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James A. Perkins

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*Robert Penn Warren and James Farmer:
Notes on the Creation of New Journalism*

JAMES A. PERKINS

James H. Justus, in his *The Achievement of Robert Penn Warren*, noted that Warren's *Who Speaks for the Negro?* is similar to "other examples of 'the higher journalism' of recent years"¹; and Hugh Ruppersburg, in his *Robert Penn Warren and the American Imagination*, said "it compares favorably with other examples of the New Journalism which had begun to appear during the mid-1960s."² These two scholars made an important connection, but they did not follow the implication of the connection to its logical and surprising conclusion. In this essay, I will use Warren's interview with James Farmer, in "The Big Brass" section, as well as Warren's treatment of events in which Farmer was an important participant to show that Robert Penn Warren was, at the very least, a co-creator of the techniques of the "New Journalism" in his 1965 work *Who Speaks for the Negro?*

The New Journalism was born in the 1960s, more precisely, it was born in 1965 with the publication of Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*³ and Tom Wolfe, Jr.'s *The Kandy-Kolored, Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*.⁴ Since Robert Penn Warren's *Who Speaks for the Negro?*⁵ was also published that year (in fact it was published before either of the other two books) and since *Who Speaks for the Negro?* uses many of the techniques of the New Journalism, Warren should be considered as one of the founders of the New Journalism.

In fact when Tom Wolfe's cultural essays appeared in *Esquire*,⁶ Warren was already publishing sections of the manuscript that would become *Who Speaks for the Negro?*⁷ Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* would be serialized later in *The New Yorker*.⁸ It is clear that Warren could have read them both; however, he never mentioned either the

authors or their works in his interviews, and he had already written the better part of his work before either author's work began to appear. This seems to be one of those moments that occur in cultural history when the time is ripe for a breakthrough and a number of people move in the same direction toward the same innovation at the same time.

In a footnote, Hugh Ruppersburg says, "Warren's 'journalism' often resembles the work of John Hersey, author of *Hiroshima* and *The Algiers Hotel Incident* [sic], to whom Warren dedicated his poem 'New Dawn,' about the bombing of Hiroshima."¹⁵ Despite the parallel activity of Wolfe and Capote toward the creation of the new Journalism, and despite the critical furor over the "death of the novel" which followed the publication of a *Life* profile on Capote,¹⁶ I believe Warren, using the strong, clear work of John Hersey as a guide to journalistic writing,¹⁷ was striking out on his own to create a blend of fictional technique and non-fictional content in *Who Speaks for the Negro?*

Warren himself was aware of the innovative nature of the work he was doing as he collected material for *Who Speaks for the Negro?* In a May 4, 1964, letter to James Farmer, he wrote: "What I am trying to do is somewhat different from the ordinary Newspaper interview. What I hope to get is a sort of portrait of the person interviewed, a sense of his personality and the workings of his mind. We touch on a number of topics, some of them having only a remote connection, if any, with Civil Rights, but the course of the interview is determined by the range of interests of the person interviewed."¹² Of course it was Warren, not the person being interviewed, who was in control of the taping sessions. It is he who posed the questions, he who reminded the subjects of previous statements, and he who asked their opinions about the statements of others on the matters at hand. Finally, it was Warren who edited the work. In discussing the creative process which led to *Who Speaks for the Negro?*, Warren wrote in the book's

"Foreword":

The interviews were recorded on tape. In almost all instances the person interviewed checked the transcript for errors.¹³ Many of the interviews were long,¹⁴ sometimes several hours, and in a few cases there was more than one conversation.¹⁵ It would have been impossible, and undesirable, to publish all the transcripts. I have chosen the sections which seem to me most significant and exciting, and within these sections have sometimes omitted repetitions and irrelevancies. I have not indicated such omissions. But except for a rare conjunction, transition, or explanatory phrase, I have made no verbal changes.

About this process, James H. Justus has said, "*Who Speaks for the Negro?* is very much Warren's document, which is to say that it is not merely edited."¹⁶ Hugh Ruppersburg disagrees with this assessment. He says "In 'The Big Brass,' the chapter devoted to the leaders of the movement, interviews are transcribed word for word, with an apparent minimum of editing."¹⁷

Warren was aware of the obvious need for editing in the transcripts of the interviews. In a letter to James Farmer on July 7, 1964, which accompanied a copy of their conversation, Warren wrote: "Here is a copy of the transcript of our conversation. It is rather ragged in part, as you see, but it will be very valuable to me."¹⁸

If we compare the transcript of the two interviews with James Farmer to the text about Farmer in "The Big Brass" chapter, we can see that Warren did considerable editing, and we can see what the shaping eye and ear of a fiction writer brought to this foray into extended journalism. The most important change from the transcripts to the book is in length. The following passage covers five lines in the book: "We find increasing tension. A number of new leaders are springing up from the Negro working class. Many have not had much education—they have developed some facility in the use of the techniques of nonviolent direct action" (195).

This passage is a pastiche composed of material taken from three pages of the June 11, 1964, transcript which covered 69 lines.¹⁹ This

cutting creates focus and clarity. It is the sort of thing novelists do all the time when they cut the dull parts out of drafts and focus on the action or the development of character.

Perhaps the most interesting changes Warren made in this section of the work were those that masked the nature of the interviewer. On page 194, Warren asks: "What about the liberal who puts his views on record but who will not march?" In the transcript, that question is much longer and (if we read it through the "Doctor I have this friend who" ploy) much more revealing:

You find situations like this—a white man that I know, who is quite a distinguished writer, has had some pressure for him to become an activist, at least associate himself outside. He has written eloquently and is planning on something that is very important, which would be on this subject, and he will be totally committed to; yet he has come in [for] some very harsh words because he won't go march.²⁰

A major problem for Warren in dealing with the Farmer material is that Warren interviewed Farmer on June 11, 1964, and did not interview him again until the last week in September when the book was about to go to the publisher.²¹ On July 7, 1964, Warren sent Farmer a copy of the transcript of the tape along with a letter that said in part, "Can you make any corrections, and return to me in the enclosed envelope? I'll be very grateful, for I know how pressed you are."²² That summer, James Farmer was very busy with other problems. On June 19, 1964, ten days after the interview, the United States Senate, after 83 days of debate (the longest debate in Senate history) passed the Civil Rights Bill 73 to 27. On June 20, 1964, three civil rights workers disappeared near the town of Philadelphia, Mississippi. Farmer did not learn about the disappearance of the COFO volunteer Andrew Goodman, along with Michael Schwerner and James Chaney, his two paid CORE field representatives, in Mississippi until the morning of June 21, 1964, ten days after Warren interviewed him for the first time. If this mystery were not enough of

a problem for Farmer, on July 18, 1964, the Harlem riots broke out, and the rise of more militant young black leadership threatened the historic multi-racial nature of CORE.

Although the bodies of the three civil rights workers were found in an earthen dam on August 4, no arrests were made in the case until October 3, 1964, just after Warren's second interview with Farmer at the end of September. Warren, in his chapter, "A Mississippi Journal," had to deal with the crime against the civil rights workers, and James Farmer, a source for much of the information about the crime, either knew nothing or was in no position to reveal what he knew at the times Warren interviewed him. Warren solved the problem by using the fictional technique of point-of-view rather than the nonfictional technique of documented sources. While this is a perfectly acceptable method in the New Journalism, it raises eyebrows in academic settings and among more traditional journalists.

My comparison of the transcripts of the two Farmer interviews with the text of *Who Speaks for the Negro?* suggests that Warren had a method for keeping his sources straight in his own mind. The material on James Farmer from page 189 to page 202 comes from the transcripts of the June 11, 1964, and the late September interviews. Warren repeats some of this material elsewhere in the book when he wishes to compare Farmer's answers to those of others. He generally introduces this material with a verbal clue that the reader has seen before: "James Farmer, as we may remember, said . . ." (264). On the other hand, Warren uses quotations by Farmer from other sources in his discussion of the disappearance of the three civil rights workers. When these quotations occur, Warren generally introduces them with a formulaic structure: "Mr. Farmer says"(115) or "James Farmer says"(126). By suppressing the source of the quotation or statement and by directing the statement through the narrative point of view of the book, Warren creates a fairly seamless web of information that reads with the smoothness of a novel. About the disappearance of the

three civil rights workers, Warren writes: “. . . two of the victims at Philadelphia, Schwerner and Chaney, were paid field workers of CORE; and it was Negro workers of CORE who disappeared into the Negro community of Philadelphia, won the confidence of the local people, and gradually assembled evidence, including, Mr. Farmer says, an eyewitness account of the death of Chaney, which it turned over to the FBI” (115). This is a story that James Farmer has been telling for thirty years. He told it in the press at the time; he wrote it out in his book *Lay Bare the Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement*²³; he spoke at Westminster College on February 15, 1994, and told the story once again as a corrective to the film *Mississippi Burning*, the latest misrepresentation of the events in the case. In the film, Willem Dafoe and Gene Hackman portray doggedly determined FBI agents who overcome all odds to break the code of silence and get the rednecks who violated the civil rights of the three men. Commenting at Westminster College on these events from the film, Farmer said: “The FBI was there all right, but we had to drag them in kicking and screaming all the way.”²⁴

On two occasions Warren uses a different formulation to introduce material from James Farmer. On page 73 Warren writes:

Some months later, an anecdote told me by James Farmer, of CORE, happened to make clear to me why the Snick boy would not stay slowed down. Medgar Evers had been driving Farmer up this same road, on the same errand I now had, to make a night call on Dr. Aaron Henry, the president of the NAACP up at Clarksdale, in the Delta, and Farmer had shown some apprehension at the speed. Medgar had said that if you are a black man in Mississippi, you never let anybody pass you at night, you never let anybody have a chance to stop you or ditch you. Too many people have been stopped or ditched.²⁵

The passage, of course, reminds the reader of the death of Medgar Evers, which Warren dealt with earlier in the chapter, but it also presages the deaths of the three civil rights workers who were

stopped in a car at night on a Mississippi back road. It is a powerful passage. On page 120, Warren, commenting on the results of the Mississippi Summer Project writes:

James Farmer, on this point, tells me: “A result of the Summer Project—and this was somewhat unfortunate, I think—was that the local people who had been involved in the Movement pulled out when they saw these skilled youngsters from the North. Now we find that after the students left, some of the local people are coming around and saying, ‘Well, maybe you need me again.’”

Both of these passages appear outside the material centered on James Farmer in “The Big Brass” section of *Who Speaks for the Negro?* The first is a paraphrase of material from the June 11, 1964, interview; the second, which assesses the Mississippi Summer Voter Registration Project, is a quote from the late September interview. It is clear that Warren is stating that Farmer relayed this information directly to him. In the first case he says, “an anecdote told me by James Farmer of CORE”(73), and in the other he says, “James Farmer, on this point, tells me . . .”(120).

It is clear to me that, above all, whether he quoted his interview source directly or paraphrased, Warren was dedicated to **accuracy** in the writing of *Who Speaks for the Negro?* This is one of the characteristics Norman Sims identified in his work *The Literary Journalists*. Sims observed a variety of characteristics in the writings of the New Journalists: 1. Historic Sweep; 2. Attention to Language; 3. Participation and Immersion; 4. Symbolic Realities; 5. Accuracy; 6. Sense of Time and Place; 7. Grounded Observations; 8. Context; and 9. Voice.²⁶ While Warren exhibited all of these characteristics to one degree or another, he avoided the common dangers of mixing journalism with fictional techniques. He did not create composite characters. He did not recreate events for which he had no source or to which he was not himself a witness. When he had questions of fact or was faced with conflicting information, he wrote letters to attempt to

resolve the problems.²⁷ While *Who Speaks for the Negro?* is concerned with a particular moment in American history and creates a **sense of a time and a place**, the civil rights movement in the American south of 1964-65, it fixes that moment in the **context** of an **historic sweep** that includes the first slave ship in Jamestown in 1619, *The Declaration of Independence*, and the Civil War. Warren came to his subject in this work through **participation and immersion**. He had written about race before, many times, but as he said of his book *Segregation*, in an interview with Tom Vitale (15 April 1985), reprinted in *Talking with Robert Penn Warren*:

... it wasn't big enough because I got too interested in the question. So I went, or my agent went, to Look and made a contract with them. They would pay all of my expenses for two years or so of travel, if I would devote my time to it and mix in some poems, and I was in Mississippi and all over the place and talked to everybody.²⁸

Through participation and immersion, Warren was able to make **grounded observations** about his subject. Employing the poet's **attention to language**, he turned apparently simple objects like blood, a cleft stick, and the colors black and white into complex symbolic realities that both depicted and advanced his subject. Finally Warren created a **voice** in *Who Speaks for the Negro?* that was as clear and identifiable as the voice in any one of his novels. William Bedford Clark, in his *The American Vision of Robert Penn Warren*, observed: "As in *Segregation*, it is Warren who is the unspoken protagonist of *Who Speaks for the Negro?*"²⁹ And James H. Justus has written: "Superficially, it is his most objective book, coming as close to being discursive as anything in his canon; but in its structure, its internal patterns, and its textual 'voice,' *Who Speaks for the Negro?* speaks for Robert Penn Warren."³⁰

And Robert Penn Warren speaks for American blacks. As Ruppensburg points out, "It is clear from the beginning (as in *Segregation*) that his sympathies lie with the civil rights move-

ment."³¹ Warren used a number of the techniques associated with the New Journalism to answer the ironic question of the book's title.³² By faithfully recording a variety of voices, Warren showed that blacks are as unique and individual as whites and that no single black voice can fairly represent that diversity. In doing so, Warren answered the question in the book's title and became the only white author of his time to study seriously the civil rights movement.³³ He also created in *Who Speaks for the Negro?* a volume that must be considered seminal in the history of the creation of the New Journalism.

If it is true that Robert Penn Warren in writing *Who Speaks for the Negro?* was employing the techniques of the New Journalists, the same devices introduced later in 1965 by Truman Capote and Tom Wolfe, Jr., why is it that Warren is not recognized as a founder of the New Journalism? The answer may be found in the content and tone of Warren's work. While Capote's work is an in-depth account of a particularly bloody and violent mass murder (the sort of thing for which the American public seems to have an endless fascination) and Wolfe's book exposes arcane facts surrounding a variety of American subcultures (the sort of thing that appears in the tabloids at the supermarket checkout counters), Warren's work calls on us to face squarely a major flaw in the American Dream, Racism. We can read either Capote or Wolfe and be comforted by the fact that no matter how interesting their subjects may be, they have little or nothing to do with our lives. Racism, however, remains unresolved and central to the American experience, and we still do not want to look at it. Although it was largely overlooked when it was published and is now out of print, *Who Speaks for the Negro?* speaks to and about America as clearly and as forcefully now as it did in 1965.

ENDNOTES

¹James H. Justus, *The Achievement of Robert Penn Warren* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 147.

²Hugh Ruppersburg, *Robert Penn Warren and the American Imagination* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 131.

³Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood* (New York: Random House, 1965).

⁴Tom Wolfe, *The Kandy-Kolored, Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1965).

⁵Robert Penn Warren, *Who Speaks for the Negro?* (New York: Random House, 1965). Subsequent references to this volume will be made parenthetically within the text.

⁶Four sections of Wolfe's book appeared in *Esquire* from October 1963 to March 1965: "Marvelous Mouth," 61 (October 1963): 146+; "There Goes (Varoom! Varoom!) that Kandy-Kolored, Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby," 60 (November 1963): 114-18+; "Las Vegas," 61 (February 1964): 97-103+; "Last American Hero Is Junior Johnson, Yes!" 63 (March 1965): 68-75+.

⁷Robert Penn Warren, "The Negro Now," *Look*, 23 March 1965, 23-31; "Robert Penn Warren and Ralph Ellison: A Dialogue," *Reporter*, 25 March 1965, 42-46 and 48; "Two for SNCC" *Commentary*, 39 (April 1965); 38-48.

⁸Truman Capote, "The Annals of Crime: In Cold Blood," *The New Yorker*, 41 (September 25, 1965): 41-57+; (October 2, 1965): 57-60+; (October 9, 1965): 58-62+; (October 16, 1965): 62-64+.

⁹Ruppersburg, 187. Ruppersburg would have been wise to point out that *Hiroshima* appeared in 1946, and *Algiers Motel Incident*, that chronicled the Detroit riots of 1967, did not appear until 1968; the poem mentioned was not published until the 1980s. Ruppersburg, in his desire to create an affinity between these two authors (about which there is little doubt), creates a muddle of dates that implies anachronistic influence.

¹⁰J. Howard, "Six Year Literary Vigil," *Life* 60 (January 7, 1966): 70-72+.

¹¹Although it is not the main purpose of this essay, I believe a strong case could be made for John Hersey as a progenitor of the New Journalism.

¹²Robert Penn Warren to James Farmer, May 4, 1964, Robert Penn Warren Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature (MSS 51), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn. Hereafter cited as Warren Papers.

¹³Mr. Farmer told me in an interview (February 15, 1994) that he did not read the transcript and that he has never read *Who Speaks for the Negro?*

¹⁴The transcript of the interviews with James Farmer runs 79 pages in typescript.

¹⁵There were two interviews with James Farmer: one on June 11, 1964, and one probably during the last week of September 1964. The time of the second interview is based on a letter dated September 14, 1964, in which Warren says, in part:

I am trying to get assessments from several key people on the gains and meaning of the summer campaign in Mississippi, in general, and on the Freedom Party project in particular, I wonder if you would oblige me here. Perhaps you might let me come by for a few minutes? I am away September 22-26 (to a con-

ference in Berlin where I shall see some of the people from the new African states), but on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday of the following week I could be free. Always Tuesday and Thursday are out—for I am at Yale those days. But the book goes in by the middle of October. Any chance of seeing you before then? Briefly?

¹⁶Justus, 146.

¹⁷Ruppersburg, 142.

¹⁸Warren to Farmer, July 7, 1964 (Warren Papers).

¹⁹The opening of the rough, unedited transcript of Tape #4 CONVERSATION WITH MR. JAMES FARMER (hereafter referred to as CONVERSATION) in the Warren Papers reads:

W: [In all cases the speaker is identified in pencil by initial] You said you had carried certain white workers to the Plaquemines [sic] office, in hope of modifying the blanket anti-white sentiment there.

F: Yes, it appeared to succeed, at least in part, I don't know how deep the success was, but these individual white persons were finally accepted by the Negro community—they were accepted as individuals—and in a sense, removed from the white race and accepted into the Negro race. They were considered exceptions—as in case of one young lady who was working for CORE down there, it became really a part of the Negro community; I visited later and was talking with some of the Negroes and they said "Well, yes, she is white but she is the blackest white woman we have ever seen"—so I am not sure it there is a carry-over from their response to these individuals.

W: You mean the real carryover—if I am interpreting you right—would be to say "Not the blackest white woman" but a human being.

F: A human being, yes, exactly. I suspect that we are in for not only a long, hot summer, but to use that now cliché, but for a long dark night of polarization between the races. I think it is a temporary thing and we will get over it, if we can avoid destructive violence in the meantime.

W: There are two thoughts that come from that, from what you have said, one is this. Speaking of widening the gap between Negro and white you were talking about, what about the widening gap that is pointed out by—well—many people—Mr. Whitney Young being one—between the Negro masses in the slum, and the successful middle-class upperclass, the draining of leadership, you know, in terms of economic split.

F: Yes, I was just about to come to that—this is heightening very rapidly in the Negro community now. You find [inaudible word] between the middle-class and the working class Negro; we find it within CORE.

W: Non-working class—

F: Non-working class—the unemployed, yes, we find it within CORE, since the four chapters have become mass movements. People walked in off the streets and joined the organization and we have wanted them—we longed for their presence in the organization—so we are pleased that this happened. Yet we find that increasing tension between the established Negro middle-class and the Negro "lower-class"—sometimes it shows itself in superficialities such as—who has a car and who doesn't have a car—who lives in a house in the

country and who lives in a tenement slum.

W: Inverted status.

F: Inverted status, yes, I think this is very unfortunate, if there is anything the Negro in this country cannot afford is that class of delineation and conflict—we can't afford that kind of division.

W: Either way—now what can be done about it—if as this distrust or lack of contact where the leadership has come from—it is bound to come from the educated class of Negroes. Now, if there is a loss of contact there, then what is the next thing? What is the danger of the next thing?

F: I didn't quite understand—

W: If the leadership, by and large, naturally has come from—and it always does come from people of education and who have had opportunities and the chance for reflection—it comes from the upperclass Negroes—college people—with a few exceptions but by and large. Now, if the gap is widening between that class and the masses of unemployed and unemployables, and the slum and the slum casual worker and these people—the oppressed depressed menace—if that gap is widening, then what?

F: Well, I think what we are finding happening now is that a number of new Negro leaders are springing up from the Negro working class and the lower class generally. Many of these persons have not had much education—they have developed a feeling, however, for the struggle for civil rights—they have developed some facility in the use of the techniques of nonviolent direct action, and I suspect that some of them will grow in prominence (1-3).

²⁰Ibid., Tape # 2, page 2. Warren had written eloquently in *Segregation: The Inner Conflict in the South* in 1956 and also in "Episode in the Dime Store," which remained unpublished until it appeared in the *Southern Review* in 1994.

²¹By Farmer's account June 11, 1964, was the last time he ever spoke to Warren (Interview with the author, February 15, 1994). This is refuted by the evidence of a 23-page transcript in the Warren Papers of an interview conducted with James Farmer by Robert Penn Warren sometime near the end of September 1964.

²²Warren to Farmer, July 7, 1964 (Warren Papers).

²³James Farmer, *Lay Bare the Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 272-78.

²⁴James Farmer, Speech at Westminster College, February 15, 1994.

²⁵This is an unusual paraphrase. Generally in teaching writing we tell students to paraphrase to focus material, to cut repetition, or to eliminate dull writing. Warren's paraphrase is clearly used to focus the passage on his subject, because Farmer's narrative in the transcript of the interview (Tape #1, page 13) is much more interesting than Warren's paraphrase except for the repeated final phrase—"you never let anybody have a chance to stop you or ditch you. Too many people have been stopped or ditched." Farmer's tale reads:

About a month before Medgar Evers was shot, I was riding with him from Greenwood to Clarksdale to see Dr. Henry, and night had fallen. He asked me to go along with him partly because he didn't want to drive alone at night. As we drove along, he told me that he didn't really go along with the nonviolence as completely as some people in the movement, and if I looked in his glove

compartment, I would find a loaded .45 there, and furthermore, every time he gets into his car, he checks under the hood and under the scat and everything else. Well, he said that in addition, nothing passes him on the highways in that state at night. We were going about 70 miles an hour and after a while he commented to me that the car behind us[,] which had four men in it, had been with us for 15 miles and we've got to lose it, he said. We went up to 80, they stayed with us—we went up to 90, up to 100 and the speedometer registered 110 before we pulled away from it. He told me that he doesn't let anything pass him because he had too many experiences being stopped at night or attempts being made to block his car or force him off the road, and there have been many cases recently, where people have had rather surprising accidents on the highway, which he does not believe were accidents. He said that in addition, lynchings still go on in the state, dead bodies not infrequently—black bodies, that is, float down the Pearl River.

²⁶Norman Sims, ed., *The Literary Journalists* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1984), 21-22.

²⁷One example of this is Warren's September 14, 1964, letter to James Farmer, which says, in part: "I have encountered, even in interviews, conflicting versions of how CORE got involved in the sit-in in Greensboro, with Izell Blair, etc. Where can I find an accurate and succinct account—merely a matter of a few sentences—of the situation? Or can you yourself give me that information?" (Warren Papers)

²⁸Tom Vitale, "A Conversation with Robert Penn Warren," in *Talking with Robert Penn Warren*, ed. Floyd C. Watkins, John T. Hiers, and Mary Louise Weak (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 393.

²⁹Clark, *The American Vision of Robert Penn Warren* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 114.

³⁰Justus, 147.

³¹Ruppersburg, 139.

³²In her March 19, 1964, *Atlanta Constitution* news article headlined "Changes Viewed by Novelist," Marjory Rutherford said: "His interviews and research here and across the country, the author reported, disproved another popular stereotype—that there is one major leader of Negroes seeking realization of their civil rights. 'Instead,' he declared, 'there is an enormous variety of personalities and range of experiences and views and talents among the people who in general might be called leaders'" (24).

³³Hugh Ruppersburg has already noted this in his *Robert Penn Warren and the American Imagination* (131), and the book, despite Ruppersburg's assertion that "in many ways it now seems outdated"(131), is as important today as it was when it was published in 1965. The range of black leadership today, from Myrlie Evers Williams, the widow of Medgar Evers, Andrew Young, and Kweisi Mfume to the Reverend Louis Farrakhan, presents the same range of uniqueness and individuality and a spectrum of voices similar to that which Warren presented in *Who Speaks for the Negro?*