The Museum of Modern Art

To: The Files

From: Michelle Harvey MH

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Re: Attached transcript

This transcript of the recorded event "A Literary Evening in Honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." [SR 68.17] was created by a staff member in the Department of Painting and Sculpture and shared with the Archives for future research purposes.

MoMA Archives
"A Literary Evening in Honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr."

PERSONALITY: Dr. William Rutherford (moderator)
PLACE: The Museum of Modern Art Auditorium
PARTICIPANTS: Introduction: Wilder Green; James Baldwin, Allen Ginsberg, Ralph Ellison, Robert Penn Warren
SPONSOR: The Museum of Modern Art; Southern Christian Leadership Conference
EXHIBITION: *In Honor of Dr. Martin Luther King* [MoMA Exh. #873a, October 31-November 3, 1968]
DATA: 7" reel; 1/2 track; side 1; monaural; 3 3/4 ips
SUMMARY: Program of readings and discussions

NOTE: This sound recording was preserved in Spring 2004. In addition to the original, a 10.5 inch analog reel-to-reel archival master, a CD-R use copy and a CD-R back-up copy now exist. Please see Supplemental Materials for program notes.

CD 1/2 (58 min.)

Wilder Greene
Good evening, uh… my name is Wilder Greene, I am on the staff at the Museum here. I just want to welcome you here tonight, on behalf of the Museum, to let you know how very honored we are to be able to have this evening here, and to have the exhibition in our gallery, which will close at 6 o'clock. Most importantly, I'd like to introduce to you Doctor Rutherford, who is Director of National Affairs of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He will introduce you the various speakers this evening and will act as the general host and moderator of the evening. Thank you very much.

(Clapping)

Dr. William Rutherford
Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am very pleased to see you here tonight. I must say I am personally very honored and very proud to have a chance to participate in what is a historic event already. We've just culminated an art exhibit here, which is probably without parallel in the history of art exhibits in New York, or in America let's say, and certainly it's very meaningful in terms of its consequences for the movement. This art exhibit was called *In Honor of Martin Luther King Jr.*, I'd like to ask you this time and for that purpose to stand and observe a moment of silence.

(Silence, about 20 seconds)

Amen.
This exhibit was made possible by the need and the willingness, the desire and the agreement of America's artists to contribute to the memory of Martin Luther King. It was a memorial exhibit, but it's much more meaningful than a memorial, in the sense that we on the staff of SCLC – and I consider myself not the National Director of anything, but what I call the chief bottle washer round the office… But our memorial to Martin Luther King will not be in monuments, will not be in statues, will not be in parks, will not be in express ways named for him. Our memorial to Martin Luther King will be continuing his work. We had the opportunity, and the artists of America had the opportunity of contributing to that memorial by offering their work, their talent, what they do best. That they did.

This evening again, we have representatives of America's intellectual and artistic world who, again, would like to, in the memory of Martin Luther King, contribute to the only real and meaningful memorial that there will ever be to Martin Luther King, which is the continuance of his work. Now we think there are many things: his work, we say, is fight [and sin?]. We say what we do in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference is the Lord's work or, in a more simple form, we call it just plain gettin' free. That's what we are all about, gettin' free. And certainly everyone of the gentlemen here tonight has, is, or will continue to make a contribution towards that end, of all of us, certainly SCLC's work, certainly Martin Luther King Jr.'s work, which is getting free.
I uh -- I would like to say that I will not make any further remarks. There is certainly no introduction needed to introduce these distinguished gentlemen, except that we are in the process of turning a film for one of the educational television networks, and I will simply mention their names in order to get that on the record. But I would say that the distinguished gentlemen who will address you tonight are certainly engaged in the process of fighting evil, carrying on the Lord's work, and of gettin' free.
I would also like to say that Martin Luther King, whom I had the honor, and I must say the great privilege to follow – he loved people, he loved things, he loved ideas, he dealt with them. Martin Luther King himself was a poet, and Martin Luther King would be very happy about this evening.
Now I'll conclude my remarks with that, to say, that I thank you all for coming. I'd like to thank the Museum, I'd like to thank Mister Wilder Greene, Miss Shaw, and the other individuals, small, low place and high place, for having made this whole demonstration possible. I thank the artists, and I am sure they join me in thanking the audience without whom no artist can ever complete his work.

I would like to begin by introducing our first figure of the evening, who is Mr. Allen Ginsberg, who like the other gentlemen of course requires no introduction. Mr. Ginsberg is a poet, a philosopher, and a mover. Mr. Ginsberg has been a lecturer, an actor, and a writer. He's also been a [solder?], a street sweeper, and a street vendor. But above all, he is a philosopher, and we call him one of our High Priests. Ladies and Gentlemen, Mister Allen Ginsberg.

(Clapping)
(A few notes of music)

Allen Ginsberg
Since uh -- since to make the occasion sacramental, satisfying…uh… Gandhi and pacifists, and uh… militant, apocalyptic tendencies, an invocation to the Muslim God Allah. There is no God but God, lā ilāha illā-llāhu.
Chanting in Arabic (lā ilāha illā-llāhu...) with music in background.

My teacher was…William Blake. And so, in relation to King's soul, Blake's soul, "The Grey Monk"…That would be Johnson's soul also. A poem by Blake, "The Grey Monk." If you interpret some of the lines, "Thy Father who," "Thy Father…" I'm sorry…"Thy Father drew his sword in the North/ With his thousands strong he marched forth," or for what to say black or white violence, militance, "Thy Brother has armd himself in Steel."

(Music playing)
Can you hear me over the music box? Okay…Maybe if I can get this higher? (*Silence)*
The poem is "The Grey Monk." The music is my own.

I die I die the Mother said
My Children die for lack of Bread
What more has the merciless Tyrant said
The Monk sat down on the Stony Bed

The blood red ran from the Grey Monks side
His hands & feet were wounded wide
His Body bent his arms & knees
Like to the roots of ancient trees

His eye was dry no tear could flow
A hollow groan first spoke his woe
He trembled & shudderd upon the Bed
At length with a feeble cry he said

When God commanded this hand to write
In the studious hours of deep midnight
He told me the writing I wrote should prove
The Bane of all that on Earth I lovd

My Brother starvd between two Walls
His Childrens Cry my Soul appalls
I mockd at the wrack & griding chain
My bent body mocks their torturing pain

Thy Father drew his sword in the North
With his thousands strong he marched forth
Thy Brother has armd himself in Steel
To avenge the wrongs thy Children feel

But vain the Sword & vain the Bow
They never can work Wars overthrow
The Hermits Prayer & the Widows tear
Alone can free the World from fear

For a Tear is an Intellectual Thing
And a Sigh is the Sword of an Angel King
And the bitter groan of the Martyrs woe
Is an Arrow from the Almighties Bow

The hand of Vengeance found the Bed
To which the Purple Tyrant fled
The iron hand crushd the Tyrants head
And became a Tyrant in his stead

The second Blake poem, appropriate, maybe difficult in terms of its color: "The Little Black Boy."

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O! my soul is white;
White as an angel is the English child:
But I am black as if bereav'd of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree
And sitting down before the heat of day,

She took me on her lap and kissed me,
And pointing to the east began to say.

Look on the rising sun: there God does live
And gives his light, and gives his heat away.
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning joy in the noonday.

And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love,
And these black bodies and this sun-burnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear
The cloud will vanish we shall hear his voice.
Saying: come out from the grove my love & care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.

Thus did my mother say and kissed me,
And thus I say to little English boy.
When I from black and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy:

Ill shade him from the heat till he can bear,
To lean in joy upon our fathers knee.
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him and he will then love me.

(Clapping)
(Silence)

Six thousands movie theaters, one hundred thousands, one hundred million television sets, a billion radios, wires and wireless crisscrossing hemispheres, semaphore lights and Morse, all telephones ringing at once connect every mind by its ears to one vast consciousness This Time Apocalypse—everybody waiting for one mind to break thru—
Man-prophet with two eyes to Dare all creation with his dying tongue & say I AM—Messiah swallow back his death into his stomach, gaze thru the great pupils of his Bodies' eyes
and look in each Eye man, the eyeglassed byriad fearful look that might be Godeyes see thru Death—that now are clark & ego reading manlaw —write news broadcasts to cover with Fears their
own Messiah that must come when all of us conscious—Breakthru to all other Consciousness to say the Word I Am. I Am, as spoken by a certain God—Millennia knew and waited till this one Century
Now all sentience broods and listens—contemplative & hair full of rain for 15 years inside New York—what millions know and hark to hear, & death will tell, but—
many strange magicians in buildings listening inside their own heads—or clouds over Manhattan Bridge—or strained thru music messages to —I Am from the central One! Come
blow the Cosmic Horn and waken every Tiglon & Clown sentience throughout the vasting circus—in the Name of God pick up the telephone call Networks announcing Suchness That—

I Am mutter a million old Gods in their beards, that had been sleeping at evening radios—
cackling in their Larynx—Talking to myself again
said the Messiah turning a dial to remember his last broadcast—I scare myself, I eat my hand, I swallow my own head, I stink in the inevitable bathroom of death this Being requires—Widen the Area of Consciousness!
set our Throne in Space, I rise to sit in the midst of the Starry Visible!—Calling All Beings! in dirt from the ant to the most frightened Prophet that ever clomb tower to vision the planet
crowded in one vast space ship headed toward Andromeda—That all lone soul in Iowa or Harkland join the Lone, set forth, walk naked like a Hebrew king, enter the human cities and speak free,
at last the Man-God come that hears all Phantasy behind the matter-babble in his ear, and walks out of the Cosmic Dream into the cosmic street
open mouth to the First Consciousness—God's woke up now, you Seraphim, call men with trumpet microphone & telegraph, hail every sleepwalker with Holy Name,
Life is waving, the cosmos is sending a message to itself, its image is reproduced endlessly over TV
over the radio the babble of Hitler's and Claudette Colbert's voices got mixed up in the bathroom radio
Hello hello are you the Telephone the Operator's singing we are the daughters of the universe
get everybody on the line at once, plug in all ears in being by laudspeaker, newspeak, secret message,
handwritten electronic impulse traveling along rays electric spiderweb
magnetisms shuddering on one note We We We, mustached disc jockeys trembling in mantric excitement, flowery patterns bursting over the broken couch,
drapes falling to the floor in St. John Perse's penthouse, Portugal's water is running in all the faucets on the SS Santa Rosa,
chopping machines descend on the pre-dawn tabloid, the wire services are hysterical and send too much message,
they're waiting to bam out the Armageddon, millions of rats reported in China, smoke billows out of New York's hospital furnace smokestack,
I am writing millions of letters a year, I correspond with hopeful messengers in Detroit, I am taking drugs
and leap at my postman for more correspondence, Man is leaving the earth in a rocket ship,
there is a mutation of the race, we are no longer human beings, we are one being, we are being connected to itself,
it makes me crosseyed to think how, the mass media assemble themselves like congolese Ants for a purpose
in the massive clay mound an undiscovered huge Queen is born, Africa wakes to redeem the old Cosmos,
I am masturbating in my bed, I dreamed a new Stranger touched my heart with his eye,
he hides in a loft sidestreet in Hoboken, the heavens have covered East Second Street with Snow,
all day I walk in the wilderness over white carpets of City, we are redeeming ourself, I am born,
the Messiah awaken in the Universe, I announce the New Nation, in every mind, take power over the dead creation,
I am naked in New York, a star breaks thru the blue skull of the sky out the window,
I seize the tablets of the Law, the spectral Buddha and the spectral Christ turn to a stick of shit in the void, a fearful Idea,
I take the crown of the Idea and place it on my head, and sit a King among the reptile Devas of my Karma—
Eye in every forehead sleeping waxy & the light gone inward—to dream of fearful Jaweh [...] or the Atom Bomb—

All these eternal spirits to be wakened, all these bodies touched and healed, all these lacklove suffering the Hate, dumbed under rainbows of Creation, O Man the means of Heaven are at hand, thy rocks & my rocks are nothing,
the identity of the Moon is the identity of the flower-thief, I and the Police are one in revolutionary Numbness! [1]

(Clapping)

Dr. William Rutherford
Thank you, High Priest, and Amen. I'd like to introduce now, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Ralph Ellison, who's a well-known writer, who will require no introduction. He is a young man I met in Paris many years ago, where I met the other young man, Mr. James Baldwin, also many years ago. They're still some of our fieriest, our brightest, leading lights.
Ralph Ellison as you know, is a writer, an essayist, a novelist. Ralph Ellison as you also know, came from absolute obscurity, with one work which should became a major work, is now one of the guideposts in contemporary American literature. Ralph Ellison is the invisible man, he embodies the invisible man. Ralph Ellison has made us all visible. *(Audience laughing)* Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you the invisible man.

(Clapping)

Ralph Ellison
Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen, but don't believe what he just said. I was never invisible. I am too highly pigmented for that…pigmentated for that.

Martin Luther King embodied a tradition of eloquence, which has given much to the tradition of American literature. In him we have no difficulty in discerning the intricate ways in which his thinking, his acting and his ways of expressing himself, were simultaneously Negro American an idiom, and yet a living part of what is now fashionably referred to as a mainstream of American life.
He not only embodied that tradition, but he resuscitated much of its more valuable and admirable characteristics. He revivified this tradition of courageous and self-sacrificial individualism. And he reminded the nation of its responsibility for the quality of the lives of all of its citizens. And by example, he returned the ministry to an awareness of the basic social and moral needs of his own people specifically, and to the needs of the nation generally.
Tonight however, I would like to remind you of the service which Martin Luther King has rented for those whose lives are devoted to literature, and to those abiding human values and predicaments which are the concerns of literature. By example, by word, and by deed, Martin Luther King reminded us of the dynamics of Negro American heroism, and the tradition and discipline upon which it rests. By being himself, by daring to dream and to believe in American possibilities, he made it a little easier for all of us to grasp the discipline and courage of those of our people who are forced to live and struggle, and pursue their own values under the most difficult of social conditions. And he emerged and grew to national and international prominence under conditions where Negro Americans were outnumbered and without the legal resources for achieving their goals, which were shared by other Americans. Many of the… of their failures -- many of their fellow Negros in the North failed to understand this. And I am afraid that some of us who failed most to understand this were Negro writers, or at least intellectuals.

I would like to suggest that in this country, where so many questions have been placed, asked, about the nature of Negro American humanity, about the quality, about courage, indeed about the whole nature of

[1] Extract from a poem by Allen Ginsberg, "Television Was a Baby Crawling Toward That Death Chamber" (1961).

heroism in the United States, Martin Luther King gave an answer. He built upon what had been present in the South, and not only in the South, but wherever Southern Negroes had God. He came, he showed forth, he led, and he made us aware, by his own example, of what we had been losing in terms of general American leadership throughout those long years when we chose not to look, and to examine, and to relate one to another.

Well, that's enough of that. I am going to read to you from a work in progress begun some many years before the terrible events which have brought us together. It's about, in this part, another Negro minister. I warn you that he is not of the same generation and did not face – on the same level of consciousness at least – the problems which Doctor King faced. And since I am a writer, rather than a poet, or a very eloquent man, I will now read.

> Three days before the shooting, a chartered planeload of Southern Negroes swooped down upon the District of Columbia and attempted to see the Senator. They were quite elderly: old ladies dressed in little white caps and white uniforms made of surplus nylon parachute material, the men dressed in neat but old-fashioned black suits, wearing wide-brimmed, deep-crowned panama hats which, in the Senator s walnut-paneled reception room now, they held with a grave ceremonial air. Solemn, uncommunicative and quietly insistent, they were led by a huge, distinguished-looking old fellow who on the day of the chaotic event was to prove himself, his age notwithstanding, an extraordinarily powerful man. Tall and broad and of an easy dignity, this was a Reverend A. Z. Hickman--better known, as one of the old ladies proudly informed the Senator's secretary, as "God's Trombone." This, however, was about all they were willing to explain. Forty-four in number, the ladies with their fans, satchels and picnic baskets, and the men carrying new blue airline take-on bags, they listened intently as Reverend Hickman did their talking. "Ma'am," Hickman said, his voice deep and resonant as he nodded toward the door of the Senator's private office, "you just tell the Senator that Hickman has arrived. When he hears who's out here he'll know that it's important and he'll want to see us." "But I've told you that the Senator isn't available," the secretary said. "Just what is your business? Who are you, anyway? Are you his constituents?" "Constituents?" Suddenly the old man smiled. "No, miss," he said, "the Senator doesn't even have anybody like us in his state. We're from down where we're among the counted but not among the heard." "Then why are you coming here?" she said. "What is your business?" "He'll tell you, ma'am," Hickman said. "He'll know who we are; all you have to do is to tell him that we have arrived. . . ." The secretary, a young Mississippian, sighed. Obviously these were Southern Negroes of a type she had heard of all her life--and old ones; yet instead of being already in herdlike movement toward the door (which he had expected) they were calmly waiting, as though she hadn't said a word. And now she had a suspicion that, for all their staring eyes, she actually didn't exist for them. They just stood there, now looking oddly like a delegation of Asians who had lost their interpreter along the way, and who were trying to tell her something which she had no interest in hearing, through this old man who himself did not know the language. Suddenly they no longer seemed familiar, and a feeling of dreamlike incongruity came over her. They were so many that she could no longer see the large abstract paintings which hung along the paneled walls, nor the framed facsimiles of State Documents which hung above a bust of Vice-President Calhoun. Some of the old women were calmly plying their palm-leaf fans, as though in serene defiance of the droning air conditioner. Yet she could see no trace of impertinence in their eyes, nor any of the anger which the Senator usually aroused in members of the Negro group. Instead, they seemed resigned, like people embarked upon a difficult journey who were already far beyond the point of no return. Her uneasiness grew; then she blotted out the others by focusing her eyes narrowly upon their leader. And when she spoke again her voice had taken on a nervous edge.
> "I've told you that the Senator isn't here," she said, "and you must realize that he is a busy man who can only see people by appointment. . . ."

"We know that, ma'am," Hickman said, "but . . ."
"You don't just walk in here and expect to see him on a minute's notice," she said.
"We understand that too, ma'am," Hickman said, looking mildly into her eyes, his close-cut white head tilted to one side, "but this is something that developed all of a sudden. Couldn't you reach him by long distance? We'd pay the charges. And I don't even have to talk to him, miss; you can do the talking. All you have to do is to say is that we have arrived."
"I'm afraid that is impossible," she said.
The very evenness of the old man's voice made her feel uncomfortably young, and now, deciding that she had exhausted all the tried-and-true techniques which her region had worked out (short of violence) for getting quickly rid of Negroes, the secretary lost her patience and telephoned for a guard.
They left as quietly as they had appeared, the old minister waiting behind until the last had stepped into the hall, then he turned, and she saw his full height, framed by the doorway, as the others arranged themselves behind him. "You're really making a mistake, miss," he said. "The Senator knows us --"
"Knows you!" she said indignantly. "I've heard Senator Sunraider state that the only colored he knows is the boy who shines shoes at his golf club."
"Oh?" Hickman shook his head as the others exchanged knowing glances. "Very well, ma'am," he said. "We're sorry to have caused you this trouble. It's just that it's very important that the Senator know we're on the scene. So I hope you won't forget to tell him that we have arrived, because soon it might be too late."
There was no threat in it; indeed, his voice echoed the odd sadness which she thought she detected in the faces of the others just before the door blotted them out.
In the hall they exchanged no words, moving silently behind the guard who accompanied them down to the lobby. They were about to move into the street when the security-minded chief guard observing their number, stepped up, and ordered them searched.

They submitted patiently, amused that anyone should consider them capable of harm, and for the first time an emotion broke the immobility of their faces. They chuckled and winked and smiled, fully aware of the comic aspects of the situation. Here they were, quiet, old, and obviously religious black folk who, because they had attempted to see the man who was considered the most vehement enemy of their people in either house of Congress, were being energetically searched by uniformed security officers, and they knew what the absurd outcome would be. They were found to be armed with nothing more dangerous than pieces of fried chicken and ham sandwiches, chocolate cake and sweet-potato fried pies. Some obeyed the guards' commands with exaggerated sprightliness, the old ladies giving their skirts a whirl as they turned in their flat-heeled shoes. When ordered to remove his wide-brimmed hat, one old man held it for the guard to look inside; then, he flipped out the sweatband, and gave the crown a tap, causing something to fall to the floor, then he waited with a callused palm extended as the guard bent to retrieve it. Straightening and unfolding the object, the guard saw a worn but neatly creased fifty-dollar bill, which he dropped upon the outstretched palm as though it were hot. They watched silently as he looked at the old man and gave a dry, harsh laugh; then as he continued laughing the humor slowly receded behind their eyes. Not until they were allowed to file into the street did they give further voice to their amusement.

"These here folks don't understand nothin'," one of the old ladies said. "If we had been the kind to depend on the sword instead of on the Lord, we'd been in our graves long ago--ain't that right, Sister' Arter?"
"You said it," Sister Arter said. "In the grave and done long finished mold'ing!"
"Let them worry, our conscience is clear on that, don't you say so?"
"Amen!"

On the sidewalk now, they stood around Reverend Hickman, holding a hushed conference; then in a few minutes they had disappeared in a string of taxis and the incident was thought closed. Shortly afterwards, however, they appeared mysteriously at a hotel where the Senator leased a private suite, and tried to see him. How they knew of this secret suite they would not explain.

Next they appeared at the editorial offices of the newspaper which had been most critical of the Senator's methods, but here too they were turned away. They were taken for a protest group, just one more lot of disgruntled Negroes crying for justice as though theirs were the only grievances in the world. Indeed, they received less of a hearing here than elsewhere. They weren't even questioned as to why they wished to see the Senator--which was poor newspaper work, to say the least; a failure of technical alertness, and, as events were soon to prove, a gross violation of press responsibility.
So once more they moved away.

Although the Senator returned to Washington the following day, his secretary failed to report his strange visitors. There were – There were important interviews scheduled and she had understandably classified the old people as just another form of annoyance. Once the reception room was cleared of their disquieting presence they seemed no more significant than the heavy mail received from white liberals and Negroes, white liberals and Negroes liberal and reactionary alike, whenever the Senator made one of his taunting remarks. She forgot them. Then at about eleven a.m. Reverend Hickman reappeared without the others and started into the building. This time, however, he was not to reach the secretary. One of the guards, the same who had picked up the fifty-dollar bill, recognized the old man and pushed him bodily from the building.

Indeed, the old man was handled quite roughly, his sheer weight and bulk and the slow rhythm of his normal movements infuriating the guard to that quick, heated fury which springs up in one when dealing with the unexpected recalcitrance of some inanimate object—say the huge stone that resists the bulldozer's power, or the chest of drawers that refuses to budge from its spot on the floor. Nor did the old man's composure help matters. Nor did his passive resistance hide his distaste at having strange hands placed upon his person. As he was being pushed about, old Hickman looked at the guard with a kind of tolerance, an understanding which seemed to remove his personal emotions to some far, cool place where the guard's strength could never reach him. He even managed to pick up his hat from the sidewalk where it had been thrown after him with no great show of breath or hurry, and he stood up to regard the guard with a serene dignity.

"Son," he said, flicking a spot of dirt from the soft panama with a white handkerchief, "I'm sorry that this happened to you, you know that. Here you've worked up a sweat on this hot morning and not a thing has been changed--except that you've interfered with something that doesn't concern you. After all, you're only a guard, you're not a mind-reader. Because if you were, you'd be trying to get me in there as fast as you could instead of trying to keep me out. You're probably not even a good guard, come to think about it, and I wonder what on earth you'd do if I came here prepared to make some trouble. You'd think of trouble as coming from numbers but you're wrong, it comes in all shapes and sizes, son. "

Fortunately, there were too many spectators present for the guard to risk giving the old fellow a demonstration of what he would do and he was compelled to stand silent, his thumbs hooked over his cartridge belt, while old Hickman strolled—or more accurately, floated—up the walk and disappeared around the corner.

Except for two attempts by telephone, once to the Senator's office…one to the Senator's office and later to his home, the group made no further effort until that afternoon, when Hickman sent a

telegram asking Senator Sunraider to phone him at a T Street hotel. A message which, thanks again to the secretary, the Senator did not see. Following this attempt there was silence.

During the late afternoon the group of closed-mouthed old folks who were praying quietly, who were seen praying quietly within the Lincoln Memorial. An amateur photographer, a high-school boy from the Bronx, was there at the time and it was his chance photograph of the group, standing with bowed heads beneath old Hickman's outspread arms, while facing this great sculpture, that was flashed over the wires following the shooting. Asked why he had photographed that particular group, the boy replied that he had seen them as, quote, "a good composition.... I thought their faces would make a fine scale of grays between the whiteness of the marble and the blackness of the shadows." Close quote. And for the rest of the day the group appears to have faded into those same peaceful shadows, to remain there until the next morning—when they materialized shortly before chaos erupted.

There is a break here… uh…as you might have uh…grasped from what I read that there the Senator was shot. And uh…the Reverend Hickman, who happened to be present during the shooting uh…was brought at the Senator's insistence into his room to sit while he went through the crisis of living or dying.

Silence.

Hickman sits and he thinks, and as he does, these particular things began to run through his mind. As he stared across of the sleeping man, the face became almost anonymous beneath his inward-turning eyes, the once familiar cast of features fading like the light. He clasped his hands across his middle as the mood of the afternoon moment returned in all its mystery and awe, and he found himself once more approaching the serene, high-columned space. They were -- And once more they were starting up the broad steps and moving in a close mass still caught up in the holiday mood evoked by seeing the sights and scenes of Washington, which most had only read about or seen in photographs or in an occasional newsreel. Then he was mounting the steps and feeling a sudden release from the frame of time, feeling the old familiar restricting part of himself falling away as when, long ago, he'd found himself improvising upon some old traditional blues riff, or when, as in more recent times, he'd felt the Sacred Word moving rapturously within him, taking possession of his voice and tongue. Old Hickman was an ex jazz trombone player.

And now his heartbeat pounded and his footsteps slowed and he was looking upward, hesitating with one foot fumbling about the step which would bring him flush into the full field of the emanating power, and he felt himself shaken by the sudden force of his emotion. Then once again he was moving, moving into the cool, shaded, and sonorous calm of the edifice, moving slowly and dream-like over the fluted shadows cast before him along the stony floor from […]the upward-reaching columns, and he advanced toward the great image slumped in the huge stone chair.

From far away he could hear some sister's softly tentative, "Reverend? Reverend?" and now their voices fading in a hush awe -- awed hushed recognition; creating but for her echoing voice a stillness resonant like the propounded note of some great distant bell; still staring, still hearing the sister's soft voice, sounding now through a deep and doom-toned silence which reverberated through his mind with the slow, time-and-space-devouring motion of great wings silently flying...

Then he, Hickman, was looking up through the calm and the peaceful light toward the great brooding face; and he, Hickman, standing motionless before the quiet, less-and-more-than-human

eyes which seemed to gaze from beneath their shadowed lids as toward some vista of perpetual dawn which lay beyond infinity.

And he thought, now I understand: That look! of his, that's us! It's not in the features but in what they look like, those eyes, it's what they have to say about what it means to be a man who tries to live and struggle against all the troubles of the world with but the naked mind, the heart, and courage. Yes, that look and what made it, that made him one of us and us one of him. It's not in the dirty dozens that they try to ease him into about his family and about the color of his skin, but in that look in his eyes and in his struggle against all the things which put it there. It's in that, and in being the kind of man he made himself to be, it's in that that he's one of us. Oh yes, he failed and he knew that he could make one step along the road which would make us free, but in growing into that look he joined us in what we have been forced to know about life and about being fully manful and what we know about man -- and what we know…as we learn that man at his best, when he has sat in all of the muck and confusion of life, is near sublime. Yes, he's one of us, because he freed us to the extent that he could by freeing himself of that awful pride, and he became a man and he pointed the way for all those who would be free – Yes!

Staring up into the great brooding eyes he felt a strong impulse to turn, to share their distant vision but he was held, the eyes holding him quiet and still, and he stared upward, seeking their secret, their mysterious life, in the stone; aware of the stone and yet feeling their more-than-stoniness as he probed the secret of the emotion which held him with a gentle but all-compelling power. And the stone seemed to live and breathe then, its great chest appearing to heave as though, stirred by their approach, it had decided to sigh in silent recognition of who and what they were and had chosen to reveal its secret life for all who cared to see and share and remember its vision. And he was searching the stony visage, its brooding eyes, as though waiting to hear it resound with the old familiar eloquence which he knew only from its sound on the printed page – and then a woman's voice came to him as from a distance, crying, "Oh Lord! Look, yonder y'all, it's him! It's HIM!," and her voice broke into a quavering rush of tears.

And he was addressing himself now, crying in upon his own spellbound ears, as her anguished, "Ain't that him, Revern? Ain't that Father Abraham?" came to him from far away. And too full to speak, he smiled; and in silent confirmation he was nodding his head, thinking, yes, with all I know about him and his contradictions, yes. And with all I know about men and the world, yes. And with all I know about white men and politicians of all colors and guises, yes. And with all I know about the things you had to do to be you and stay yourself – yes! She's right, she's cut through the knot and said it plain; you are and you're one of the few who has ever earned the right to be called "Father." Yes, and though I'm a man who despises all foolish pomp and circumstances and all the bending of the knee that some still try to force us to do before false values, Yes, and Yes again. And though I'm against all the unearned tribute which the weak and the lowly are forced to give to power based on force and false differences and false values, yes, yes, for you "Father" is all right with me. Yes…

And he could feel the cloth of the sister's arm as he turned, touching her gently as he gazed into the great face, thinking, There you sit after all this unhappy time, just looking down out of those sad old eyes, just looking way deep out of that beautiful old ugly wind-swept-storm-struck face. Yes, she's right, it's you; stretching out those long old weary legs like you've just been resting a while before pulling yourself together again to go and try to bind up these wounds that have festered and run and stunk in this land ever since they turned you back to stone. Yes, that's right, it's you, just sitting and waiting and talking and taking your well-earned ease, getting your second wind before getting up to do all over again what has been undone throughout all the betrayed years. Yes, it's you all right, just sitting and resting while you think out the mystery of how all

this could be. Just puzzling out how all this could happen to a man after he had done all one man could possibly do and then take the consequences of having done his all. Yes, it's you -- Sometimes, I guess... Sometimes...and then he was saying it aloud, his eyes held by the air of peace and perception born of suffering which seemed to eminate from the Great faiths, replying now to the sister's question, and a voice so low and husky, that it sounded hardly like his own:

"Sometimes yes...sometimes the good Lord...I say something the good Lord accepts His own perfection and closes His eyes and goes ahead and takes His own good time and He makes Himself a man. Yes, and sometimes that man gets hold of the idea of what he's supposed to do in this world and he gets an idea of what it is possible for him to do, and that man lets that idea guide him as he grows and struggles and stumbles and sorrows until finally he comes into his own God-given shape and achieves his own individual and lonely place in this world. It don't happen often, oh no; but when it does, then even the stones will cry out in witness to his vision and the hills and towers shall echo his words and deeds and his example will live in the hearts of men forever.

So there sits one right there. The Master doesn't make many like that because that kind of a man is dangerous to the sloppy ways of the world. That kind of man loves the truth even more than he loves his life, or his wife, or his children, because he's been designated and set aside to do the hard tasks that have to be done. That kind of man will do what he sees as justice even if the earth yawns and swallows him down, and even then his deeds will persist in the land forever. So you look at him a while and be thankful that the Lord allowed such a man to touch our lives, even if it were only for a little while, then let us bow our heads and pray. Oh no, not for him, because he did his part a long time ago. Instead let us pray for ourselves and for all those whose job it is to wear those great big shoes he left to fill..."

And there in the sonorous shadows beneath his outspread arms, they prayed.

(Long clapping)

Dr. William Rutherford
Whether he wants to admit it or not, he does make the invisible visible. And we've been very privileged Ralph, to hear part of your great new work. Ladies and Gentlemen, I'd like to suggest now that we take a brief intermission before we continue.

INTERMISSION

CD 2/2 (38 min)

Dr. William Rutherford
In introducing the next speaker, I'd like to make one or two further, very brief, comments. The four authors that are addressing us tonight represent in fact the consciences of the intellectual community of America. These are four of the most prominent men in their fields in our country today. These four men, the four names when the idea was first broached of a memorial poetry reading for Doctor King, these were the first four names that occurred to us. Of these four gentlemen, they have come to New York tonight from North, South, East, and West. Each of these four gentlemen is engaged in many activities, long-term commitments, engagements that have been made long before we invited them to this evening, and I am very pleased and very happy to say that not one of these gentlemen was unable to come here tonight to offer their time on very, very short notice. If they represent the spectrum of the intellectual conscience of America today, we are in very good shape. I'd like to say…

(Clapping)
Again, our next speaker, like the preceding ones, really needs no introduction at all. But for the record and our film, I'd like to say our next speaker is a scholar, and a teacher. He is a writer, greatly known, twice Pulitzer Prize winner; he is a poet and a philosopher. He is also one of our groovy ones. I'd like to introduce Doctor Robert Penn Warren.

(Clapping)

Robert Penn Warren
Well, I am grateful for those handsome remarks, I shall cherish them. Thank you. And I won't inspect them too closely. I wanna say one thing or two, it's uh-- I feel moved to say, before I read a few poems. We are here tonight, as we all know, to try to do honor to Martin Luther King. But it's he who does honor to us, by the simple fact that he is an honor to all man. By embodying and by proclaiming uh… the possibility that a man… uh… may be great. It's almost an embarrassing concept in our time. As Herman Melville put it, in a poem, long ago, "Nothing can lift the heart of a man like manhood in a fellow man." And in that sense, among other senses, Martin Luther King lifted our hearts. But the most obvious thing, in his greatness, was the simple manhood of it. The strength and the scale of that manhood, he saw a great cause and in that manhood he was able to greatly serve it.
Now in our age, which is not among the best of ages I should think, the kind of greatness we see, we most often encounter, is a sleazy greatness of the celebrity, that concoction, a synthetic concoction, by the expert in public relations, in collaboration with the manipulators of the great media to flatter the debased taste of -- for sensation and mere novelty.
In that context, the mere presence of Martin Luther King renewed some faith in the possibility that a man might be great. It's my considered opinion that he is the only example of that quality that we've observed in American public life in many years.

(Clapping)
And I want to say that much, as a general remark…Now, to a more workaday level, I am going to read a few poems. The first one of two will be from a book called *Selected Poems* but the poems I'll read will be those of 1965 and '66. And then I'll turn to a more recent volume for another poem or so.
The first one is a rather topical poem. I read a newspaper story which said that shoes, uh… deteriorated rapidly in rain jungles *(audience laughing)* and I wrote a poem about shoes in rain jungles. I find I have the same quote from Melville, it's one that stuck in mind many years ago.

> Shoes rot off feet before feet / Rot, and before feet/ Stop moving feet/ Rot, rot in the/ Rain, moving.
> Napoleon was wrong, an army/ Marches on its feet. If/ It has them. If/ The feet have shoes.
> The Battle of Gettysburg was fought for shoes./ (literally, by the way) It is hell to die barefoot, unless,/ Of course, you were raised that way.
> They are cheap, but shoes are dear, and
> All wars are righteous. Except when/ You lose them. This/ Is the lesson of history. This --/ And shoes. On rotting shoe leather
> Men march into history, and when/ You get there take a good look around, lost/ In the multitudinous gray portieres of beaded/ Rain, and say, "*Mot de Cambronne*, this/ Is history."
> Now you know what history is.
> History is what you can't/ resign from, but
> There is always refuge in private virtue,/ Or at least in heroism, and if
> You get stuck with heroism you can, anyway,/ When the cameras pop, cover your face,/ Like the man who, coming from the D.A.'s office,/ Lifts his hands, handcuffed, to cover his face.
> You can do that much.

> Melville, ruined, sick, acerb, anent/ The Civil War, said: "Nothing/Can lift the heart of man/ Like manhood in a fellow-man," and
> Sociologists should make a study called "Relative/ Incidence of Mention of Heroes in News Media/ As Index to Gravity of a Situation." *(Audience laughing)*
> Sociologists can do that much.
> And when the rainy season is over/ There will be new problems, including / The problem of a new definition of virtue.
> Meanwhile talk as little *mot de Cambronne* as /Possible, and remember / There is more than one kind of same.
> This last is very important.

(Clapping) Thank you.

This is a fruit of my sporadic Bible readings, I mean in myself, not in public. (*Audience laughing*) It is about Elijah, now the reason it's called "Elijah on Mount Carmel" is that I had a design for a stained-glass windows of St. John the Divine in New York City. I put it back [on this?] occasion.

> About Elijah, after the miraculous fall of fire on his altar, the breaking of the drouth, and the slaughter of the priests of Baal, girds up his loins and runs ahead of the chariot of Ahab to the gates of Jezreel, where Jezebel waits.

You remember the episode, I'm sure, uh… you know the priests of Baal danced and danced and danced and danced around the altar but no rain came to break the drought. And then old Elijah, he smelled like a goat you know, and hairy and uncouth, and scratching. He made a few remarks to God and then a storm came up and lighting fell and his altar burned. And the priest…I mean the people of Israel, got the point; they killed the priests of Baal. *(Audience laughing)* And Elijah had a great time racing back ahead of its chariot to carry the news to the city. And poor Ahab, the husband, the rather milksop husband of Jezebel, had to go tell Jezebel the bad news. That wouldn't have been a pleasant errand, as you think, but he had to. Anyway I think of him along the way. *(Audience laughing)*

> Nothing is re-enacted. Nothing/Is true. Therefore nothing/ Must be believed,/ But/To have truth/Something must be believed,/ And repetition and congruence,/ To say the least, are necessary, and/ His thorn-scarred heels and toes with filth horn-scaled/ Spurned now the flint-edge and with blood spurts flailed/Stone, splashed mud of Jezreel. And he screamed. /He had seen glory more blood-laced than any he had dreamed.
>
> Far, far ahead of the chariot tire,/ Which the black mud sucked, he screamed, / Screaming in glory/ Like/ A bursting blood blister./ Ahead of the mud-faltered fetlock,/He screamed, and of Ahab huddled in/ The frail vehicle under the purpling wrack/ And spilled gold of storm – poor Ahab, who, / From metaphysical confusion and lighting, had nothing to run to/ But the soft Phoenician belly and commercial acuity/ Of Jezebel: that darkness wherein History creeps to die.
>
> How could he ever tell her? Get nerve to? / Tell how around her high altar / The prinking and primped /Priests, / Limping, had mewed, / And only the gull-mew was answer, / No fire to heaped meats, only sun-flame, / And the hairy one laughed (This is what I'm told, my [glosses?] on the Bible, is what he actually said): "Has your god turned aside to make pee-pee?"/ How then on the sea-cliff he prayed, fire fell, sky darkened, / Rain fell, drought broke now, for God had hearkened, / And priests have their death-squeal. The king hid his eyes on his coat. / Oh, why to that hairy one should God have hearkened, who smelled like a goat?

> Yes, how could I tell her? When he himself/ Now scarcely believed it? Soon,/ In the scented chamber,/ She,/ Saying, "baby, Baby,/ Just hush, now hush, it's all right," Would lean, reach out, lay a finger / To his lips to allay his infatuate grabble. So,/ Eyes shut, breath scant, he heard her breath rip the lamp-flame / To blackness, and by that sweet dog-bait, lay, and it came, the soft hand-grope he knew he could not, nor wished to, resist/ Much longer; so prayed: "Dear God, oh dear God – oh please, don't exist!"

(Clapping)

I will read poets uh…from a group of poems I consider it as a long poem, but the poets are more or less self-contained. Uh…This poem is based on a little visit I was making some years ago uh… to a Southern penitentiary. And I was being shown around with the deputy Warden and in the infirmary there was a very old man sitting in the toilet, crouched and clearly in great pain, and I was told he was dying of a cancer obviously uh… lower [inence?]. And this is the only place he'd be comfortable 'cause there are no doors in prisons, you know, for toilets, there's no privacy. And the Warden, in a great, hearty voice, says, "Well, uh, Jake or John," I forget the man's name, really, I call him Jake, "You know we're pulling for you, Jake." And the old man lifted his head, sweat-soaked, and said, "Well just keep that morphine moving, Cap, and I'll try to stick it out." And it's…" Just keep that morphine moving, Cap," there's a little rhythm, ya know, in it. That's sort of [… ?] for some years and finally it sort of began to pick up a poem around it.
Anyway, here is one or two sections from that. And the first is called "Keep That Morphine Moving, Cap." Oh by the way the title is *Penological Study: Southern Exposure. (Audience laughing.)* This is an old hill man, very old, I mean 75 at least, all grey and battered, and long malarial face you find frequently in the hill man of my country. This is sort of a ballade, this part.

> Oh, in the pen, oh, in the pen,
> The cans, they have no doors, therefore
> I saw him, head bent in that primordial
> Prayer, head grizzled, and the sweat,
> To the gray cement, dropped. It dripped,
> And each drop glittered as it fell,
> For in the pen, oh, in the pen,
> The cans, they have no doors.
>
> Each drop upon that gray cement
> Exploded like a star, and the Warden,
> I heard the Warden saying, "Jake—
> You know we're pulling for you, Jake,"
> And I saw that face lift and explode
> In whiteness like a star, for oh!—
> Oh, in the pen, yes, in the pen,
> The cans, they have no doors.
>
> A black hole opened in that white
> That was the star-exploding face,
> And words came out, the words came out,
> "Jest keep that morphine moving, Cap,
> And me, I'll tough it through,"
> Who had toughed it through nigh thirty years
> And couldn't now remember why

He had cut her throat that night, and so
Come to the pen, here to the pen,
Where cans, they have no doors,

And where he sits, while deep inside,
Inside his gut, inside his gut,
The pumpkin grows and grows, and only
In such a posture humped, can he
Hold tight his gut, and half believe,
Like you or me, like you or me,
That the truth will not be true. Oh, Warden—

Keep that morphine moving, for
All night beneath that blazing bulb,
Bright drop by drop, from the soaked hair, sweat
Drips, and each drop, on the gray cement,
Explodes like a star. Listen to that
Small sound, and let us, too, keep pulling
For him, like we all ought to, who,
When truth at last is true, must try,
Like him, to tough it through—but oh!—
Not in the pen, not in the pen,
Where cans, they have no doors.

(Clapping)
That's all I'll read from that one. I'll read one poem that's yet unfinished. I am going to try on you, you know, and see how it goes…It is called "Bad War."

That was the year of the bad war. The others
Had been virtuous. If blood
Was shed, it was, in a way, sacramental, redeeming
Even those evil people from whose veins it flowed,
Into the benign logic of History, and some,
By common report, even the most brutalized, died with a shy
And grateful smile on the face, as though they,
Understood. Our own wounds were, of course, precious.
There is always imprecision in human affairs, and war
Is no exception, therefore the innocent—
Though innocence is often a complex and dubious concept—
Must sometimes suffer. There is the blunt
Justice of the falling beam, the paw-flick of
The unselective flame. This the test case. But happily,
If one's conscience proclaims ultimate innocence,
Then the brief suffering of those innocent incidentally
Can be regarded, with pity of course, as merely
The historical cost of the process by which
The larger innocence fulfills itself in
The realm of contingency. For conscience
Is, of innocence, the only test, and the fact that now we
Are troubled, and candidly admit it, proves only

That in the past we, being then untroubled,
Were innocent. Well let us pray
To have again that purity of conscience
That sanctifies the shedding of blood.

Thank you.
(Clapping) Thank you very much.

Dr. William Rutherford
It's really not very difficult to see why Doctor Warren has so many awards. I suspect he is working on another one right now. I'm certainly very appreciative of the opportunity of hearing him this evening. Our next and last poet to address us this evening is perhaps the one I know best, certainly known the longest, a very dear friend of mine, from the time we both had a great deal more hair on our heads as I said, and also were very busily and quietly starving to death in Paris. But at the time we were starving to death in Paris, I was very busy chasing up little jobs here and there, and James Baldwin was very busy, refining the cutting-edge of his intellect, and wit, and voice.
James Baldwin is not only a great writer, Ladies and Gentlemen, as you'll very shortly see, he is also a great speaker. He's a man who deals with ideas. He deals with his ideas in terms of his feeling, his intellect, and his heart. He's never ever compromised those ideas and without any further ado, I'll let you see what I mean. James Baldwin.

(Clapping)

James Baldwin
Good evening. I feel a little handicapped, because uh… I expected to take part in a panel, and I am usually a little disorganized and I was in California and just came in with nothing to read. And so, what I will have to do… is -- since we're here because of Martin, and I have some things on my mind which I never really expressed, because… it was too deep a blow perhaps, I am sort of forced to try to deal with that before you this evening. I had seen Martin about two weeks before his death, in New York, and then I flew back to Hollywood, California, where I…I'm working on a screen version of the life of Malcolm X. And one of the… *(Clapping)*

Thank you but please, wish me luck. *(Audience laughing and clapping)*

Now in doing this I have made a very peculiar discovery, though once I state it… I suppose it seems obvious, it seemed obvious even to me, but it was new at that moment. When I got to Hollywood, when I agreed to do it, I of course knew that Malcolm was dead. Malcolm and I had been friends, and uh… I was very frightened of the assignment. What really happened, which was a revelation that applies to what I am about to say about Martin, was that though I knew the man was dead, and by now would be a skeleton, I had not accepted it. For a very long time I'd get no work done on the script because in some most private parts of myself, what my head knew my heart refused to -- my heart or my spirit had either refused to accept, to, to…, to allow it to enter.

That was the hardest part of all of the hard work that lay before me, and I won't bother going into any of the details about how trying to work in Hollywood, especially with such a subject. But I say that to say this. That on the day that Martin met his end, it'd been one of the few really good days at work. And I was very jubilant, as writers can sometimes be on those rare good days. I was dancing around the obligatory swimming-pool, and, uh *(Audience laughing)*…feeling very proud of myself, and the phone rang... And it was a friend of mine, a young black drama student, sounded very shaken, and he said that Martin had just been shot. Well *(sigh)*… I, like everyone else in this country I suppose these last few years… It is very

hard to describe the kind of reaction one has. He's been shot but he's not yet dead. But it's a head wound, so he's probably going to die. And behind Martin, one thinks not only of Martin then, there's Malcolm, there's Medgar [Evers], and then it stretched back, kind of hideously, into a very frightening past which in some ways sums up a very frightening present. And the great question which you're confronted with then is how you're going to bury it, how it is going to be checked, is it possible to check it. I myself confess that for a few days, I simply was… numb! I had no -- In a sense I had no reaction, which is one of the things I suppose one does, it doesn't mean your organism does [?]. I certainly didn't work, and there was something absolutely grotesque and unbearable about the fact that I should be sitting in this incredible fairy land called Hollywood, uh…this kind of Eldorado, this uh -- this dream-factory, this curious colony, which has tremendous power in this country and in the world, the manufacturer of myths to console the great American Republic.
It seemed to me that I had no right in a way to be there, and then again in another way I realized that what I was watching all around me, was nothing but a kind of inescapable pressure, the apathy and the seeming opulence of American life. And then in fact, it wouldn't have mattered where I was on that particular day, as long as I was in America, and in another way it wouldn't have mattered where I was on that particular day 'cause I would be somewhere in the world . And it was a world which had lost a tremendous hope.

But it took me a little while to get myself in some kind of state of mind where I could begin to act on what I dimly knew, which was this: that it was no good, my grief or my guilt – 'cause I felt guilty too for all the things that I had left undone – would not serve, that what I would have to do somehow, if I really loved Martin and believed in what Martin was trying to do, was to keep on doing it. So I went to Atlanta.

You see, what the battle was, and is, especially in this country now, at least for me, and I think it's true of every American writer, is that the whole effort of writing, the whole private solitary effort, seems in the face of the events about which one is surrounded, of storm, of things passing, of a great State, of the American State, seeming before your eyes to crumble. The whole effort of writing is absolutely trivial and self-indulgent and… and even to some degree sometimes wicked. That one feels that one should be doing something else, like storming barricades, I don't know, getting Molotov cocktails, doing something which seems like action. I think the American writer suffers from this temptation more than any others, because we are -- in this country we have the great myth that an active man is a man because he's active. So then we get people like John Wayne, and Ronald Reagan, who are certainly active. *(Audience laughing)*

But during that funeral, in Atlanta, I saw something which again is very obvious but which I had never seen before, or perhaps I saw it all over again in another way. When we came out of the church, and we started the long walk to the cemetery…I'll never forget that as far as the eye could see, on this side, and all up the road on that side, and on the roofs and in windows, great mass of black people, absolutely silent…I don't know if… I had never been confronted in my life with that kind of silence. It was a silence which I had the feeling that my ancestors had lived. The silence out of which somebody began to sing *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*… The silence in fact of the buried, the still-to-be-expressed American past, that buried past, which led of all us to this dangerous place, because they were not in a sense weeping, they were making no sound at all. They stood there, and we passed, in a mourning, which I can never, if I live to be a thousand, describe. And yet, in that mourning, I somehow sensed, and I sensed in a way unwillingly…in that mourning there was a tremendous dignity, there was a tremendous pride, a pride which cannot be described by me, or named. There was in fact in that day of the most awful defeat, in some way, in that multitude, and in the fact that it was Martin whom we were burying, in that terrible defeat, there was also some tremendous victory. And, it began to be a matter of my own manhood to recognize that in this horror, there was that victory, and that perhaps, one of the most important things that Martin Jr. showed us, was precisely that. And that out this kind of apprehension, one can begin to be released from the daily rage, the daily pain, the daily despair, that in some way, one is armed, in the sense that firearms can never be a weapon, one is armed against the despair and the rage which you would feel when you are facing a white policeman, or a white landlord, or indeed when you're dealing, as one must

day in and day out, with all of the terrifying and corrupt institutions of this country. It turns out that the endurance of the black people in this country may indeed prove to be, may already have proven to be, the only real thing which can save the country. It may…
(Clapping)

And if my apprehension of the uses to which one can put an historical and a personal despair is true, then it turns out that being in the world of division of labor that just as Martin did not for a moment ceased to do what Martin had to do. And as Ralph points out, he was also a historical creation. He was something which was absolutely unique to this country, could not be produced in any other country, coming as he did from the auction block by means of the church, which is where we all came. If he was an actor in history, and I was supposed to be a poet, then my obligation to Martin, and to all of us, and to myself, then becomes clear all over again. I suppose it's gotta be made clear, all over, and over, and over again. In that case, then, the act of writing, the act of painting, the act of singing, the act of -- the affirmative act of trying to become an artist, the affirmative act of trying to create, then becomes a very high responsibility. In ways, which the populous never really understands and neither does the artist, without that witness, without that Vision as the Bible has put it, the people perish. The only real tribute as Bill has said that we can make to Martin is now to do precisely what he asked us to do. And what he asked us to do was a very simple, and a very complex thing. He asked us to love one another, he asked us to keep our own hearts free from hatred, and free from bitterness.
And Martin not only had a dream: Martin had a vision. And the vision perhaps can be summed up in one way by saying that Martin's vision was not concerned with simply this present generation, but the generations coming after us. We will have to undo, in ourselves, in our own lives, and now, that history, which must never be repeated. We must not bequeath our children the legacy of blood, and lies, and disasters which we have had to survive. It is we who had to pick up what Martin left off and begin to create a climate, in this country, where black and white people can face each other, and love each other. And in the doing of this, I think we have to be clear-headed enough and courageous enough to recognize, that this is an attempt at revolution, and bear in mind that Martin met his death trying to get a raise for garbage workers. Thank you.

(Long clapping)

Dr. William Rutherford
Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen, and I told you so. As I began by saying earlier this evening, Doctor King would have been happy about this evening. In his name, I thank you. Good night.

(Clapping)