

THE SEARCH FOR COOPERATION

Report of an Exploratory Visit to the  
University of the West Indies,  
June 4 - 16, 1968

Auspices of the Committee on Non-Western Studies  
The Atlanta University Center  
Atlanta, Georgia

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November 15, 1968

## INTRODUCTION

During the month of June, 1968, a generous grant from the Atlanta University Center's Committee on Non-Western Studies made it possible for me to visit the three campuses of the University of the West Indies, at Mona, Jamaica; St. Augustine, Trinidad; and Cave Hill, Barbados. My basic purpose was to explore the possibilities of developing various modes of communication and cooperation between the Atlanta University Center and the University of the West Indies.

Part of the background of the exploration was found in the quickening sense of black consciousness and the search for new levels of Afro-American identity which now pervade our Atlanta campuses--as well as many others like them. In the course of this heightened awareness of cultural roots, an increasing number of our students and faculty have begun to explore the West Indian experiences of black peoples. Some have only recently learned of the existence of the University of the West Indies and its own significant struggles to shape a new set of institutions and realities out of a colonized past. It seemed obvious to me that the students and faculties of these two University Centers shared too much in common to allow us to pass each other like ships in the night.

I. AREAS OF POSSIBLE COOPERATION

During the course of my visits, I sought to explore several specific possible areas of cooperation among the institutions involved.

They included:

1. Student exchanges during summers or regular school years
2. Faculty exchanges of varying types and durations
3. Visiting lectureships and Artists in Residence
4. Jointly sponsored research, institutes and conferences in areas of common concern.
5. Exchange and sharing of library facilities
6. Joint publishing ventures
7. Special Afro-American Consortium

Largely because of some very kind intermediaries and hosts, I was able to engage in significant conversations with some forty members of the faculty and staff of the three campuses, as well as to meet scores of students. (Besides, many contacts in the surrounding communities were developed, ranging from lectures by me to a fascinating visit with Mrs. Amy Jacques Garvey. However, these additional benefits will not be explored in this document.) Following is a brief, summary report on the visit, including a set of recommendations for further action.

## II. THE THREE CAMPUSES: DISTINCTIVE CONCERNS

Certain distinctive elements developed from the conversations on each campus. I shall call attention to them briefly before summarizing the general conclusions.

### A. Mona, Jamaica

On this segment of the trip I was fortunate to have as a companion Dr. Albert Manley, chairman of the Council of Presidents of the Atlanta University Center, and head of my own college, Spelman. He shared totally in my enthusiasm for the experience at Mona, and for the attractive prospects we foresaw in the larger relationships.

We were especially encouraged by our visit with Sir Philip Sherlock, Vice Chancellor of the University system. Sir Philip was most encouraging in his enthusiastic response. He felt that the sharing of facilities, the exchange of staff, joint research and even a special consortium of Afro-American Universities (using American in its hemispheric sense) might well grow out of our explorations. Sir Philip promised that upon receiving this report his first step would be to appoint two or more members of the faculty of the University of the West Indies to return our visit by coming to the Atlanta University Center. At that point, some specific joint proposals for cooperative work could be developed.

On the Mona campus our other contacts with faculty and students in History, Education, Economics, Religion and the Arts made it very clear that we have many common interests, problems and challenges,

and can probably be of great mutual assistance.

#### St. Augustine, Trinidad

The careful planning of Professors Andrew Comacho and Jesse Noel made the Trinidad visit a highly organized and most fruitful one. Here, visits with members of the University's Institute for Education revealed that the problems of developing meaningful, indigenous systems of education out of a colonialized past are problems which are shared by those concerned with education (and Education) at both University Centers. At St. Augustine, a center for Afro-Asian Studies has recently been established, and our growing supply of Africanists in Atlanta may be of some real help here. Also, some of the historians and social scientists in Trinidad are especially interested in studies in comparative slavery. One of them voiced a strong interest in doing research on phases of North American slavery, using our University Center as a base of operations. (Of course, there are several AU Center faculty persons who would be eager to study the patterns of Caribbean slavery from the base of the UWI.)

#### Cave Hill, Barbados

The youngest and smallest of the University campuses, Cave Hill, has a special attraction for scholars of the Afro-American experience. Its newly established Centre for Multi-Racial Studies holds many possibilities for significant research and offers facilities for some of the conferences which should develop out of continued explorations between the two University Centers.

One of the most significant attractions of the Cave Hill Centre for Multi-Racial Studies is its recent acquisition of the library of Mr. Richard B. Moore, one of the most significant lay scholars of Afro-American history in this hemisphere. At Cave Hill, too, the pro-Vice Chancellor, Mr. Sidney Martin, was very hopeful about the prospects of cooperation between the two University Centers. His own interest was greatest in the area of joint research projects.

### III. SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

In response to my questions and suggestions concerning cooperation, the basic response of the students, faculty and administration of the University of the West Indies was almost unqualifiedly enthusiastic. Now, following the scheme of the seven specific areas which I sought to explore (Student exchanges; faculty exchanges; visiting lecturers and artists; joint research; library cooperation; joint publishing; special consortium), these conclusions may be safely drawn:

1. Student Exchanges: There was a general feeling that the two distinct undergraduate systems in Atlanta and the UWI might present difficulties for conventional undergraduate student exchanges during the regular academic year. It was clear, for instance, that undergraduate students who decided to spend a year on the other campus would have to be prepared to face an additional year to complete their degree requirements at home. However, it was also agreed that:

- a. It was not impossible to work out a year-long undergraduate student exchange, but that it should not be among the first elements of cooperation.
  - b. Undergraduate summer seminar groups which might spend half of their time at each University Center might be a good beginning.
  - c. Graduate student exchanges would be very valuable and far less difficult to arrange for summers as well as full year.
  - d. Students from both campuses would benefit greatly from whatever kinds of exchanges were finally developed.
2. Faculty Exchanges: The development of mutually beneficial exchanges of faculty seemed quite acceptable to most persons. Some concerns were raised which ought to be included in the structuring of any faculty exchange program. These included:
- a. The program might best begin with short-term exchanges.
  - b. The varying salary scales would need to be taken into consideration. (Converted to dollars, the UWI scales are somewhat lower than Atlanta's.)
  - c. Certain exchanges might be worked out exclusively between departments and divisions, at least in their initial stages.
  - d. Persons working in various aspects of the Afro-American Experience (using American in the Hemispheric sense of the word) might be most interested in this sort of exchange, but it ought not be limited to them.
3. Visiting Lectureships and Artists in Residence: With adequate funds, this seemed to be one of the easiest parts of the cooperative program to begin developing. It would require, however, that the two University Centers become familiar with those scholars and artists on the opposite campus who might make the most significant contributions. (E.G., George Lamming, one of the best-known West Indian novelists, was in residence at Mona during our visit, and indicated keen interest in a possible visit to the Atlanta University Center.)

4. Joint Research, Institutes, Conferences, etc.: Most faculty and administrative persons at the UWI were convinced that this was one of the most important and immediate possibilities for cooperative action. It seemed clear that there were many topics which could be explored in a comparative fashion by two University centers which shared the Afro-American experience. These would include concerns which were both fundamentally scholarly in essence, and those which focussed more on social change and on the University's role in such processes. A few examples of the possible subjects for joint research or consultation follow:

- a. Current Frontiers of Research on the New World Black Experience.
- b. Studies in Comparative New World Slavery
- c. Education for Developing Identity in Post-Colonial Societies.
- d. Afro-American Folklore in the Elementary School Curriculum
- e. Comparative Urban Development Among New World Afro-Americans.
- f. The Literature of the Black New World
- g. Comparative Issues of Health and Illness Among Rural Afro-Americans
- h. Religious Experiences of the New World Negro
- i. Festival of New World Black Art
- j. Neo-Colonialism in Harlem and Kingston
- k. Current Trends in New World Black Nationalism

One of the reasons why there was general excitement about the possibility of such interdisciplinary, comparative New World research, was the recognition that there is no such work being carried on in a sustained manner anywhere in the world today.

5. Exchange and Sharing of Library Resources: This was considered another of the areas which needed only to be initiated to become valuable on both sides. It was clear, too, that various forms of cooperation could be initiated here.

The Librarians involved would certainly know best how to proceed in this area. One UWI Librarian (at Trinidad) expressed special interest in bibliographies which would make it possible for them to develop significant holdings on the black experience in the USA, and especially on the Civil Rights Movement.

6. Joint Publishing Ventures: On a formal level with the UWI's Institute for Social and Economic Research and on an informal level with the editors of New World (an independent periodical edited by members of the UWI faculties), it was generally agreed that the results of jointly sponsored research and of conferences would be an obvious place to begin joint publishing activities. It was also agreed to continue this conversation--on both formal and informal levels--with persons in the United States and in the West Indies.
7. Special Afro-American Consortium: Several persons suggested the fascinating possibility that a number of Afro-American schools in the United States might form a special consortium with the University of the West Indies. The purposes of such a consortium would be to expand the contacts already described and to advance the proposed academic work even more fully. It was agreed that further discussion of this possibility should be part of the conversations which would continue to take place between representatives of the AU Center and the UWI.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the visit in June, as well as subsequent contacts and proposals, I would make the following recommendations concerning immediate next steps in developing cooperative modes of relationship between the two university centers. These recommendations are directed, of course, primarily to our own university community (and specifically to the Council of Presidents and the Faculty Senate), but they will surely have relevance for the decisions of our colleagues in the West Indies.

1. That the proposal of Sir Philip Sherlock be acted upon, and that two or more persons from the University of the West Indies be invited to return the visit made by President Manley and me.
2. That a small, concerned sub-committee be formed in the AU Center to begin to draw up certain draft proposal which could be discussed at length with the visitors from the University of the West Indies when they arrive. It is hoped that these proposals would take seriously the Conclusions and Recommendations sections of this report.
3. That individual departments, programs and graduate schools in the AU Center begin to establish communications between themselves and their counterparts in the University of the West Indies.
4. That Trevor Arnett Library initiate a policy of correspondence and exchange with the various branch libraries of the University of the West Indies in whatever ways seem mutually helpful.
5. That this report be circulated to chairmen of departments in the Social Sciences and the Humanities, especially, in the hope that it will help to stimulate them to initiate contact with the UWI.

SPECIAL POST-SCRIPT:

Dr. Albert Manley has mentioned recently the strong interest of a philanthropist in sponsoring at the AU Center a Festival of Afro-Caribbean Arts sometime before the end of this academic year. Such a Festival might include graphic arts, music, dance and theatre as well as the literary arts. If appropriate persons on the UWI campuses could help to organize the resources, this kind of festival would be of great value to the AU Center and its environs. I would strongly urge that concerned persons in both Centers seek to develop this idea.