem of thousands of reported incidents of racial harassment and violence and in the face of continuing racial gaps in the economic, health, housing, and education experiences of people. The latter is explained by the lack of human capital among Blacks, or deficient cultural and familial predispositions, or even an inferior natural intelligence as claimed by Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray in their book, *The Bell Curve*.¹⁴ This approach is also evident in the work of Stephan Thernstrom and Abigail Thernstrom, who conclude that U.S. society has arrived, in fact and substance, into a post-civil rights period where race and racism are no longer valid concepts for understanding and analyzing contemporary U.S. society. They offer several hundred pages of polemical arguments and metastatistics to claim that only guilty whites and, for self-serving reasons, Black militants refuse to acknowledge the racial progress of the nation.¹⁵

Two Strands of Activism

Within the call for greater activism on the part of Black intellectuals are two schools of thought among social scientists and activists. Both reflect the activism of earlier leaders noted above, but they differ in a fundamental way: One focuses on Black individuals—and especially their moral failures—to explain racial inequality; the other blames the problem on larger social, political and economic patterns.

The crisis in Black living conditions, according to the first line of thinking, is a “general crisis of moral and cultural authority. . . .” This is illustrated in the 1992 article by Rev. Eugene Rivers, “On the Responsibility of Intellectuals in the Age of Crack” published in the *Boston Review*.¹⁶ A few years later, Rivers also wrote, in “Beyond the Nationalism of Fools: Toward An Agenda for Black Intellectuals,” that “a new vision of freedom cannot simply address relations of Black citizens to the broader political community and the state. As American politics devolves and inner-city life degenerates, our vision must also be about the relations within our communities . . . and the essential role of personal morality and of religious conviction in defining that morality.”¹⁷ Rev. Andrew Young echoed these sentiments in a column in the *Wall Street Journal* titled “Politics vs. the Poor”: “The crisis of the poor is as much moral as it is material.” He added that spiritual resources are “critical for the resolution of our social problems.”¹⁸ This view also reflects the position of many white conservatives as reflected in the address delivered by President George W. Bush at Notre Dame University’s 156th commencement in 2001: “Much of today’s poverty has more to do with troubled lives than a troubled economy.”¹⁹ Indeed, this philosophy helped rationalize welfare reform as enacted in the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act of 1996—a measure supported by both Democrats and Republicans.

The other strand of Black intellectual thinking bases its analysis on the political economy of society: The relationship between the Black community and the state remains key. This approach is reflected in the writings of Martin Kilson, Mack Jones, and the late Rhonda M. Williams, to name but a few. Although the former perspective focuses on the presumed moral peculiarities of Blacks in U.S. society, the latter permits a broader discussion of not only Blacks, but also of Latinos and other impoverished groups, within the context of U.S. political economy. In this second school, the issue of morality is indeed important, but it involves *civic* morality, not *personal* or *religious-defined* morality. And it suggests that Black intellectuals have a responsibility to question the dominant civic discourse about the causes and nature of social and economic inequality. Earlier Black leaders such as Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Fannie Lou Hamer believed that Blacks have a responsibility to push for a civic morality aimed at enhancing social justice and economic democracy for all people, here and abroad.²⁰ Each distinguished, however between their personal morality and religious beliefs and their social activism. For example, Malcolm X urged his followers to keep their personal relationship with God separate from their push for social and racial justice. In fact, it was this very approach that, in part, convinced Malcolm X to leave the Nation of Islam.²¹

Challenging the Dominant Civic Dialogue

Black intellectuals and others have to play a role in changing the dominant civic discourse that serves to ignore racial and class inequalities or blame its victims. Two decades ago political scientist Ira Katznelson proposed in his book, *City Trenches*, that civic dialogue associated with a range of urban problems involving race and class was beginning to shift at that time.²² As he explained, the

Although policies facilitating the concentration of wealth have little impact on improving unemployment, neighborhood development, education, public health systems, or affordable housing, the dominant civic discourse obscures this fact

political language of urban life and politics was being transformed from social movements to the clinical or managerial. Terms such as *power* and *powerlessness*, *poverty*, *internal colonialism*, *community control*, and *racial divisions* were being replaced with *wage freezes*, *balancing budgets*, *bondholder confidence*, *world-class schools*, and today, I would add, *dependency*, or *the underclass*. Black intellectuals committed to strengthening the institutional base of Black and Latino communities should not accept this shift in civic dialogue without critique; they should challenge it by examining social history and analyzing political and economic developments involving power and wealth.

This shift in the civic discourse focusing on race and social democracy constitutes a powerful political tool that has dampened the quality of activism emerging from the Black community: It tends to mute the effects of racial and class inequalities and separate discussions about those inequalities from the actual practices and policies of economic, educational, and political institutions. It is this shift that allows some observers to speak about racial matters as if they had nothing to do with the policies and practices of those institutions or with the role of wealth and power in our society. We see examples of this in racial debates that focus on the lack of morals on the part of Black or Latino youth without mention of how the management and distribution of wealth denies them the tools and opportunities for attaining social and economic benefits. Likewise when we pass legislation such as welfare reform focusing on the presumed behavior of poor women while ignoring the historical and contemporary practices that bar them from economic opportunity. Or when we debate how to motivate poor people to help themselves, but we don't investigate how corporate giants are allowed to pursue policies that contribute to deteriorating living conditions in some neighborhoods. Black intellectuals have a responsibility to challenge any perspective on Black inequality that ignores the roles of wealth and power in maintaining race, class, and gender disparities in our society.

As noted earlier, Black intellectuals must put on the table of civic discourse the increasing and fiscally irresponsible concentration of wealth in this nation. This trend has escalated over the last two decades even as we have seen a significant decline in real wages, massive public disinvestment, and the militarization of U.S. society. Through tax

Black intellectuals must put on the table of civic discourse the increasing and fiscally irresponsible concentration of wealth in this nation

breaks and subsidies, local and state governments have given major corporations hundreds of billions of dollars in return for vague promises that they will create more living-wage jobs. This scenario was rationalized in the 1980s by conservative economists using a trickle-down theory called "Laffer's Curve," which suggested that policies facilitating the upward concentration of wealth would allow the wealthy to save and invest and thereby produce more jobs for all people. In reality, however, Laffer's Curve played out such that unprecedented profits realized by corporations and wealthy individuals were not always invested in plants, in human capital, in expanding affordable housing and accessible health facilities, or in physical infrastructure—in the things that produce jobs. In-

stead, profits were invested in junk bonds that promised ever-higher returns for relatively few families.²³ The unadulterated, ongoing concentration of wealth is so egregious today that even the mainstream *Time* magazine shed light on this concern in a special report on corporate welfare.²⁴ Black intellectuals and others should consider the

implications of such concentrations of wealth on the economic well-being of neighborhoods and cities where many Blacks and Latinos reside. Although policies facilitating the concentration of wealth have little impact on improving unemployment, neighborhood development, education, public health systems, or affordable housing, the dominant civic discourse obscures this fact. Instead, it perpetuates a mentality that targets people of color and dupes working- and middle-class whites into blaming victims for their plight.

Black intellectuals must challenge civic dialogue that endorses without question or analysis the quick fixes that have become popular responses to social and economic problems. Some of these quick fixes include the call for youth curfews and school uniforms to deal with supposedly disruptive children; sports stadiums to generate economic development for poor and working-class neighborhoods; or vouchers and more standardized testing as a response to poor public schooling. Youth curfews and uniforms will not solve the

problem of youth unemployment and alienation. Stadiums and megaplexes do not produce much-needed jobs and economic development in low-income neighborhoods. Vouchers cannot be used to build affordable and decent housing or better schools. And more standardized testing and screening does not enhance the quality of public schooling. These are but quick fixes that serve to keep the fundamental causes of serious social and economic problems off the table of civic dialogue. These approaches are legitimized, in part, when Black intellectuals, activists, and others abrogate their historical and moral role to critique policies and practices that continue to support inequality. Neither Black liberal nor conservative advocates have successfully challenged the ideological paradigms that support increasing corporate power and wealth in the United States.

Whereas we once molded civic discourse through critique, analysis, and mobilization, we have now largely resorted to cheerleading from the sidelines. One example of this problem is the response of Black leadership to the Monica Lewinsky affair in former President Bill Clinton's administration. The opinion of the leadership regarding Clinton's impeachment seemed to have been based on partisan preferences—whether among the Democrats or the Republicans—rather than what might be in the permanent interests of



In Time. Photo by LeRoy Henderson

the Black community. The litmus test for our support or non-support for the Clinton administration should not have been the sexual debate sensationalized by the mainstream media; it should have been, and should still be, the national policies that have been pushed by both Democrats and Republicans against the interests of all poor people, but especially women and children, in our communities. President Clinton led the charge in stereotyping poor and Black women during his push to overhaul welfare. And, amazingly, he was able to do this from the pulpits of more than a few Black churches. While he was engaged in his own exploitive sexual encounter with a much younger woman serving as his employee, he hypocritically castigated the alleged lack of morals and hard work of Black men and women. We should have seized this as our opportunity to help mold civic discourse regarding this inconsistency. We might have honored the tradition of Ida B. Wells, who in her 1895 publication *The Red Record* used quantitative data to show the patterns of race and lynching. She thereby exposed the political and moral hypocrisy of powerful interests that excused the violence against Black families.²⁵

Youth curfews and uniforms will not solve the problem of youth unemployment and alienation. Stadiums and megaplexes do not produce much-needed jobs and economic development in low-income neighborhoods. These are but quick fixes

There are yet more recent instances of the failure of Black leadership and intellectuals to mold civic discourse in ways that are helpful to the resolution of social and economic inequality. The controversy regarding the counting of the 2000 presidential ballots in Florida, for example, provided an opportunity for Black leadership to raise concerns about obstacles to effective Black political participation. Florida, as a matter of fact, was one of the states targeted for review by the U.S. Department of Justice under Section 5 of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. White elected officials—Republicans and Democrats—were responsible for historical and contemporary conditions that have barred many Black Floridians from equal access to the ballot. Yet, to hear the attacks and criticism directed against white Republicans by some Black leaders and intellectuals, one would think that the Democratic Party in Florida has always been the best friend of Black voters. This, of course, is not true. The failure to change the nature of civic discourse about this political controversy meant that the debate remained ensconced in partisan terms of Democrats versus Republicans rather than in a discussion about the continuing systemic obstacles to Black voting rights perpetuated by members of both parties.

Furthermore, Black leaders must mold civic discourse so that it reflects the values of social justice and the expansion of economic democracy rather than *blame the victim* rostrums, or *trickle-down* economic rationalizations. This kind of fundamental shift in the public conversation can enhance the effectiveness of policy responses to questions raised by local activists. There are many policy questions that need comprehensive answers and responses. Among them: How can we enhance economic and community development opportunities in our neighborhoods? How can we strengthen our community-based organizations? How can we involve our faith-based institutions in neighborhood struggles that focus on strengthening the institutional fabric of these places? How can we improve the quality of education? How can we train teachers to respect and

utilize the culture and histories of people of color in educating our youth? How can we develop stronger linkages between our youth, the elderly, and supportive institutions in our neighborhoods? How can we ensure that women and young girls won't be exploited or threatened by male chauvinism in our communities? How can we improve the health status of infants, children, and others? How can we increase the number and involvement of small businesses in the economic and social strengthening of our communities? How can we increase the number of decent-paying jobs for young people and others? How can we build and maintain affordable and decent housing? How can we reduce crime, including environmental crime, in our neighborhoods? And, how do we obtain and use information that allows us to hold government, including its police forces, accountable? These are pressing questions that have been raised but are not yet fully answered. In fact, as suggested in the writings of Hamilton and Hamilton, Buttons, King, Jr., and others, these are the very same questions that many in the Civil Rights Movement raised a generation ago as they called for abolishing apartheid in this nation.

Effective responses to these kinds of questions offer some possibility for enhancing the quality of life and strengthening the social and economic fabric in our neighborhoods. But how U.S. society responds is linked to the kind of civic discourse that is associated with these issues. This is a linkage that was made recently in a series of papers analyzing news reporting about welfare reform.²⁷ The authors and journalists who contributed to this series argued that how stories about welfare reform are covered molds public perceptions, and therefore, public support for policies. As journalists have a responsibility to be accurate and analytical about issues that involve race, class, and social policies, Black intellectuals also have a responsibility to influence the substance and paradigmatic contours of public dialogue that will help the U.S. citizenry support strategies aimed at enhancing our social democracy.

Some claim that only guilty whites and, for self-serving reasons, Black militants refuse to acknowledge the racial progress of the nation

Notes

1. Herbert Aptheker, *Afro-American History in the Modern Era* (Secaucus, N.J.: The Citadel Press, 1971).

2. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (Chicago: A. C. McCurtg, 1903), 4.

3. Information about *Freedom's Journal* can be found in Kenneth Estell, ed., *The African-American Almanac* (Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research Inc., 1994).

4. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Two Addresses Delivered by Alumni of Fisk University in Connection with the Anniversary Exercise of their Alma Mater* (Nashville, Tenn.: Fisk University Press, 1898).

5. Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (1895) in John Hope Franklin, *Three Negro Clas-*

sics (New York: Avon Books, 1965).

6. For elaboration on this point, see several articles by Stephanie Athey, "Race in Feminism: Critiques of Bodily Self-Determination in Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Anna Julia Cooper," *Research Report* (Boston: The Trotter Institute, 1998); "Eternal Vigilance is the Price of Liberty: A Biographical and Bibliographic Overview of the Work of Ida B. Wells-Barnett (June 16, 1862–March 25, 1931)," *Research Report* (Boston: The Trotter Institute, 2000); and, "Eugenic Feminisms in Late Nineteenth-Century America: Reading Race in Victoria Woodhull, Frances Willard, Anna Julia Cooper and Ida B. Wells," *Genders* 31 (Spring 2000).

7. Charles V. Hamilton and Dona C. Hamilton, *Dual Agenda: The African-American Struggle for*

Civil and Economic Equality (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); James W. Button, *Blacks and Social Change: Impact of the Civil Rights Movement in Southern Communities*, (N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989); and Darlene Clark Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reed, *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: A Reader in Black Women's History* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1995).

8. Eric Foner, "African Americans and the Story of American Freedom," *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 22.

9. Shelby Steele, *The Content of Our Character* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).

10. *Ibid.*, 151.

11. *Ibid.*, 146.

12. Paul M. Sniderman and Edward G. Carmines, *Beyond Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 146.

13. *Ibid.*, 154.

14. Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve* (New York: The Free Press, 1994).

15. See Stephan Thernstrom and Abigail Thernstrom, *America in Black and White: One Nation, Indivisible* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997).

16. Eugene F. Rivers III, "On Responsibility of Intellectuals in the Age of Crack," *Boston Review* (September–October 1992).

17. Eugene F. Rivers, III, "Beyond the Nationalism of Fools: Towards [sic] an Agenda for Black Intellectuals," *Boston Review* (Summer 1995).

18. Andrew Young, "Politics vs. the Poor," *The Wall Street Journal*, 29 July 2001.

19. Commencement address to Notre Dame University, Notre Dame, Indiana (May 21, 2001).

20. For a discussion of how King's call for civic morality is related to politics and public policy, see James Jennings and Mel King, "Politics and Morality" in Boston University's journal dedicated to Howard Thurman, *Debate and Understanding* (Summer 1983).

21. See *The Ballot or the Bullet*, in George Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990).

22. Ira Katznelson, *City Trenches* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); similarly, as E. E. Schattschneider observed more than forty years ago in his book, *The Semi-Sovereign People* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), the ability and capacity to define the nature and basis of conflict is an effective tool for building political power.

23. For an explanation and critique of Laffer's Curve during the Reagan administration see Frank Ackerman, *Hazardous to Our Wealth: Economic Policies in the 1980s* (Boston: South End Press, 1984).

24. Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele, "Corporate Welfare" *Time*, 9 November 1998, 36.

25. See Alfreda Duster, ed., *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

26. "Reporting Welfare, Reporting on Poverty: The Challenges of Reporting This Story in Various Communities and Other Countries," *Nieman Reports* 53, no. 2 (Summer 1999).

27. *Ibid.*