

I would hurl words into the darkness and wait for an echo. If an echo sounded, no matter how faintly, I would send other words to tell, to march, to fight.

-American Hunger Harper & Row 77

Well, what had I got out of living in the city? What had I got out of living in the South? What had I got out of living in America? I paced the floor, knowing that all I possessed were words and a dim knowledge that my country had shown me no examples of how to live a human life. All my life I had been full of a hunger for a new way to live. . .

I heard a trolley lumbering past over steel tracks in the early dusk and I

knew that underpaid, bewildered black men and women were returning to their homes from serving their white masters. In the front room of my apartment our radio was playing, pouring a white man's voice into my home, a voice that hinted of a coming war that would consume millions of lives.

Yes, the whites were as miserable as their black victims, I thought. If this country can't find its way to a human path, if it can't inform conduct with a deep sense of life, then all of us, black as well as white, are going down the same drain. . .

I picked up a pencil and held it over a sheet of white paper, but my feelings stood in the way of my words. Well, I would wait, day and night, until I knew what to say. Humbly now, with no vaulting dream of achieving a vast unity, I wanted to try to build a bridge of words between me and that world outside, that world which was so distant and elusive that it seemed unreal.

I would hurl words into this darkness and wait for an echo, and if an echo sounded, no matter how faintly, I would send other words to tell, to march, to fight, to create a sense of the hunger for life that gnaws in us all, to

keep alive in our hearts a sense of the inexpressibly human.

— American Hunger, final paragraphs (1945)

"Negroes, as they enter our culture, are going to inherit the problems we have, but with a difference. They are outsiders and they are going to know that they have these problems. They are going to be self-conscious; they are going to be gifted with a double vision, for, being Negroes, they are going to be both inside and outside of our culture at the same time. Every emotional and cultural convulsion that ever shook the heart and soul of Western man will shake them. Negroes will develop

unique and specially defined psychological types. They will become psychological men, like the Jews . . . They will not only be Americans or Negroes; they will be centers of knowing, so to speak . . . The political, social, and psychological consequences of this will be enormous."

— The Outsider (1953)

I'm a rootless man, but I'm neither psychologically distraught nor in any wise particularly perturbed because of it. Personally, I do not hanker after, and seem not to need, as many emotional attachments, sustaining roots, or idealistic allegiances as most people. I declare unabashedly that I

like and even cherish the state of abandonment, of aloneness; it does not bother me; indeed, to me it seems the natural, inevitable condition of man, and I welcome it. I can make myself at home almost anywhere on this earth and can, if I've a mind to and when I'm attracted to a landscape or a mood of life, easily sink myself into the most alien and widely differing environments.

— White Man, Listen! (1957)

I have no religion in the formal sense of the word ... I have no race except that which is forced upon me. I have no country except that to which I'm

**obliged to belong. I have no traditions.
I'm free. I have only the future.**

— Pagan Spain (1957)