

12/16/68

Mr. Julius Lester
c/o The National Guardian
197 West 4 St.,
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Lester,

I quote from your "Revolutionary Notes" two excerpts dealing with what you call the "death" of Martin Luther King, Jr. and his funeral:

"...but the young bloods in the street understood. Martin Luther King^w as a 'brother', a member of the family, whom you disagreed with, fought with, but when you got down to the nitty-gritty, you defended". (page 85)

"In the rush of white America to expunge its sins in the blood of Dr. King, it forgot he was black, that he had such an appeal to the black community because his rhetoric and his style came from the roots in the black community..." (page 88)

Where is the "defense" of this "brother", this "member of the family", by the "young bloods" or any other black, particularly by those self-styled as "revolutionary"? In abdication? In silence? It is bad enough that those his close personal friends are without voice, for whatever self-imposed fear, whatever demeaning self-justification. But how about the fearless big-talkers, the young, the impassioned? Where are the peoples' heroes, the defenders, the avengers?

I agree with you, he was a symbol. So about the murder of your symbol you are silent, to a man, especially, the would-be leaders, the writers? In the modern marketplace almost anything sounding revolutionary or violent from a black pen can be published. We thus have many fine, established black writers, every one of whom is mute about the murder of this black brother, this symbol.

As with Malcolm X, there is no black Blondel, no avenger, no defender, no truth-seeker - no one man willing to do the dirty hard work of learning and establishing truth, a record of what happened, a record of what government did. You all copped out, with Ramsey Clark, Phil Canale, J. Edgar Hoover, who framed a convenient white patsy for you and thus bought the silence of those who might have been tempted to seek, to speak, if there were any.

I did that hard, disagreeable work, with a refusal from every black I asked to help (me or himself, mostly the latter) or interest himself. Had something been done, had the black writers been less interested in philosophical talk and more in action, some of their recently-murdered brothers might today be alive. Some in jail on spurious charges might not have been falsely charged. But when there was a black crisis, when black leaders were murdered black writers were cowardly, unmanly. It is enough for them to be contemptuous, indiscriminately, of all whites, including defining as "activists" those who go to Europe rather than stay and fight. (page 87). I am more the brother of these murdered blacks than you, for I, at least, act like a real brother. Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg